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Strategies To Achieve Decent Work For All: Zimbabwe

Social Protection For Formal
And Informal Economy Workers
In Zimbabwe

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Executive Summary

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), social protection refers to the provision of benefits to households through public or collective arrangements to protect against low or declining living standards. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016) defined social protection as a set of nationally owned policies and instruments that provide income support and facilitate access to goods and services by all households and individuals at least minimally accepted levels, to protect them from deprivation and social exclusion, particularly during periods of insufficient income, incapacity or inability to work. Social protection is one of the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda and an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals and, has been widely acknowledged as a developmental tool but its role has been amplified as a key policy instrument to enable countries to build better especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates the right to social protection for every citizen. The Government also developed a sound National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF). The country also has National Social Security Authority (NSSA) Schemes for formal workers which however excludes the informal economy workers and domestic workers.

The research findings revealed that the role of macroeconomic policies in advancing social protection has been under spotlight for the past years. The share of the Ministry's annual budget allocation for social protection has been on the decline which is at odds with the growing demand for social protection owing to continued decline of the economy, increasing poverty levels and more recently the adverse impact of COVID-19. The COVID-19 social safety nets were characterised by lack of accountability and transparency in distribution and were rendered meaningless by the inflationary environment. Women workers both in the formal and informal economy has suffered the brunt of the social protection deficits.

Despite the challenges, the research findings point to the fact that there have been various programmes, initiatives and campaigns on social protection for the formal and informal economy workers by various stakeholders. These include in-house initiatives and campaigns by the trade unions, informal economy associations and by Government, employers and trade unions through implementation of the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP). The emerging finding on these initiatives is that whilst they are good they however suffer from fragmentation and lack of political support as evidenced by the length of time these initiatives have taken before operationalisation thus undermining their sustainability. Some successes have been choked by the volatile macroeconomic policies implemented over the years.

Collaboration between trade unions, informal economy associations and civil society organisations have been weak and the paper provides opportunities for collaboration. The research findings underscore the fact that social protection for workers can no longer be viewed as a government responsibility alone but that trade unions, informal economy associations and workers and civil society organisation should play an effective role in shaping and ensuring that the social protection schemes and programmes for all workers are inclusive and effective as indicated in the recommendations provided in the paper.



1. Introduction



Source: Nyautare Rural Clinic-Nyanga

1.1 Background

Social protection a term that incorporates social assistance, social insurance social safety nets, livelihood programmes, labour market interventions and social care programmes. Social protection is key aspect of decent work and has been defined in different ways by various international organisations. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), social protection refers to the provision of benefits to households through public or collective arrangements to protect against low or declining living standards. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016) defined social protection as a set of nationally owned policies and instruments that provide income support and facilitate access to goods and services by all households and individuals at least minimally accepted levels, to protect them from deprivation and social exclusion, particularly during periods of insufficient income, incapacity or inability to work.

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

It is now widely acknowledged that decent work is important as it provides an important link between economic growth and poverty reduction, and thus, sustainable and humane development. There has been an increased urgency among international policy makers, particularly in the wake of the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 and the global COVID-19 pandemic, to deliver quality jobs along with social protection for workers and the citizens; and respect for rights at work to achieve sustainable, inclusive economic growth, and eliminate poverty.

Furthermore, given the rise in gender inequalities amplified by COVID-19 pandemic makes it more imperative for governments to develop social protection responses sensitive women-related challenges both at workplaces and household level. Women workers face inequalities and discrimination in the workplace based on maternity and family responsibilities; glaring gender-pay differentials; gender stereotyping; difficulties in balancing work and family life; occupational segregation; and, are overrepresented in the informal economy, thus making decent work deficits a gendered issue.

To complement social protection measures, an adequate living wage and the upholding of workers' rights is imperative for the attainment of decent work. In Zimbabwe wages and incomes inequalities and workers' rights violations have grown tremendously over the years. Social dialogue, key to development of responsive social protection measures at workplace and national level has been undermined by various political and economic forces. This has seen the trade unions and CSOs embarking on various strategies to bring back the issue of decent work as a national priority for the achievement of sustainable and humane development.

In addition, the volatile macroeconomic environment has also challenged social protection measures rendering most of them meaningless. High rise in poverty level and informalisation of the economy puts further strain on the existing social protection measures, thus creating massive decent work deficits for workers both in the formal and informal economy.

It is in the light of the above challenges that this paper explores the state of decent work deficits, with particular reference to social protection, the role that macroeconomic and legislative frameworks have played in shaping the existing context of social protection in Zimbabwe for workers in the formal and informal economy. The paper will also analyse the various initiatives including campaigns on decent work for the formal and informal economy, best practices and recommendations centered on policy advocacy areas post COVID-19.

1.2 Objectives of the research

The objectives of the research were to:

- i. Analyse the role of macroeconomic policy in national spending on social safety nets for the formal and informal sector workers.
- ii. Analyse past and current campaigns on decent work for the formal and informal sector workers.
- iii. Identify best practices that can be used to inform the decent agenda work for the formal and informal sector in Zimbabwe post-COVID-19.

1.3 Methodology

The research findings were informed by primary and secondary data collection. Primary data was collected from stakeholders involved in decent work namely the trade unions and the informal economy associations. Key informants from these stakeholders were identified and primary data collection was through virtual means mostly telephone interviews where initiatives and case studies were collected and documented and views on sustainability of these initiatives provided by the key informants. Secondary data collection involved analysis of government's macroeconomic policies including the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP), national budgets, monetary policy statements, National Social Security Authority (NSSA) documents and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

1.4 Limitations of the research

The limitations of the research were related to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were limited face to face interviews and most of the primary data collection was undertaken through virtual means. There could have been a possibility of undertaking a face to face focus group discussion with the informal economy, but this could not take due to COVID-19 restrictions.



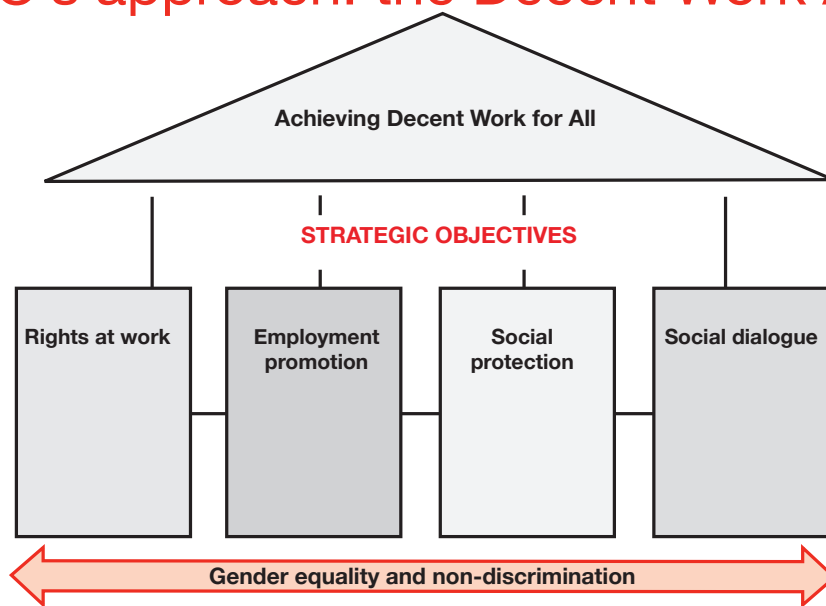
2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 The Decent Work Agenda (DWA)

The Decent Work Agenda was adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at its 87th Session in 1999. The word “work” is intended to be broader than employment or labour, reflecting “the variety of ways in which people contribute to the economy and society.” The word “decent” denotes that work must be of acceptable quality in terms of income, working conditions, job security, and rights. Ten years later at the 97th Session in June 2008, the ILO adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation which institutionalised the Decent Work Agenda as the key policy and operational concept of the ILO. The Declaration recognises the “four equally important strategic pillars or objectives” of the Decent Work Agenda: (a) promoting employment, (b) enhancing social protection, (c) promoting social dialogue, and (d) realising rights at work. Gender is a cross cutting issues across the four pillars (Figure 1). The Declaration further recognises that these four pillars are “inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive.” The Declaration thereby institutionalises and constitutionalises the ILO Decent Work Agenda (DWA) as its integrated global strategy to meet the universal aspiration of social justice, which includes achieving full employment and combating poverty and inequality (ILO, 2008).

Figure 1: The Four Pillars of the Decent Work Agenda

The ILO’s approach: the Decent Work Agenda



“Decent work is not just a goal – it is a driver of sustainable development. More people in decent jobs means stronger and more inclusive economic growth. Improved growth means more resources to create decent jobs. It is no wonder that people put a decent job among their top priorities in the global consultations for the 2030 Agenda. With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we have a once-in-a-generation chance to make a change and improve the lives of billions.” Guy Rider ILO Director-General

Decent Work sums up the aspirations of people for: work that is productive, gives fair income, security in the workplace & social protection for the family, equal opportunities & treatment, better prospects for - personal development & social integration, freedom to organise & participate in decision making.

Overall, decent work sums up people's ideals at work. It involves productive work opportunities and provides fair income, workplace safety and better prospects for family protection, personal development and social integration. It upholds people's expression of their concerns, freedom to organise and participate in decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

In the context of this paper, social protection is a key pillar of decent work agenda and it reduces inequality and increases resilience among workers and general citizens. Social protection policies developed through social dialogue help people and communities cope with the impact of pandemics and crises of various nature.

Effective social protection and decent work in general is also a driver of gender equality through, for instance promoting women workers' rights and their social security whilst at work, whether formally or informally. Generally, although women's share in the labour market has increased over years, they are however concentrated in sectors with serious decent work deficits and vulnerable employment such as agriculture, food, hotel and catering, retail sectors informal economy, amongst others. These sectors are largely dominated with non-standard forms of employment (casual, contract fixed terms) which suffer from social security deficits, including low pay lack of maternity benefits and social security as well as high prevalence of sexual harassment. In addition, women are concentrated in the public sector (teaching and health professions), which have over the recent past years been characterised by poverty wages and poor working environments. As such, the social protection is a key pillar of the Decent Work Agenda as well as a tool that is instrumental in promoting women workers' rights and promoting decent work.

During the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 2015, decent work and the four pillars of the decent work agenda: **employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue** became an integral part of the new 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda. Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda calls for the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work. These were the key anchors or areas of this paper. Social protection is also regarded as a developmental tool and underscored in the SDG Framework.



3. Global overview of social protection for workers



Source: zimbabweschildren.org

Social protection, or social security, is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection plays a key role in achieving sustainable development, promoting social justice and realising the human right to social security for all. Thus, social protection policies are vital elements of national development strategies to reduce poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle and support inclusive and sustainable growth by raising household incomes, fostering productivity and human development, boosting domestic demand, facilitating structural transformation of the economy and promoting decent work.

Despite significant progress in the extension of social protection in many parts of the world, the human right to social security is not yet a reality for most of the world's population. Only 45 percent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, while as many as 4 billion people are left unprotected. In 2019, the ILO estimates showed that only 29 percent of the global population are covered by comprehensive social security systems. In Africa, only 17.8 percent of the population receive at least one social protection cash benefit, with significant variation across countries. Social protection for women and men of working age has remained limited covering mostly those who are formally employed. Despite the positive developmental impacts of supporting childbearing women, only 41.1 percent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit, while 83 million new mothers remain uncovered.

Expenditure estimates show that worldwide only 3.2% of GDP is spent on public social protection to ensure income security for persons of working age, although they constitute a large proportion of the global population. As part of fiscal consolidation or austerity policies, number of countries are scaling down protection for men and women of working age, narrow-targeting benefits to the poor and leaving many persons unprotected, at a time when social protection is most needed.



4. The national context on social protection for workers

This section analyses social protection for workers in the formal and informal economy as provided for in the national legislative and policy frameworks. It further unpacks how macroeconomic policies have played a role in shaping the current state of social protection for workers in both the formal and the informal economy and the challenges thereof.

It is important to recognise and acknowledge why social protection is important for workers both in the formal and informal economy. Social security is important for the workers due to the following reasons:

- i. protects workers at their workplaces against unfair, hazardous and unhealthy working conditions.
- ii. protects workers in the event of sickness, unemployment, maternity, invalidity, death of a bread winner and old age (occupational safety and healthy schemes).
- iii. provides access to health services at the national level.
- iv. provides minimum income for people whose income are below the poverty line;
- v. provides support for families with children, vulnerable groups such as orphaned or abandoned children, single mothers, female-headed households, people living with HIV and AIDS, people living widows, people living with disability and people.

4.1 The legislative framework on social protection for workers in Zimbabwe

4.1.1 Social protection as a right in the Zimbabwe Constitution

The Constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates the right to social protection as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Social protection as a right in the Zimbabwe Constitution



4.1.2 The National Social Security Authority (NSSA) Schemes for formal workers

The NSSA has two important schemes for workers namely: The Pension and Other Benefits Scheme (POBS) and the Accident Prevention and Workers Compensation (APWC). The POBS cushions members and their dependants in the event of a worker retirement, invalidity or death. It covers every working Zimbabwean who has attained the age of 16 years and is under the age of 65 years, who is in any type of employment (permanent, seasonal, contract or temporary employment). The contribution rate is a 4.5% of the insurable earnings (employee) and a 4.5% from the employer, giving a total of 9% to be paid to the nearest NSSA office before the 1st of each month. The APWC scheme provides financial relief to employees and their families when a worker is injured or killed in a work-related accident or suffers from a work related disease or dies due to that particular occupational disease. The APWC also provides for rehabilitation services to workers who have been disabled due to a work-related injury or disease so that the worker can return to his or her former employment or otherwise prepare them for a useful and meaningful place in society. The schemes cover all workers formally employed in a profession, trade or occupation who are above the age of 16.

4.1.3 The National Social Security Authority (NSSA) Schemes for informal economy workers

The NSSA Act states that all the schemes under NSSA will not cover domestic workers and informal economy workers.

4.2 The Social Protection Policy Framework

4.2.1 The National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF)

Zimbabwe has a National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) consisting of 5 pillars (Table 1).

Table 1: National Social Protection Policy Framework Pillars

Pillar	Programmes
Social Assistance	Social cash transfers
	Public works programmes
	Fee waivers for basic services
	Pensions
	Accident Prevention and Workers Compensation (APWC)
Labour Market Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Job creation ✓ Skills training ✓ Job placement services ✓ Employment subsidies
Livelihood support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) ✓ Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP) ✓ Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Livelihoods Project ✓ Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) ✓ Enhancing Nutrition, Stepping Up Resilience and Enterprise (ENSURE) ✓ Amalima (Lets farm together) ✓ Rural Resilience Initiative in Zimbabwe (R4) ✓ Smallholder Farmer Initiative (SHF)
Social Support and Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Child protection services ✓ Probation services ✓ State services disability benefits

Given that most of the social protection schemes for workers fall under social insurance pillar in the NSPPF, this paper will therefore analyse the various social insurance schemes as they pertain to workers in the formal and informal economy.

4.3 The impact of the macroeconomic policies on social protection for workers

4.3.1 Government's national budget spending on social protection

The national budget is a key tool for informing and shaping the macroeconomic policy. To assess the effectiveness of the budget on social protection spending, it is critical to analyse the budget allocations to the ministry responsible for social protection. The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare is the ministry responsible for implementing social protection programmes at a national level. Table 2 shows the national budget allocations to the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

Table 2: Budgetary allocations (%) to the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and its sub-programmes (2019-21)

Year	2019	2020	2021
% Ministry allocation from national budget	4.4	3.4	1.6

Clearly the Ministry's percentage allocation has been declining over the years from 4.4% of total national budget allocation in 2019, down to 3.4% in 2020 and further down to 1.6% in 2021. This decline is at odds with the growing demand for social protection due to economic downturn over the past years worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Tellingly, social protection has not been prioritised by the government.

It is also worth noting that fund allocation to the Ministry for social protection are not directed to workers in the informal economy per se, but to the vulnerable population in the country. Thus, the informal economy workers continue to be marginalised not only from a legal perspective but from a macro policy perspective.

4.3.2 COVID-19 social protection response for workers in the formal economy

Whilst the overall job loss due to COVID-19 pandemic could not be ascertained, it is clear that the pandemic adversely affected jobs in both the formal economy. Workers in the formal economy either lost their jobs, incomes, experienced wage cuts and lost paid leave days during the lockdown and irregular business hours which had a knock-on effect on their contributions to NSSA social security schemes. Unlike other Governments, the Government of Zimbabwe did not introduce wage subsidies to cushion companies or job protection or job retention, thus, a significant number of workers were adversely affected. There was lack of transparency and accountability in the disbursement of the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Package to track how many companies benefited and how many companies were able to safeguard jobs and social security contributions due the stimulus package.

4.3.3 COVID-19 social protection response for workers in the informal economy

Given that the informal economy and its workers were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was expected that the government of Zimbabwe would come up with social safety nets to cushion informal economy workers from the negative impacts of the pandemic. In May 2020, the government announced the COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Stimulus package which included among others a ZWL \$500 million SMEs Fund. This was purely for business resuscitation for SMEs and not a safety net or grant for workers operating in the informal economy. As a result, there was a huge outcry from the representative organisations for the informal economy that there was lack of awareness of the funds and accessibility of the funds, their distribution and actual beneficiaries, and repayment modalities.



Source: Ignatius Banda.ipsnews.net

4.3.4 Social protection challenges emanating from macroeconomic policies

Low social security coverage: The 2019 Labour Force and Child Labour Survey revealed that only 2 percent of the population were receiving a monthly pension or some social security funds and only 7 percent of the population in Zimbabwe were members of a medical aid scheme. This leaves most of the population outside of the pension schemes and medical aid hence the majority of the population remains vulnerable to abject poverty. The low coverage is also attributable to the fact that the existing social protection schemes for workers are still focused on the formal economy and its workers yet, the economy has structurally shifted from formal employment to informal economy due to the deteriorating macroeconomic policies and policy inconsistencies that have shaped the Zimbabwean economy over the past years. The past macroeconomic policies have not helped to reindustrialise the economy to ensure more workers are employed in formal economy but rather increased the informal economy. As such the majority of the workers fall out of the existing social protection schemes because they are largely in the informal economy.

Social insurance coverage in Zimbabwe is mainly associated with formal employment, these is due to legislation that mostly recognises workers who are formally employed as contributors. These jobs are largely not accompanied by effective social security coverage, meaning huge social security gaps for workers. With more people in precarious employment following the COVID-19 impact on jobs and incomes, it means more workers fell out of the social security bracket, thus worsening the social security deficits. Due to poverty wages, these workers highlighted that they were not able to afford to join private insurance schemes, thus, most of these workers are unprotected workers and suffer from decent work deficits.

Precarious employment also has a female and youth dimension. The LSFLS for 2014 and 2019 showed that precarious employment was high among the youths (15-34 years), 67.6 percent cumulatively in 2014 and 62.5 percent in 2019. This means more youths are holding NSFE which are unstable, insecure and indecent. For 2019, the share of females in precarious employment was higher from the age of 24 years upwards. Such high prevalence of precarious employment escalates females (especially young females) to gender-based violence at the workplace such as sexual harassment and the lack of maternity protection which undermines full enjoyment of women workers' rights and decent work.

Non-remittance of NSSA obligations by employers: Due to the drop in capacity utilisation, and the volatile macroeconomic environment, which is not conducive for business operations, employers are claiming lack of financial capacity to keep pace with NSSA obligations of POBS (pensions) and the APWC (accident and worker's compensation). The macroeconomic policies have not been able to foster sustained increase in capacity utilisation. This challenge was reiterated by the ZCTU and various sectoral unions where most employers were not remitting the NSSA funds and yet they were deducting the funds from the workers' wages and salaries, meaning most employers were acting in bad faith. Responses from workers indicated that the majority of workers were getting shocked when after retirement or workplace injury or death or job loss they shockingly discover that their employer had not been remitting funds to NSSA.

Exclusion of some workers from NSSA schemes: NSSA schemes excludes domestic workers and informal economy workers from national social security schemes, yet these highly vulnerable workers. Such exclusion poses huge insecurities and deficits for workers in these sectors.

Economic policy inconsistencies and austerity measures resulting in erosion of value of pensions: Collapse of the economy over the past decade has rendered most occupational pension schemes and the social security scheme unviable, irrelevant, meaningless and unsustainable. The ZWL\$ denominated pensions still lag far behind the Food Poverty Line (FPL) and the Poverty Datum Line (PDL), thus creating a social crisis. The first wave of erosion of pension funds happened at the height of the economic crisis and hyperinflation in 2008.

The serious erosion of pensions and the persistent outcry from trade unions and workers on this erosion, necessitated the appointment of a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Conversion of Insurance and Pension Values from the Zimbabwe Dollar to the US Dollar. The inquiry covered a 20-year period from 1996 to 2015 covering the regulatory, financial and governance of 11 life insurance companies, nine funeral insurers, four independent pension administrators, 15 stand-alone pension funds, the National Social Security Authority (NSSA), the Government Pension Agency, and the Insurance and Pensions Commission (IPEC). However, since the conclusion of the Commission of Inquiry since 2017, up to date (2021) no concrete measures have been taken by the Government to redress the situation or implement the recommendations of the Commission, clearly indicating the lack of political will to redress the pension crisis.

The second wave of erosion of pensions happened in October 2018 following the economic austerity measures implemented under the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) (October 2018-December 2020) which limited the capacity of the Government to invest in social protection and social service delivery. Furthermore, the monetary policy changes implemented in this period which involved introduction of (i) the two-tier currency and the fiction of parity between FCA accounts for Nostro and RTGS funds; and, (ii) regressive Intermediated Money Transfer Tax (IMTT) of 2 percent tax on every mobile transaction seriously eroded social security benefits. These policy measures resulted in a sharp rise of inflation rose sharply from annual inflation of 4.8 percent in September 2018 to 353.3 percent by the following year September 2019, before reaching its climax in July 2020 at 837.5 percent. Resultantly, FPL and PDL were pushed high up at a time when wages, salaries and pensions remained stagnant, thus making the pension pay-out irrelevant and meaningless. Worse more, the pension pay-outs were subjected to the two percent IMTT thus, eroding the real value of the pensions.

The third wave of erosion of pensions funds was during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the country experienced a surge in prices (COVID-19-induced inflation). For instance, inflation soared since the national lockdown from 676.4 percent in March 2020 to 785.6 percent in May 2020, reaching a high of 837.5 percent in July 2020 before starting to decline to 401.7 percent in November 2020 to 161.91 percent in May 2021.

Late disbursement of pensions: Pensioners have over the past year complained on the late disbursement of pension funds. For instance, in 2020 a group of women pensioners demonstrated at the RBZ Office over the late disbursement of their pensions, clearly indicating a serious violation of basic human rights.

Lack of transparency and accountability of pension funds: there has been several reports on corruption cases at NSSA over misuse of pension funds. In 2019, NSSA forensic audit report tabled in Parliament exposed shocking corruption, fraud, criminal abuse of office and theft that saw the authority being prejudiced of over US\$175 million¹.



5. Programmes, initiatives and campaigns on decent work for the formal and informal sector workers

In order to attain decent work for all workers in the formal and informal economies, Zimbabwe has undertaken multiple strides, these include:

5.1 Gender equality and social protection for workers



6. Development of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP)

Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) have been established as the main vehicle for delivery of ILO support to countries. DWCPs have two basic objectives, these are to (a): promote decent work as a key component of national development strategies; and, (b) organise ILO knowledge, instruments, advocacy and cooperation at the service of tripartite constituents in a results-based framework to advance the Decent Work Agenda within the fields of comparative advantage of the Organisation.

Zimbabwe adopted the decent work agenda of the International Labour Organisation in 2005 and has implemented three generations of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) from 2005-2008, 2009- 2011 and 2012-2018. Over the years, the focus of the country's DWCP has been on growing the economy through sustainable enterprises and job creation for poverty alleviation, while upholding international labour standards. Following this, a series of reviews and consultations with the tripartite partners were conducted and agreed to have three priorities namely Employment Promotion, International Labour Standards and Social Protection. In addition to the three priorities, promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination, green economy, strengthening social dialogue, future of work, labour market information systems and disability are to be mainstreamed throughout the DWCP priorities. Table traces the achievements made by decent work country programmes from 2005-2018, in relation to promoting social protection in Zimbabwe.

The Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Zimbabwe 2019-2023 served as a framework to support Government of Zimbabwe to achieve its national development policy, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme, which aimed to ensure fiscal consolidation, economic stabilisation, and stimulation of growth and creation of employment. The DWCP also offered alternative policies that aim to promote a human-centered agenda for development.

¹ <https://www.herald.co.zw/inside-nssa-audit-report/>

² <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/departments-and-offices/program/dwcp/lang--en/index.htm>

Table 3: Achievements in promoting social protection in Zimbabwe through the DWCPs (2005-2018)

Programme period	Priority	Intended Outcome	Achievement/Progress
2005-2007/2008	Priority 2: Social Protection and Impact of HIV-AIDS at the workplace reduced	Outcome 2.3 Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS): the scheme was not implemented due to the financing mechanism that would see workers being further taxed to finance it. ii. Pensions: Capacity built and information on awareness programmes within the Ministry of Gender and Women Development were undertaken
2009-2011	Priority 2: Social Protection and HIV and AIDS at the workplace	Outcome 2.2: Maternity protection strengthened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Proposals were made in regards to the strengthening of maternity protection under the ongoing labour law reform programme. Labour law reform was not finalised in the period and is still in the process in 2021. ii. Legislative instruments (Labour Act, Public Service Act) are already in line with C183 as regards the duration of maternity leave iii. The issue under consideration was the setting up of
		Outcome 2.3: Improved health care for workers in the informal economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Feasibility study for the establishment of a health micro-insurance scheme in Zimbabwe: study yet to be conducted. ii. National Health Insurance Scheme proposal drafted and discussed in Parliament -Could not be implemented due to timing issues considering challenges for the existing national social security system arising from inflationary impact
2012-15 / 2016-17	Priority 4: Coverage of Social Protection Increased Through Mainstreaming Elements of the Social Protection Floor	Outcome 4.1: Increased coverage of social security systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increased social protection schemes, Maternity Protection Fund, National Health insurance Scheme (NHIS)- this was not achieved ii. Follow up on the implementation of the Zimbabwe/ South Africa MoU, and observance of the SADC Social Charter. -Bilateral consultations between South Africa and Zimbabwe under the MoU on Employment Labour facilitated on up scaling the initiative on promoting circular migration and protection of migrant workers through documented and mutually beneficial migration. iii. An information guide for Migrant Domestic Workers was developed and distributed for domestic workers in South Africa i. Labour Migration Policy finalised. -The Zimbabwe National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) finalised and submitted to Government for adoption. i. Buy-in of the NHIS and MPS studies and implementation plans- not achieved ii. Extended coverage and improved quality of social security schemes and programmes- not achieved

6.1 Formalisation Strategies

With the adoption in 2015 of the ILO R204 - Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, the Government of Zimbabwe in 2016, under the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development, drafted a Formalisation Concept and Strategy Paper. The Strategy failed to gain traction as it focused more on taxing workers in the informal economy and lack stakeholder input in its developed.

In 2021, the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Labour with the assistance of the ILO has embarked on a comprehensive and inclusive process to develop the National Formalisation Strategy Framework. The formalisation strategy will contain measures to promote decent work, gender equality in the informal economy including addressing gender-based violence especially against women in this economy.

6.2 Extension of Social Protection to Workers in the Informal Economy

Given that NSSA pension and benefit schemes exclude workers in the informal economy, the Government of Zimbabwe in 2018, enacted Statutory Instrument 50 of 2018, Social Security –Voluntary Schemes for the Informal Sector. This notice provided for the establishment by the Authority of the following three voluntary schemes for the informal sector: (1) Pension and Other Benefits, (2) Health Insurance and (3) Maternity Protection. Working with the ILO, NSSA is in the process of operationalising the statutory instrument. In 2020, NSSA embarked on a process towards the establishment of a universal social protection system by bringing informal economy workers into their schemes. However, the process was largely slow, exclusive, lacked political will from the Government and was narrow in focus (targeting selected informal sectors such as transport sector).

In terms of promoting safe workplaces for workers in the informal economy, in 2020, NSSA was supported by the ILO with the participation of the informal economy associations to undertake workplace inspection programmes targeting the informal economy. The programmes covered Chivhu, Chinhoyi and Bulawayo towns. The partnership aims to capacitate workers in the informal economy with requisite knowledge on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and decent shelters to work from. The COVID-19 response programme seeks to reduce the risk of infection by the workers and customers. The partnership with NSSA contributes to the UN joint programme on 'Safe markets' being implemented by the ILO with UNDP and UN Women, which seeks to empower vulnerable women marketers for recovery and resilience from socio-economic shocks, the impacts of COVID 19 . The pilot areas were a success in that it strengthened the working relationship and cohesion between the ILO, the Government and informal economy associations. Resources permitting, the programme should be up scaled for wider coverage especially in remote towns which were traditionally neglected by such services.

³ ILO R204 aims to:(a) facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, while respecting workers' fundamental rights and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods and entrepreneurship; (b) promote the creation, preservation and sustainability of enterprises and decent jobs in the formal economy and the coherence of macroeconomic, employment, social protection and other social policies; and (c) prevent the informalisation of formal economy jobs.

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/africa/countries-covered/zimbabwe/WCMS_773093/lang--en/index.htm

6.3 In-house initiatives by Informal Economy Worker Associations

Due to the absence of national schemes for workers in the informal economy, associations for workers in the informal economy have had to establish in-house initiatives to provide cover for their members. The Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA) noted that they had established initiatives to give access to credit to its members (through savings and credit schemes) and a funeral fund (members contribute to the fund when there is a bereavement).

These Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCOs) are an initiative from the Territories through the application of Mukando. They have seen members contributing between the range of US\$5.00 to US\$30.00. Due to COVID-19, the number of people participating in the schemes has dropped to 4,532 (60 percent being women) from a potential of 15,000. ZCIEA has registered a Cooperative, with the aim to expand these initiatives to benefit as its members by promoting the development of an investment vehicle. This will be specific to improve the livelihoods of the participating members and migrate them into decent living standards. The major challenge the organisation is facing is access to credit and funds to train its members on the initiatives (i.e. financial literacy, economic literacy, starting and running a productive business venture, among others). Another challenge is the volatile macroeconomic environment especially unresolved currency issue undermining viability and sustainability of these progressive initiatives.

6.4 Trade Union Initiatives



Source: sheleadsafrica.org

In 2009, the ZCTU and its affiliates undertook the Decisions for Life (DFL) Campaign for young women workers. The campaign was spearheaded by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in collaboration with Trade Union Federations from 14 different countries including Zimbabwe. The programme focused on young women aged between 18 and 35 years. Its main objective is to mobilise, educate and empower young women as they make choices at work and at home. In Zimbabwe, the campaign reached out to over 9,000 young working women and men. The DFL campaign focused on women workers coming together to fight for:

- Decent work and decent life;
- A healthy work /life balance;
- Developing their bargaining and leadership skills;
- Elimination of discrimination, sexual harassment or gender based violence; and,
- Strengthening of their voice and formulation of gender sensitive policies and legislation.

The campaign brought young women together to tackle issues or challenges that affect them which included: job-seeking/ career guidance, workplace rights, women's rights, sexual harassment, gender based violence, influencing national policy, family responsibilities and balancing personal and work lives. The campaign also had a mentoring component and promoted the participation of young workers in decision making, at work, in the trade union and even in the community. Sadly, the programme was discontinued in 2015, due to limited funding ⁶.

Other campaigns undertaken by trade unions focused on achieving a decent living wage, these included the:

- Wage Theft Campaign by ZCTU and its affiliates, started in 2017. The campaign saw trade unions rallying together to fight the scourge of wage theft. Although the intended results were on-course and achieved in most sectors (Hwange Colliery as the peak, which saw wives of miners getting involved), the COVID-19 pandemic dealt a huge blow to the work and jobs. The implementation of national lockdowns saw the re-emergence of wide-spread wage theft in all sectors;
- The USD-based Wage Campaign by ZCTU, its affiliates and public sector unions, started in 2020- the campaign is still on-going with recorded achievements in some sectors and workplaces. The campaign has also brought cohesion between the two main rival trade union federations (ZCTU and ZFTU) who rallied together to fight the Government over erosion of wages and salaries. The campaign is based on S.I 185 of 2020, that has enacted dual pricing for services and goods; and
- The Save our Education Campaign, targeting mostly rural education by Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union (ARTUZ), started 2020. The campaign has seen union leaders being harassed, arrested and tortured, but this has not deterred them in their endeavour to see teachers in the rural areas being recognised and afforded decent work.

⁵ https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/zim_dfl_forum_magazine_issue1_oct12.pdf

⁶ [Interview with Fiona Magaya, ZCTU Gender and Women Empowerment Specialist.](#)

6.5 Strategies responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing decent work deficits post-COVID-19

In responding to COVID-19, the ILO proposed a policy framework (Table 4), which takes into account the four pillars of decent work agenda to fight COVID-19 based on international labour standards as follows:

Table 4: ILO's Policy Framework based on the Four Pillars of Decent Work

Policy Area	Purpose	Strategies & Action
Protecting workers in the workplace	To minimise the direct effects of the coronavirus, in line with World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) measures, including social distancing, provision of protective equipment (especially for health and allied workers, volunteers and others in permanent contact with people), hygiene procedures and forms of work organisation (supported by information and awareness campaigns), and through social dialogue between employers and workers and their representatives, using for example OSH committees; • Prevent discrimination and exclusion relating to COVID-19; • Enhance universal access to collectively-financed health services for all, including uninsured workers and their families; • Expand access to collectively-financed paid sick leave, sickness benefits, and parental/care leave to ensure income security for those who are sick, quarantined or caring for children, elderly or other family members.
Stimulating the economy and labour	To stabilise economic activity through economic and employment policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active fiscal policies, particularly social protection measures, including targeted transfers and automatic stabilisers, such as unemployment benefits, along with public investment and tax relief for low-income earners and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); • Accommodative monetary policy (interest rate reductions, reserve rate relaxation, targeted liquidity provisions); • Targeted lending and financial support for specific sectors to protect enterprises, especially MSMEs. Investing in health systems is crucial in building resilience against COVID-19 but also offers an opportunity to create decent jobs
Supporting employment and incomes	For enterprises and workers negatively impacted by the indirect effects (factory closures, disruption to supply chains, travel bans, cancellation of public events, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social protection through existing schemes and/or ad-hoc payments for workers, including informal, casual, seasonal and migrant workers, and the self-employed (e.g. through access to unemployment benefits, social assistance, and public employment programmes); • Employment retention schemes, including short-time work arrangements/partial unemployment benefits and other time-bound support for enterprises, such as wage subsidies [and temporary cuts to payroll tax/exemptions from social security contributions], provision of paid leave and extension of existing entitlements to workers, and training leave, grants and related schemes; • Time-bound financial/tax relief and income smoothing measures to support business continuity, especially MSMEs and the self-employed (e.g. subsidies, credit mediation/refinancing to overcome liquidity constraints).
Relying on social dialogue for solutions	To fine-tune policy packages so that they best serve those most in need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the capacity and resilience of employers' and workers' organisations; • Strengthen the capacity of governments; • Strengthen social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour relations institutions and processes.

Some policy actions, such as social protection, not only support jobs and incomes but also protect workers in the workplace and are therefore cross-cutting. As noted from the four pillars of decent work, the response to COVID-19 should be diverse and all-encompassing, transcending health issues together all the key stakeholders in the country.



7. Recommendations: Strategies and policy advocacy areas

In extending social security to all workers, including workers in the informal economy, the following are recommended:

- a) **Inclusive legal coverage:** The legal framework has to be revisited to take account of the changing dynamics in the labour market, where the economy is highly informalised. Thus, initiatives by NSSA to include informal workers and the operationalisation of S.I.58 of 2018 are critical in ensuring that all workers are covered under the national social protection schemes. Informal economy workers with the support of their organisations, trade unions and likeminded civil society organisations have to demand full participation in the operationalisation of S.I.58 of 2018.
- b) **Benefits need to be aligned with priorities:** Workers and employers may be reluctant to contribute if they are not convinced that the benefits provided will meet their priority needs. It is therefore imperative for workers to be part of the policy/scheme design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation teams. This will enable workers in the informal economy to articulate their needs and tailor-make schemes that meets their needs. By including informal workers in the processes, it will also ensure that the costs and financing arrangements, are affordable and inline to the incomes of all the workers.
- c) **Increased workplace inspections:** Initiatives by the ILO, NSSA, informal economy associations on addressing OSHE issues in the informal economy are critical and need to be expanded. Overtime, NSSA and even the inspectorate department in the Ministry of Labour had noted that limited resources have hindered their attempts to cover informal workers. The pilot work by the ILO in Chinhoyi, Chivhu and Bulawayo need to be scaled-up to ensure that decency in the workplace for informal workers.
- d) **Speedy finalisation of the National Formalisation Strategy and implementation in an inclusive manner:** Workers in the informal economy have to demand full participation in the National Formalisation Strategy and its speedy finalisation. They also have to demand that the process be socially inclusive, gender and disability sensitive.
- e) **Wider dissemination of information and awareness on the role of social protection in poverty reduction and sustainable development:** A lack of information and awareness concerning social security is one of the factors that contribute to weak incentives to register for social security and limited political will. A few workers or organisations in the informal economy are aware of S.I.58 of 2018 and the status of implementation. Awareness-raising through education and training and campaigns by workers, their organisations and employers is a catalyst for the extension of social security to the informal economy. Accessibility of information is related to several factors such as simplicity, language and proximity. Information should be provided in a simple, straightforward and accessible language including vernacular languages that anyone can quickly and easily understand and act upon.
- f) **Further development and support of in-house programmes and schemes:** the research findings indicated noble in-house social protection schemes such as Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCOs), cooperatives, health schemes. However, these need to be supported and expanded for effective implementation. The Government needs to also create a conducive macroeconomic environment for viability and sustainability of these informal economy social protection schemes. The Government through the respective Ministry should support formalisation of these initiatives so that they can access formal credit for growth. Informal economy associations also need to strengthen their resource mobilisation programmes to educate and train its members on the initiatives (i.e. financial literacy, financial resilience, digital systems, economic literacy, starting and running a productive business venture, among others).

- g) **Prioritisation of social protection in the national budgets:** The research findings have shown how social protection is underfunded yet the demand of social protection is skyrocketing. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development needs to priorities increasing budgetary spending in line with international benchmarks. For example, the Social Policy for Africa (2008) states that African Governments must spent at least 4.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on social protection. The national budget must also support implementation of the Decent Work Country Programmes and the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) with a clear budget line with measurable targets and indicators.
- h) **Lack of representation and organisation:** It has been widely acknowledged that there is a direct link between the workers' organisation capacity and the ease of their inclusion in contributory schemes. The lack of organisation of some categories of workers makes them more marginalised and reduces their chances of being represented in open debates. Trade unions and organisations for workers in the informal economy need to be capacitated to be able to organise workers in the informal economy and advocate for decent work for all workers.

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