



**A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON CURRENT ECONOMIC
POLICIES: FOCUS ON FISCAL AND MONETARY
POLICY REVIEW STATEMENTS AND NEDPP**

Discussion Meeting Report

Crowne Plaza Monomotapa Hotel,
21 AUGUST 2006, 1200HRS TO 1430HRS

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1 Introduction

The discussion meeting on was held on the 21st of August at Crowne Plaza Monomotapa Hotel, Harare. The meeting was organized by E-Knowledge for Women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA) under the programme Southern African Network for Women Economists (SANWE) and was facilitated by Ms Phides Mazhawidza, a member of the Zimbabwe Network for Women Economists (ZINWE).

Mrs. Margaret Zunguze, Executive Director of EKOWISA, gave a brief background of what EKOWISA as an organization is doing. She said EKOWISA aims to generate, analyse, translate, repackage and disseminate locally relevant information and knowledge by promoting the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Mrs Margaret Zunguze also gave a brief overview of the SANWE programme. Southern African Network for Women Economists (SANWE) is a UNIFEM sponsored initiative mandated to carry out and promote gender sensitive research on micro/macroeconomics, train and re-tool women economists (capacity building) on gender issues, lobby for and advocate gender sensitive economic policies at national, regional and global level, promote networking and collaboration with women's organizations and other organizations focusing on gender and economists. She also explained EKOWISA's role in SANWE which is to provide an electronic platform to the SANWE network members where they can exchange ideas.

Mrs Phides Mazhawidza then briefly explained ZINWE's role as a local chapter of SANWE. She explained that ZINWE was formed in 2005 and its ongoing strategies are; to carry out mobilization of interested parties, carry our gender awareness workshops and carry out a gender review the National Economic Development Priority Programme, Monetary and Fiscal Policies and other economic blueprints

1.1 Attendance

The meeting was attended by journalits, representatives from civil society organizations, donor organizations and representatives from the Ministry of Economic Development. 35

people attended the workshop. The meeting was graced by the presence of the Governor of Matabeleland North province, Hon Thokozile Mathuthu, three female senators and three women parliamentarians including the vice chairperson of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Hon Thoko Khupe. The Mayoress of Marondera, Mrs Getrude Chimankire was also in attendance.

1.2 Workshop Objectives

The meeting's objectives were as follows:

- Include presentations on the economic policies by key persons from the relevant ministries
- Come up with gender assessment of the economic policies which can be recommended to policymakers
- Provide a platform for women economists to discuss and provide feedback to the policymakers
- Facilitate the interaction of women economists and other stakeholders- policy makers, private sector and civil society, and academia.

2 National Economic Development Priority Programme (NEDPP):An Overview and Gender Persepective- by Mr M. Dzinotizei, Principal Director, Ministry of Economic Development

Mr Dzinotizei, the Principal Director of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Economic Development gave an overview of the National Economic Development Priority Programme and provided a gender assessment of the policy. He began by highlighting the objectives of the NEDPP.

2.1 NEDPP Objectives

The specific objectives of NEDPP revolve around:

- the reduction of inflation,
- stabilization of the currency,
- ensuring food security,

- increasing output and productivity,
- generation of foreign exchange,
- enhancement of expenditure and revenue management,
- removal of price distortions and,
- effective policy co-ordination and implementation

In order to achieve these objectives it is important that investor confidence is restored, key infrastructure is rehabilitated and developed, both domestic and external debt is reduced to sustainable levels, a positive image of the country is restored and economic empowerment is enhanced.

In this regard, the Government and the Private Sector are systematically working together and interfacing to urgently address the economic challenges facing Zimbabwe. The NEDPP is therefore an action oriented and results based programme focusing on the following quick win strategies:

- Economic Stabilization and Inflation Reduction
- Foreign Currency Mobilization and Utilization
- Increased Agriculture Coordination , Adequate Supply of Inputs and Food Security
- Enhanced Savings and,
- Increased Investment Inflows

2.2 Taskforces under the NEDPP

Taskforces have been set up to implement the NEDPP. The taskforces comprise membership from both government and the private sector. Some of the taskforces are even headed by the President, Vice President Mujuru and the Chief Secretary of Cabinet. The following taskforces are implementing the action oriented programmes and strategies:

- Agriculture Coordination, Input Supply and Food Security
- Foreign Exhcnage Mobilization and Utilization
- Domestic and International Resources Mobilization

- Import Substitution and Value Addition
- SMEs Promotion and Distressed Companies Rehabilitation, and
- Human Skills Identification, Deployment and Retention
- Look East Promotion and Implementation of Programmes
- Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

2.3 Gender Perspectives on the NEDPP

Mr Dzinotizei admitted that the NEDPP is not gender explicit and encouraged gender experts to provide input to economic policy formulation. However while NEDPP is not necessarily gender explicit he highlighted the following:

- Economic growth will generally improve gender imbalances. Quote ‘ A rising tide lifts all boats’
- Sustainable economic growth and development is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to address gender issues effectively and sustainably
- Access to and affordability of social services i.e. health and education is critical for women
- Employment and wealth creation and generation essential for women’s empowerment.

3 A Gender Perspective on Current Economic Policies: Focus on Fiscal and Monetary Policy Review Statements and NEDPP- by Dr J. Chipika, Independent Consultant

Dr Chipika began by stressing key background issues in policymaking. She highlighted that:

- Policymakers do not purposefully set out to hurt men and women
- Negative impacts on women, men and youth are unintended outcomes due to errors of omission, error in design itself and errors in implementation
- Negative impacts on some groups can be minimized at formulation. There is need for policy evaluation at draft stage so aspects like gender mainstreaming are done at that stage

- Policies are not sacred, they need to be continually monitored and evaluated
- There is a general weak capacity on gender expertise in major government departments
- NEDPP, Fiscal and Monetary Policy are well integrated at document level, however there seems to be no synergy at implementation.
- The 3 policies fit well into the MDGs 2015 targets.

Dr Chipika explained that she was not out to criticize the policies but to evaluate their possible impacts on women.

3.1 Current Economic Context

Dr Chipika gave an overview of the current economic context using quotes from the policies:

NEDPP

“The country is in a state of economic crisis.....We cannot therefore continue with a ‘business as usual approach’.” par. 1 pp. 2.

MID-TERM FISCAL POLICY REVIEW

“Inflation remains our biggest challenge affecting savings and investment, undermining day-to-day business activity, as well as creating price instability in the conduct of ordinary transaction”. Par.5 pp. 3.

MONETARY POLICY REVIEW STATEMENT

“.....on the ground there is tremendous hardship among the majority of people; majority of workers and students alike; majority of women; the elderly and the frail cannot make ends meet on basics, let alone simple luxuries”. Par. 2.1 pp 3

“.....we are coming out of a serious dislocative land revolution whose consequences we shall endure for a while.....before we realise that taking the land was but only the first step; that it is production that counts at the end of the day”. Par 3.5 pp.5.

Vices weighing down the economy are indiscipline, corruption, speculation and bureaucratic inertia. pp.14.

“Zimbabwe has approximately 14 million people, all capable of being appointed Central Bank Governors tomorrow. We can therefore change governors for the next 14 million days.....”. Par. 9.1 pp 16.

3.1.1 Key Issues on Current Economic Context

Five key issues come out of the Fiscal, Monetary Policy Statements and the NEDPP. These are:

- There is an economic crisis which should be treated as an emergency!
- There are generalised hardships/POVERTY, with differential impact including gender differentiated impact.
- There was a land revolution now facing a production challenge.
- The “TIONS/Vices” - Inflation, corruption, speculation and bureaucratic inertia!
- Zimbabwe has a ‘capable’ human resource base of 14 million people (men and women).

However Dr Chipika lamented the silence on the HIV & AIDS pandemic in all three policies. HIV/AIDS pandemic affects all sectors of the economy.

3.2 Zimbabwe’s Macroeconomic Policy Framework

Dr Chipika explained the country’s macroeconomic policy framework and how the policies are linked together. The macroeconomic policy framework can be summarized as follows:

- *What are the country’s development priorities?*
NEDPP – Quick Win Priorities.
- *How will these development priorities be achieved (strategies & financing)?*
Fiscal Policy – Development finance & sources, budgets, revenue (taxation etc) & expenditure.

- *What are the monetary parameters essential to create a conducive economic environment?*

Monetary Policy – Money Supply, Inflation, Exchange Rate, Interest Rates etc

3.2.1 *Aim of Actors in the Development Process*

There are several actors engaged in the development process whose main aim is to create wealth to improve the welfare of the country's population (sustainable human development). The actors are:

- State/Government/Public Sector
- Private Sector (firms/companies & labour)
- Households
- Individuals
- Non-state Actors (NGOs, civil groupings, international organisations/donors etc).

Underlying all these actors are gender dimensions to development!! (WHO are the men and women in government, private sector, civil society, WHY?)

3.3 Tool of Analysis/Quick Inspection: 'Traffic Light Approach'

Dr Chipika used the Traffic Light Approach for a quick gender analysis of the Fiscal, Monetary Policy Review Statements and the NEDPP. The Traffic Light Approach is as follows:

- Green (G)
Opportunities and policies with positive impact on both men and women.
- Amber (A)
Watch out for signals of possible negative impact of policy on men and women.
- Red (R)
Policy impact which will clearly work against some gender groups.

At times the signals are not mutually exclusive.

3.3.1 *Gender Analysis of Key Policy Issues*

NEDPP Quick Win Strategies for Economic Stabilization

a. Food Security and Increased Agricultural Production

- 99-Year Land Leases as a confidence building measure.

(G/A) – Women can be dispossessed of land & disempowered for the next century.

- Performance and capacity based leases in A2 Commercial farms.

(G/A) – Can discriminate against women who are generally disadvantaged in the two criteria.

- Rental or temporal lease approach of idle farms to capable indigenous black farmers and corporate farmers. (G)
- Targetted food production – maize, wheat, soya beans, sorghum, sunflower, groundnuts, livestock, dairy. (G)
- Targetted export crops – tobacco, cotton, horticulture (flowers & paprika). (G/A) – need to watch out for trade off with food security and working conditions particularly for women.
- Decontrol farm output prices, intensify and extensify provision of agric. extension services. (G) – for majority of communal farmers who are women.

b. Enhanced Investment

- Attract FDI from the East.

(A) – need to be selective on what we are attracting.

- Improve Infrastructure. (G)
- Enhanced support to SMEs (SME Development Fund). (G??)

SME Development Fund

- ✓ Z\$ 16 trillion, 70% per annum, provincial wallets, through SEDCO and Banking Sector. (G/A)

Criteria for SMEs to be supported – Have to be:

- ✓ In Construction Industry,
- ✓ Engaged in specific foreign exchange generating projects,
- ✓ In agro-processing, with strong synergies with the Agrarian Reform Program,
- ✓ In Mining Sector Development,

(A/R) Women entrepreneurs largely out as well as most male owned SMEs.

c. Pricing

- ‘One-commodity-one-price’ concept in diesel, petrol, exchange rate, electricity tariffs, municipality tariffs and maize prices.

(G) – will remove unintended subsidies to the non-poor and significantly reduce speculative activities.

Monetary Policy Review Statement

d. ‘Shock Therapy’ Currency Reforms

In short the currency reforms seek to:

- War against speculation, inflation, abuse of concessional financing and cash hoarding, foreign exchange parallel market dealings etc.
- Make redundant, useless and obsolete all Zimbabwean bearer cheques illegally circulating in neighbouring countries.
- Make business transactions manageable.
- Between 1 Aug-21 Aug 2006, a new set of bearer cheques will be introduced to replace the entire family of bearer cheques currently in circulation.
- From Monday 21 Aug 2006, all current bearer cheques and other forms of old currency will be obsolete and valueless.
- 1st Aug to 21 Aug 2006 sees three zeros being taken off every old bearer cheque.
- Post the cut-off date, it will not be feasible to trade-in the old bearer cheques for the new ones at any bank, store, supermarket, service station or outlet.

A quick gender analysis shows that:

- G/A) – Rural communities whose majority are women had a lag in receiving information about the currency reforms.
- Possibility of rural assets such as cattle liquidated for school fees and agric. inputs and funds may fail to meet swap deadline to banks.
- Is there effective coverage of RBZ Swap Teams in rural areas?
- Abuse of border controls against cross-border traders who are mostly women.
- Most banks do not have user friendly products for the majority of our ordinary people particularly women who are already on the fringes of the formal economy.
- Most women’s enterprises are unregistered SMEs and they have difficulty in producing proof of source of income under current banking conditions.

3 Issues Highlighted during the Open Discussion

The following issues and questions were raised by the floor during open discussion

- People appreciated the gender analysis carried out by Dr Chipika as it was eye opening.
- There were calls for the environment to be included within the macroeconomic policy framework as it affects sustainability and poverty. However it was acknowledged that when poverty is reduced through economic policies, environmental sustainability is also achieved.
- The discussion meeting 's findings should be presented to the women parliamentary caucus so they can raise them in parliament
- There were concerns on the restrictive criteria of the SME development fund. Calls for serious lobbying and advocacy for it to be revised.
- Participants were encouraged to approach the Ministry of Economic Development to obtain the three policy documents- Fiscal, Monetary and NEDPP.
- People with disabilities are not sufficiently catered for by the policies
- Alternative strategies should be developed to increase capacity of women to participate in advanced SMEs and thus fit into the SME development fund criteria
- It is critical for this information discussed at the meeting to be disseminated to the appropriate authorities
- Women legislators were appreciative of this opportunity to discuss key economic policy issues and urge women economists and gender experts to discuss economic issues with them regularly.

4 Closing Remarks

Dr Naomi Wekwete (ZINWE) expressed her sincere gratitude to the presenters and all participants for managing to attend a fruitful meeting and urged all present to continue communicating and networking in order to empower women for economic development in Zimbabwe. She encouraged women economists to continue working together with women legislators and for more discussion forums to be convened in future. She expressed hope that Zimbabwe's women economist would soon table their recommendations to the appropriate government authorities. She urged women economists and women decision makers light the candle and not curse the darkness

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