



*Hearts starve as well as bodies –
give us bread but give us roses too!
Democratising Zimbabwe – an opportunity to shine!*

**A WOZA perspective on the state of democracy in Zimbabwe
February 2010**

Preamble

On 11th February 2009, a Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed between the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU PF) and the two formations of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) with the swearing in of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara. Its birth filled us with hope. The promises of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) signed on 15th September 2008 that led to the formation of the new government gave Zimbabweans an opportunity to shine:

- *“Concerned about the recent challenges that we have faced as a country and the multiple threats to the well-being of our people;*
- *Dedicating ourselves to putting an end to the polarization, divisions, conflict and intolerance that have characterized our country's politics;*
- *Determined to build a society free of violence, fear, intimidation, hate, patronage, corruption and founded on justice, fairness, openness, transparency, dignity and equality;”*

Talking Democracy

A month later, in March 2009, WOZA started discussions on what we think the building blocks of democracy are with over 11,000 members, urban and rural, through workshops and a booklet - *Building democracy with WOZA*. The objective was to build an appreciation within the hearts and minds of our members that Zimbabwe needs a democratic form of government committed to making sure that all the building blocks of democracy are in place for all citizens to enjoy social justice.

We identified the eight building blocks of basic democracy as:

1. Elections – people vote to choose representatives to govern them
2. Opposition – many political parties are welcome, expressing different ideas, views and policies
3. Civil rights – people have rights which protect them from abuse of powers by government
4. Rule of law – everyone must obey the law or be punished
5. Separation of powers – different roles of government are held by different people who act independently
6. Equality – everyone has the same rights and the same protection of the law
7. Transparency and accountability – government's actions are made public and they accept responsibility for any mistakes
8. Participation of the people – the people are able to make their views known and influence decisions of government

As 2009 closed, a further consultation of the state of our democracy was conducted through the lens of the power-sharing government. 4,016 people from Harare and Bulawayo gave their views in answer to the following questions:

- Did the power-sharing government bring more democracy or less?
- Since the only independent MP Jonathan Moyo has rejoined ZANU PF, who is the opposition in Zimbabwe?
- If an election is called before any electoral reform is conducted, will you feel confident that your vote will count?
- Do you feel that the parliament-led constitutional consultation process can bring a people-driven constitution?
- Has government spending become more transparent?
- Are civil rights more respected under this government?

- Has the rule of law improved or become worse?
- Has the power-sharing government made your personal life better, worse or nothing has changed?

In this report we hope to provide a snapshot of our community activists' views on the state of democracy in Zimbabwe one year after the GNU was formed.

A synopsis of the findings

Did the power sharing government bring more democracy or less?

Members felt that the power-sharing arrangement has decreased democratic space for the following reasons:

- There is not a genuine sharing of power amongst all three principals (Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara) and that too much legal and actual state power is still in the hands of one person – Robert Mugabe.
- The other two principals are not active enough at wresting power away from ZANU PF or in holding them accountable to fully implement the 15 September 2008 agreement. The agreement was not negotiated on the basis of mutual respect and so it has continued on in a disrespectful manner.
- No clear steps have been taken to restore the rule of law and respect of human rights.
- People's participation in decision-making has not been encouraged nor has it expanded.
- There has been no concrete opening up of the media. Hate speech against MDC supporters, human rights defenders and international actors remains and media coverage is still biased towards ZANU PF.
- People are still being forced to join ZANU PF or attend rallies against their will.
- There is now no opposition in parliament to exercise their role in being a check on the government's behaviour.

The general feeling amongst those polled was that the power-sharing government may have stabilised the economy but it has not brought democracy. Some people even stated that 'democracy' and the names 'Robert Mugabe' and 'ZANU PF' cannot be used in the same sentence. Members also expressed sadness that despite MDC's holding cabinet positions, they have not managed to reduce the harassment of their own members or to increase their member's freedoms of expression and assembly as well as their free movement. How therefore can they be expected to deliver more freedom for the people of Zimbabwe?

Since the only independent MP, Jonathan Moyo, has rejoined ZANU PF, who is the opposition in Zimbabwe?

Members were clear that there is currently no meaningful opposition in the country that can criticise the power-sharing government. The Simba Makoni-led Mavambo party has no seats in parliament and the ZAPU revival is currently confined to the distribution of t-shirts. Many people testified that people are forced to attend ZANU PF meetings and rallies under threat of violence or control of food aid or other support so support for that party is not truly in people hearts.

If an election is called before any electoral reform is conducted, will you feel confident that your vote will count?

- Many members felt that their votes will not count in any election whilst ZANU PF controls appointments to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). People will only feel confident to vote if there is a reformed and transparent process of appointing new commissioners.
- People expressed concern that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is biased. There was a demand that other countries also monitor the election so that people's voices will not be undermined. In addition to SADC, monitors and observers from other countries, like the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), should also monitor the elections.

- Many expressed no confidence in an election before the constitutional process is complete, as we need a new system of checks and balances if our votes are to be respected and counted.
- Some argued that voting is a risk worth taking as it could be the only way to choose the leaders we want. Additionally people will take the risk because they want to have a government made from one party that will rule and concentrate on the constitution-making process.
- Concern was expressed that as soon as dates are announced there will be a lot of violence and intimidation from the militia who are being regularly paid from the Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti's sweat.
- There cannot be a free and fair election until there is a free and fair voters' roll prepared by an independent commission and not ZANU PF civil servants.
- Many felt that until the President's powers are reduced, no one's vote will count properly.

Do you feel that the parliament-led constitutional consultation process can bring a people-driven constitution?

- People want to give their views and write their own constitution but worry that the current consultation process has too many loopholes that can be manipulated to change their views into those wanted by politicians.
- Because of the public bickering over resources, people are losing confidence in the select committee who seem to be working for their own benefit. There is a belief that the delays are a sign of foul play so that time is lost and people are forced to settle for the 'Kariba Draft' of the constitution (drafted and initialled by the three negotiators of the three main political parties).
- There needs to be debate about how the referendum will be organised so that people are confident that their vote will be fully exercised and respected.
- There is concern that the President may change or alter the draft if it includes clauses that he does not like.
- People in rural areas are already being told to vote for the 'Kariba Draft' by their Chiefs in Mashonaland. This already distorts the consultation process.
- There is sense that there is less democratic debate about the constitutional reform process because both formations of the MDC are discredited because they signed the 'Kariba Draft'.

Has government spending become more transparent?

- There is not yet any spirit of transparency. People are not told exactly how much money is being sourced and earned through revenue, for example the AIDS levy and the Chiyadzwa diamond fields, and what it is being spent on. Until there is transparency we will be concerned that embezzlement and corruption are still the order of the day and that funds are still being diverted for personal use of politicians. It will take time for Zimbabwe to build a structure of honest people.
- Most agree that they believe that public funds should go through the Ministry of Finance but the Minister must also be transparent about what he does with it. Mr Biti - where are the road repairs you promised when you introduced the tollgates?
- There is concern about how the youth militia are formally employed as civil servants and receive money through the Salary Service Bureau when their work is to beat and maim people in the name of the politics of ZANU PF.
- Mr Biti - as long as civil servants underpaid by government there will be corruption and demand for bribes from ordinary people.

Are civil rights more respected under this government?

- Civil rights are not respected under this power-sharing government. People are not able to exercise their rights freely and are still beaten and arrested for peacefully exercising their rights. They are also not encouraged to participate in civil life.
- The personal security situation for ordinary people is still very insecure – anyone can be arrested for anything and end up forced to pay a bribe or a fine without any clear wrongdoing.

- In many rural areas there is an increased presence of youth militia who have been deployed to threaten people and put pressure on them to vote for the 'Kariba Draft' and not participate in the constitutional outreach meetings. People are forced to attend ZANU PF meetings.
- Civic rights are still being violated because it is still difficult to get a birth certificate, identity card or a passport in the country.
- As long as state media and radio continue to spear hate messages people will not feel freedom of expression is respected. Bring back banned newspapers for a clear signal of open media space.
- Let us see a public transparent process of appointing commissioners for the human rights commission and less appointment of military men to these positions.

Has the rule of law improved or become worse?

Most people polled believe that the rule of law in the country has worsened for the following reasons:

- People are living in fear that the violence experienced in 2008 is resurfacing. People are reporting that in some parts of the country, militia bases were not closed.
- Police officers are not working professionally to reduce crime, which continues to increase. Police also apply the law selectively, openly solicit bribes from people and ignore violence from youth militia.
- Many government officials are known to be looting at the Chiyadzwa diamond fields, but no action is taken against them. In Zimbabwe, the rich can easily get away with crime because they can afford bribes.
- Court orders are ignored and law officers still follow political orders when making judgements. We want to see a judiciary operating professionally without political interference.
- The president is still above the law.
- Vendors are criminalized and are always on the run despite the need to revive the economy.
- Illegal land grabs from ZANU officials are continuing.

Has the power-sharing government made your personal life better, worse, or nothing has changed?

- There has been some change for those who are rich but for the poor nothing has changed. It has remained survival of the fittest. The dollarisation of the economy stabilised prices and the economy in general but the gap between rich and poor widened. The reason is simple - there was no increase in employment opportunities and genuine encouragement of informal trade. The few who are employed are paid too little to survive or to put back into the economy as disposable income.
- Some people are happy that there is food in shops. Unfortunately many people cannot afford to eat three meals a day or to pay high rents or service charges for unstable supply.
- Service delivery remains hijacked by too much political interference in local councils and so people continue to suffer flowing sewages, increased electricity and water cuts, and many homes going without services for weeks at a time.
- It is better because the hospitals may have some medication although it is not always affordable but we desperately need more professional and motivated staff in hospitals. There is still not dignity in death as mortuaries are still in a bad state.
- The education sector has collapsed and most parents cannot afford to pay teachers and all the school demands so drops-outs continue.
- The youth cannot dream of a better future for themselves because of unemployment and lack of education.

Conclusions

As mentioned earlier, the power-sharing government turns one year old as we finalise this report. The 'baby' is taking steps - learning how to walk. It has taken the first step - the economy is a bit more stable and food is on the shelves, with a quiet promise of jobs. WOZA, the mothers of the nation, would like to see steps toward a full democratisation of Zimbabwean systems as follows:

1. Elections – Before the referendum, we need to have confidence that a voter's roll will be transparently prepared and displayed for viewing. We need a truly independent electoral commission.
2. Opposition – we need to see democracy in action – a genuine welcoming of different political voices.
3. Civil rights – we are citizens with rights and must be allowed to enjoy all our rights without fear or harassment. We look forward to the passing of the bill amending POSA. We need to see the promised security sector reform with special attention on police reform because it is police who abuse our rights on a daily basis.
4. Rule of law – start to prosecute perpetrators of politically motivated violence urgently - everyone must obey the law or be punished.
5. Separation of powers – The presidential appointment of Tomana and Gono has resulted in a further mixing up of the functions of government. For judicial reform, Tomana and other political appointees in the Attorney General's office must go and be replaced by professional people who will balance the scales of our justice system.
6. Equality – we are writing this into our new constitution. Please Parliamentary Select Committee do not betray this ideal by cheating us when we give you our views.
7. Transparency and accountability – As long as we have a politically partisan Reserve Bank governor, there will be no investor confidence, jobs will not be available and workers receive a living wage - therefore Gono must go. Minister Tendai Biti, we need more transparency and accountability from you. Studying your strategy from the trenches, it looks like you want to squeeze money out of poor people's pockets to fund the recovery. You need to do better to cushion the poor! You must stop the police from criminalizing informal traders. Please don't forget about the children's education, they are our future.
8. Participation of the people – our report is called *hearts starve as well as bodies – give us bread but give us roses too!* We want our 'rose', which is our own constitution! Allow a genuine people-driven process for the constitutional consultation for our full participation. Disband militia camps and let our children come home. The police must stop arresting people without good reason; police officers are crucial to allowing people to feel free. To the three principals, you promised us a "*society free of violence, fear, intimidation, hate, patronage, corruption and founded on justice, fairness, openness, transparency, dignity and equality.*" Now it is time to deliver on what you promised.

ZIMBABWEANS lets us ALL participate in democratizing our country: people must participate and politicians must practice it – this is our opportunity to shine!