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(A)  
Academic article

## Public opinion:

### What people say about the GPA

*Jabusile Shumba and Anyway Chingwete<sup>1</sup>*

In September 2008, the leaders of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two wings of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T and MDC-M) 'set aside' their political differences and signed a landmark power sharing agreement known as the Global Political Agreement (GPA). The GPA was the culmination of protracted negotiations, mediated by South Africa's ex-president Thabo Mbeki on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), to find a legitimate and workable way out of the deadlock following the inconclusive March presidential poll and the violence-marred run-off in June. In Article II of the GPA, the Parties agreed 'to work together to create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally acceptable solution to the Zimbabwe situation and implement the agreement with the aims of resolving once and for all the current political and economic situations and chart a new political direction for the country'. A key component of the GPA was the formation of an Inclusive Government (IG), which finally came into existence in February 2009.



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*During the first six months of the IG, the country made incredible progress in terms of economic reforms and reducing political violence.*

Two years after the signing of the GPA, the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe (IDAZIM) conducted an opinion poll<sup>2</sup> on public attitudes to the IG. In this paper, we discuss the performance of the government based on the survey's findings and on supporting evidence from secondary sources. We recognise the limitations of space and time and for that reason, we have restricted ourselves to the public's opinion of economic, political and constitutional reform; elections; state institutions; service delivery; and, transitional justice since they are some of the key imperatives agreed in the GPA.

## ZIMBABWE'S TRANSITION UNDER THE INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT

With the signing of the GPA and subsequent inauguration of the IG a political transition began in Zimbabwe. More than two years into that transition, Zimbabweans have experienced both progression and regression on the political and economic fronts. During the first six months of the IG, the country made incredible progress in terms of economic reforms and reducing political violence. Hope and considerable enthusiasm were generated among Zimbabweans but also across the region and internationally. Opinion surveys conducted soon after the IG was formed confirmed that there was robust public support for the coalition government and that Zimbabweans had great expectations about their future. In a survey conducted by the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) between March and early April 2009<sup>3</sup>, a whopping 80 percent of Zimbabweans approved of the formation of the IG, while only 14 percent disapproved and 5 percent were neutral. In May 2009<sup>4</sup>, 66 percent of Zimbabweans were agreeable to the sentiment that 'creating a coalition government in Zimbabwe was the best way forward' against 26 percent who felt that the coalition government was an ineffective way of resolving the crisis. This majority support for the IG was an expression of hope for the future – for an end to protracted economic decline, for a return to political stability and for improved delivery of key social services. Approximately two years into the life of the coalition government, the IDAZIM survey found that about 70 percent

of Zimbabweans still expressed satisfaction with the performance of the IG, while 25 percent felt the government had performed badly or very badly<sup>5</sup>.

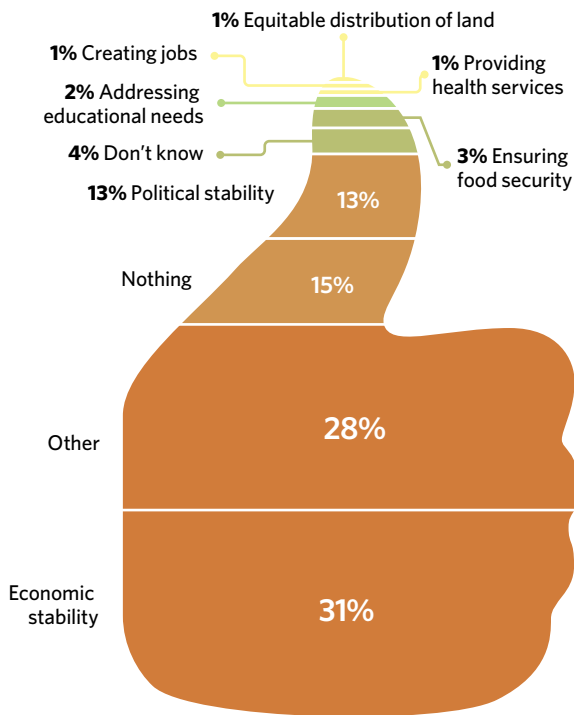
### Overall how would you judge the performance of the Inclusive Government so far?

	OVERALL
Performed very well	8
Performed well	62
Performed badly	18
Performed very badly	7
Don't know	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

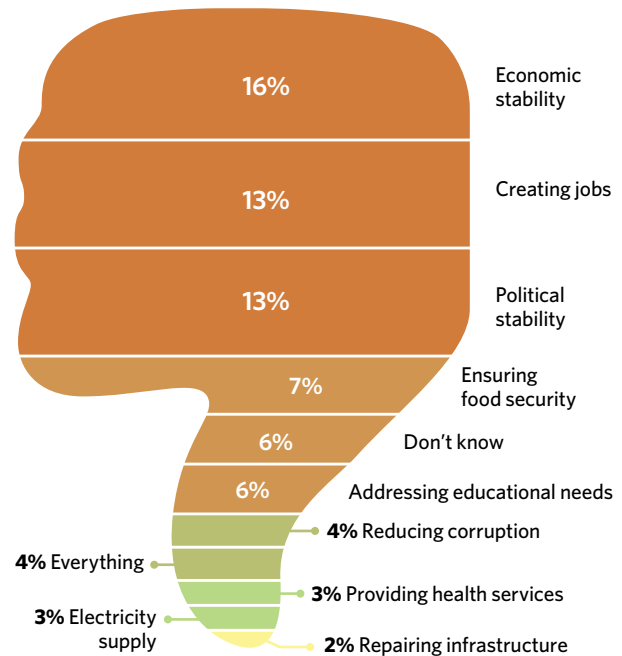
Notably, inflation has been effectively contained following the adoption of the multi-currency regime, while food and other basic commodities are back on the shelves – although they are a bit more expensive than before. The establishment of important institutions such as the Media Commission, which has licensed a few independent newspapers, and the Human Rights Commission as well as the appointment of new commissioners to the Electoral Commission are a few of the important milestones on the political front. With the constitution making process underway, demilitarisation of key state institutions remains the missing link towards a smooth democratic transition.

However, the government still has a long way to go in fully resolving deep political divisions, restoring economic growth, creating employment, ensuring food security and fulfilling basic social service responsibilities. In addition, the government has yet to be fully embraced by the international community since some authoritarian features still remain. Meanwhile, ongoing violence, abuses and farm invasions continue to generate questions about Zimbabwe's commitment to upholding human and property rights as well as agreements entered into with other countries.

Data from the IDAZIM survey shows that economic stabilisation was regarded as the IG's biggest achievement according to the people polled, who highlighted major



**What has been the Inclusive Government's greatest achievement since assuming office?**



**What has been the Inclusive Government's greatest failure since assuming office?**

issues such as the availability of goods and services, dollarization and the taming of inflation. Ironically, the government's greatest achievement was also cited at its greatest failure – a paradox that is probably due to people's higher expectations when it comes to the economy. Other important deliverables like service provision, employment creation, food security and health hinge upon the economy. It is plausible to say that people's attitudes suggest that while there is appreciation for what the government has done to stabilise the economy, much more needs to be done to ensure real economic recovery. This explains the apparently paradoxical public perceptions in the poll – successful stabilisation but few signs of recovery.

### ECONOMIC STABILISATION AND GROWTH

In response to poor and declining socio-economic indicators, the IG's most herculean task was to stabilise the national economy and stimulate economic growth. Article 3 1(a) of the GPA commits the signatories to pursue the goal of economic recovery and the parties did agree to work together to produce a comprehensive programme to resuscitate Zimbabwe's battered economy. With this aim in mind, the IG implemented

a number of measures to turn the economy around under the auspices of the Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP) – an emergency macro-economic policy stabilisation programme from March–December 2009 that was designed to lay a solid foundation for a more comprehensive reform programme. STREP's major achievements included the restoration of civil service salaries; reduction of duty to zero and extension of the zero rate to the import of basic goods; institutional reforms of the Reserve Bank; strengthening of public finances through the Public Finance Management Bill; and, the adoption of a results-based budgeting regime. In response to the hyperinflationary environment, the IG permitted the use of multiple currencies for all monetary exchange, which saw inflation tamed to the point where it remained in single digits for the whole of 2010. The country's economy also grew in 2009 and 2010 – after a decade of precipitous decline. However, non implementation of key components of the GPA and policy inconsistencies continued to affect the investment climate, while poor performance in relation to lines of credit impacted on the fiscal capacity of the government to achieve STREP's socio-economic targets.

**What are the three most serious problem facing the country that the Inclusive Government should address?**

	OVERALL
Unemployment	16
Lack of agricultural inputs	16
Unaffordable basic commodities	11
Poverty / destitution	10
Education	7
Wages and salaries	6
Water shortages	5
Use of multiple currencies	5
Energy shortages	4
Health e.g. shortage of drugs	4
Transport problems	3
Political violence	3
Housing problems	2
Human rights violations	2
Corruption	2
High rates and taxes	1
HIV/AIDS	1
Crime	1
The Inclusive Government	1
Don't know	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

In the survey, 16 percent mentioned unemployment and lack of agricultural inputs as the most serious problems facing the country, while 11 percent complained about unaffordable basic commodities and 10 percent highlighted poverty and destitution. Formal unemployment is currently estimated at 94 percent due to industry undercapitalisation and represents a major economic challenge for the government<sup>6</sup>. Despite the stable economic environment, goods and services remain out of reach for many Zimbabweans, particularly poor, rural families. Twelve percent of rural respondents claimed that unaffordable basic commodities were the most serious problem facing the nation – more than the nine percent of urban dwellers who felt the same way.

In 2007, parliament passed the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, which mandates all companies with investments in Zimbabwe to dispose of 51 percent of their interests to locals. The indigenisation programme, which was formally introduced in 2010, has been met with criticism by many analysts for its potentially negative impact on foreign investment. However, the survey also showed that 55 percent of people did not believe that the policy would promote black economic empowerment – as opposed to 41 percent who thought it would.



*In the previous question, you said that the indigenisation regulations would fail to promote black economic empowerment. Why do you think that?*

Over half of those who did not believe the regulations would promote broad black economic empowerment felt that the policy would only benefit the ruling elite, while more than a quarter thought that it would succumb to corruption. The major challenge for the indigenisation programme – and the reason for the widespread criticism of it – is that there is historic mistrust of the government’s capacity to implement redistributive policies in a transparent manner. In addition, at a time when the country is battling undercapitalisation and massive unemployment, indigenisation may not be the best option.

## CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

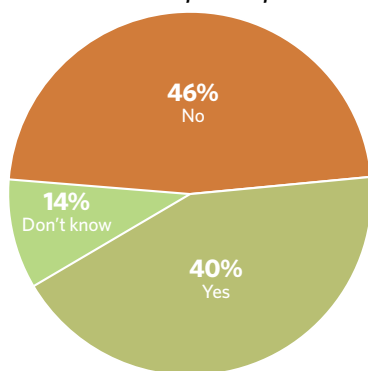
The GPA recognises that Zimbabwe needs to address not only economic concerns, but also issues relating to the rule of law, a new people-driven constitution and entrenched property rights. Article 6 of the GPA defines the framework for a new constitution drafting process and commits the IG to producing a new constitution. Article 6 also acknowledges that it ‘is the fundamental right and duty of the Zimbabwean people to make a constitution by themselves and for themselves’. A constitutional process is generally characterized by four phases – the preparatory phase, the public consultation phase, the drafting phase (the stage that Zimbabwe’s current process has reached) and the ratification phase, when the constitution is voted for in a referendum.

In April 2009, the IG established a twenty-five member Parliamentary Constitutional Committee to draw up

the framework, and make recommendations, for a new Zimbabwean constitution. The committee comprises legislators from ZANU-PF and the two MDC groups. Afterwards, outreach teams were despatched across the ten provinces to capture Zimbabweans' views on the content of the new constitution. While approving this move towards constitutionalism, there was still some concern about how individual views would be captured, with some groups calling for independent bodies such as churches and NGOs to lead the process.

The process itself was characterised by reports of political violence and intimidation, which violated the principle of free citizen participation. ZZZICOMP reports (August 2010) highlighted orchestrated violence and coaching strategies, with people being corralled into following a party political line and programmed to speak within defined parameters – all backed up with threats of violence. Despite these concerns, 53 percent of Zimbabweans were happy with the current process, while 39 percent disapproved.

*Do you think that the constitution making process will be conducted in a free and fair manner to the satisfaction of most Zimbabweans?*



Interestingly, despite a majority being happy with the process, only 40 percent of people felt that it would be free and fair, while 46 percent thought it would not be conducted in a manner that was satisfactory for all Zimbabweans.

*If you are not happy with the constitution-making process, what are your concerns?*

	OVERALL
The process is not transparent	36
People were forced to comply with 'Operation Handitauri'	23
The final document may not reflect people's opinions	22
People were afraid to voice their personal opinions	16
The process will fail if there is a 'No' vote in the referendum	1
Other	1
Don't know	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

Those who were pessimistic about the process cited four main problems – a lack of transparency, being forced to comply with 'Operation Handitauri/I will not speak out', the likelihood that the final document would not reflect people's wishes and people's fear of speaking out. Overall, the government failed to effectively lead the reform process and hopes that it would be a genuinely people-driven and democratic process have been shattered. Even so, 79 percent of Zimbabweans agreed that it was the duty of the IG to ensure public participation in the constitution making process. The hope now is that a renewed democratic constitutional process can be spearheaded by the IG working with civil society and churches.

## TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: NATIONAL HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

National healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe is linked to transitional justice. The International Centre for Justice defines transitional justice as a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights. It seeks recognition for victims and to promote possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy. Transitional justice is not a special form of justice but justice adapted to societies transforming themselves after a period of pervasive human rights abuses. This approach emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, mainly in response to political changes in Latin America and Eastern Europe and to demands in both these regions for justice. At the time, human rights activists and others wanted to address the systematic abuses by former regimes but without endangering the political transformations that were underway. Since these changes were popularly called 'transitions to democracy', people began calling this new multi-disciplinary field 'transitional justice'.

To confront the legacy of past human rights abuses with the motive of creating a more just and democratic nation, the importance of transitional justice cannot be overstated. Indeed, as indicated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The preference for doing nothing is no longer an option"<sup>7</sup>.

Under Article 7.1 of the GPA, the Parties agreed to consider the creation of a body to properly advise on what mechanisms might be necessary and practicable to achieve national healing, cohesion and unity in respect of victims of pre and post independence political conflicts. The result was the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation.

**In your opinion, for whose benefit was the Organ on National Healing created?**

	OVERALL
The population of Zimbabwe as a whole	49
The victims of political crimes	25
The perpetrators of political crimes	12
Both perpetrators and victims	7
Don't know	5
Other	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

While 49 percent of people felt that the Organ was created for the benefit of all Zimbabweans, it is interesting to note that a quarter felt it was created specifically to benefit the victims of political crimes and 12 percent thought it was set up solely to help the perpetrators of those crimes.

While gross human rights violations were committed during the colonial era, in the early 1980s, and in the 2000s during the fast track land reform programme, Operation Murambatsvina in 2005<sup>8</sup> and repeated bouts of election violence, more than half of those surveyed (55%) supported a transitional justice process that focused on the years since 2000 – with just under a quarter (23%) preferring the period from independence to the present day and under one-in-ten (9%) opting for the period from the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 to now. Provincially,

interesting disparities exist. A clear majority in six provinces opted for 2000 onwards as the period to be covered by ‘national healing’, while people in Bulawayo and Midlands were split. However, inhabitants of the two Matabeleland provinces favoured a longer period, starting with either (UDI) in 1965 or at independence in 1980.

**What should be the basis for national healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe?**

	OVERALL
Truth telling and forgiveness	34
Justice	22
Reparation, i.e. compensation	19
Criminal prosecution	15
Don't know	9
Institutional reform and memorialisation	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

As for what would provide the best method of driving the process of national healing, respondents were split between truth telling and forgiveness, reparations, justice and criminal prosecutions. However, most respondents (62%) believed that all those involved in political violence should be held to account, while a quarter felt that accountability should be confined to ‘those who planned and supervised violence’. In terms of who should lead the transitional justice process, a plurality of 44 percent answered that the govern-

	UDI TO PRESENT %	1980-2010 %	2000-2010 %
Harare	10	22	56
Bulawayo	18	25	32
Midlands	15	33	38
Masvingo	4	18	76
Manicaland	7	17	63
Mashonaland East	7	18	65
Mashonaland West	4	13	77
Mashonaland Central	2	18	71
Matabeleland North	21	47	15
Matabeleland South	17	42	19

*With regard to the process of reconciliation, what period should it cover?*

ment should spearhead it – well ahead of the support for churches, NGOs, political parties and traditional leaders.

**Who do you think should spearhead the reconciliation process?**

	OVERALL
Government	44
Churches	18
Non-Governmental Organisations	12
Political parties	8
Traditional leaders	6
Don't know	5
President	2
Other (specify)	2
Judiciary	1
Prime Minister	1
Other Countries	1
Organ on national healing	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

However, not much has been done by the Organ in driving the process of national healing and reconciliation forward. Civil society has done remarkable work in uncovering the public's preferences on this decisive matter but this critical information has so far not been used to help further the healing process.

**ELECTORAL REFORMS AND FUTURE POLLS**

There have been numerous calls for electoral reform in Zimbabwe, primarily from opposition parties, independent analysts and civil society organisations. These calls intensified after the domestic and international outcry following the country's hotly disputed 2008 elections. In July 2010, Justice and Legal Affairs Minister, Patrick Chinamasa, proposed sweeping amendments to the Electoral Act. The parties agreed to amend the Electoral Act so that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is obliged to declare presidential election results not more than five days after voting day. The parties consented to proposals that ZEC be empowered to summon candidates, election agents or parties accused of engaging in political violence. Under the proposed amendments, ZEC will also be empowered to warn candidates, election agents or parties implicated in acts of political violence and to set up a special court at magistrates' level to try such cases. Under the amendments, the Attorney-General will set up a special unit in his office dedicated to prosecuting cases of political violence committed during elections. The parties agreed that upon conviction by special courts, the court could make a special order banning candidates from further participation in the election process.

While the parties agreed on a number of reforms, a number of key issues were not taken into account, including executive – rather than ZEC – control over the election dates even though the president is a participant in the polls. Violence has been a significant issue in Zimbabwean elections and while the electoral act makes provisions for various types of offences – such as intimidation, preventing political parties and candidates from campaigning close to the polling station, undue influence and bribery to mention a few – it would have been preferable to include these important aspects in an official code of conduct for political parties and candidates. It seems that these reforms were agreed to on the basis of the existence of the rule of law in Zimbabwe. But in a country like Zimbabwe, where there is selective application of the law and where citizens do not have confidence in the impartiality of the police, issues to do with politically-motivated violence need to be seriously addressed through a code of conduct for political parties. More importantly, the independence of the ZEC is not addressed in the proposed reforms yet it is fundamental to the organisation of free and fair elections.

The majority of Zimbabweans expressed little confidence in the electoral systems and the current political environment, with 52 percent claiming that prevailing conditions would not allow free and fair polls – due to political violence and the manipulation of electoral and state institutions. Indeed, 53 percent of people felt that the ZEC lacked the capacity to run a free and fair election. Unsurprisingly, there is a large degree of voter fatigue, with 24 percent of the respondents admitting that they were not registered to vote.

**If you are not registered to vote, why not?**

	OVERALL
Have no identity documents	47
Not interested in voting/lost confidence in elections	25
Do not know where to register	9
Was below 18 years	7
Have no proof of residence	4
Was prevented from registering by local leadership	4
Was outside the country	3
Other (specify)	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

But Zimbabweans are still aware of how crucial the next elections will be and are divided as to when they should be held – although a majority would like them within the next two years. Interestingly, despite the importance of the polls, a tenth of those surveyed said that they were no longer interested in elections.

### How soon would you want the next elections in Zimbabwe?

	OVERALL
Within the next 6 months	30
Within the next 6-23 months	21
After 3-5 years	11
No longer interested in elections	10
Don't know	10
2-3 years	9
Soon after the new constitution is enacted	6
Anytime	2
6-10 years	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

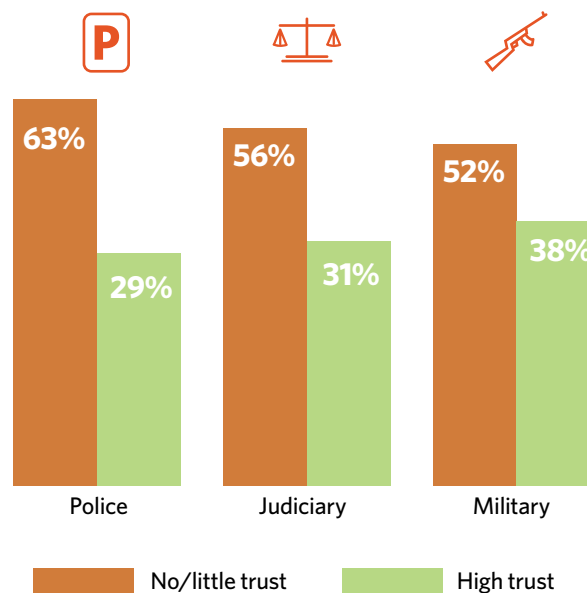
Although the reforms are significant, they have failed to resolve the fundamental and structural problems that need to be addressed in order to restore the integrity of the ballot in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the reforms did not address issues to do with media plurality or equitable access to the media for political parties during election time, which has been a contentious issue due to biased reporting. There is also a need to reform presidential powers in relation to electoral laws as the president is a candidate in the very elections that he devises regulations for. The draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) have curbed freedom of association and speech, which are critical components of a democratic election, and the repeal of these acts is critical to provide the space for genuine elections.

In addition, the independence and autonomy of ZEC is necessary for running credible elections. De-politicisation of electoral governance can only be achieved by the establishment of an independent electoral management body, which must be able to level the political playing field and ensure that political actors comply with the law. Independence does not mean total disconnection from government but that as a state institution, the body remains accountable to the state and public through parliament. The fact that ZEC's functions are to a large extent subject to ministerial approval limits the operational independence of ZEC.

### REFORM OF KEY STATE INSTITUTIONS

The formation of the IG provided an opportunity to consider fundamental reforms related to the provision of security and justice to the people of Zimbabwe. The key state institutions – namely the Zimbabwe National Army, the Judiciary and the Zimbabwe Republic Police – have been widely blamed for meddling in politics and

adopting a partisan approach in the discharge of their duties. Article XIII (1) of the GPA says that 'all state organs and institutions do not belong to any political party and should be impartial in the discharge of their duties'. More than two years after the formation of the coalition government, little if anything has been achieved in the reform of these critical organs of state, which explains the public's lack of confidence in them. A clear majority of the surveyed respondents has little or no trust in the police force (63%), judiciary (56%) and the military (52%) – and even more resounding majorities were opposed to a politically active judiciary (81%) and military (79%).



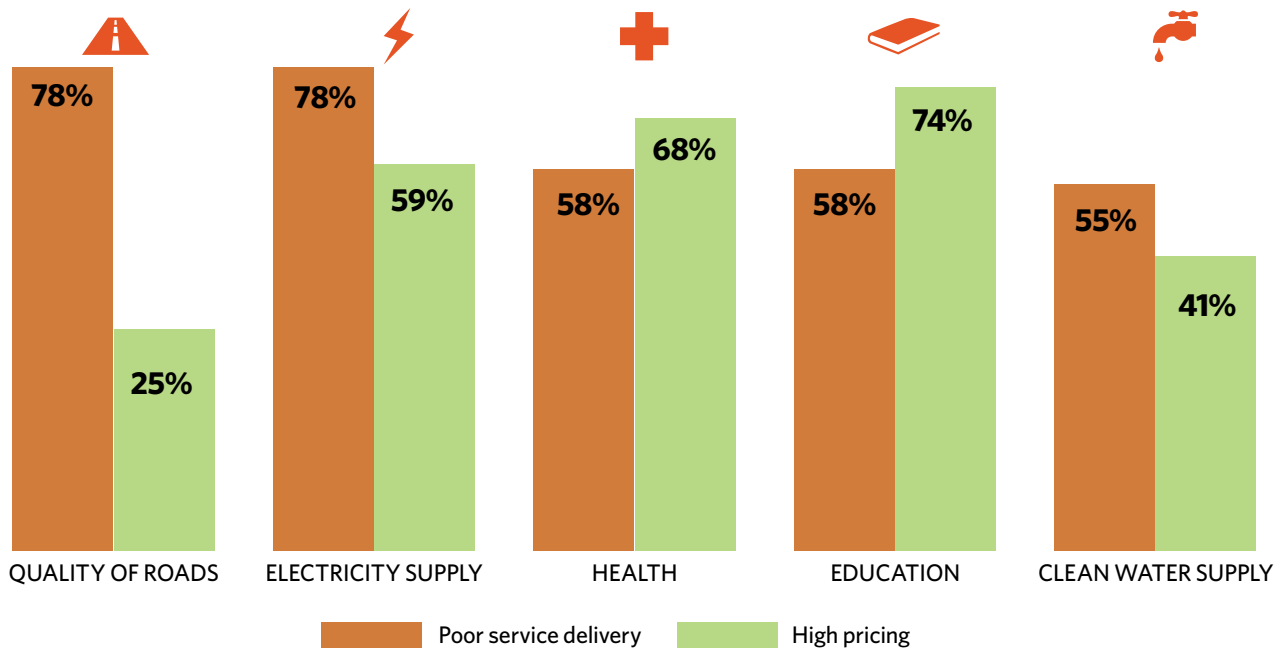
Over the past ten years, the Zimbabwean security and justice sectors have increasingly come under the spotlight for being unduly politicised and partisan, and for infringing on citizens' human rights. Hendriks and Hutton (2009) argue that the nature of the Zimbabwean security sector is defined by the inter-play between the colonial institutional heritage, the liberation culture that gave birth to Zimbabwe and threat perceptions that emerge. This translated into the development of security structures at the core of state power, which were assigned wide powers and were subject to little oversight or accountability (Hendriks and Hutton, 2009). Security sector reform is thus pivotal to the success of democratic transition in Zimbabwe.

### SERVICE DELIVERY

Service delivery is crucial to the welfare of a country's citizens. In Zimbabwe, service delivery crumbled over the past years due to the meltdown of the economy. The



*Most of the respondents were unhappy about the government's response in relation to service delivery.*



**A mismatch: service delivery and charges**

formation of the IG was viewed with relief – and hope that it would be able to deal with these challenges. However, confirming earlier findings, most of the respondents were unhappy about the government's response in relation to service delivery. A clear majority criticised the IG's performance on a whole host of issues from the quality of the road network to health and education services to electricity provision and water supplies. What's more – more than half the respondents also claimed that the prices charged for most of these key services were too high (although there was less criticism of water and toll fees) so that most people feel they are paying too much for services that offer them too little.

Given the severe fiscal constraints, there is a need for the government through its various arms and structures to come up with more innovative ways of funding service delivery. The process requires total commitment on the part of central government but also progressive thinking on the part of all stakeholders – the private sector, non-governmental organisations, elected officials in local government, parliament, the executive staff and last but not least, ordinary citizens who bear the brunt of poor delivery on a day-to-day basis.

## CONCLUSION

Zimbabweans remain optimistic even though there has been a decline in confidence in the government based on the experiences of the last two years. Despite the notable strides made by the IG in stabilising the economy and reducing political violence, a number of new policy measures are required in order to address unemployment, unaffordable basic commodities and the lack of available agricultural inputs. On the political front, the reform of key state institutions, such as the military, the police force and the judiciary, are critical milestones for the restoration of the rule of law and the achievement of a democratic transition that are nowhere near being accomplished. Opening up the media, promoting freedom of speech and association and putting an end to all acts of political violence, arbitrary arrests and land invasions are also critical components of a democratic society that have only been partially addressed – if at all.

The IG should speedily implement the provisions of the GPA, without which this marriage of convenience will eventually end in a bitter divorce – and Zimbabwe could slip back into the political conflict and economic crisis of 2008. No one wants to see a return to those days so it essential that all parties in the IG put their differences aside and work together to ensure implementation of all the provisions of the GPA – for the benefit of Zimbabwe and its people. ○

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### Endnotes

1. The authors write in their independent capacities.
2. The survey was national in outlook and conducted across all ten provinces in Zimbabwe from 7-19 November 2010. The survey involved a sample size of 1200 Zimbabweans aged 18 years and above. A random selection method with Probability Proportionate to Population Size was applied at each stage of sampling to ensure equal representation of respondents. Overall, the achieved sample size of 1200, gives a margin of error of +/-3% at the 95% confidence level.
3. Survey on Zimbabwe Economy and People's Survival Strategies, conducted by the Mass Public Opinion Institute.
4. Afrobarometer Briefing Paper no. 85, The Public Mood on Zimbabwe's Inclusive Government.
5. IDAZIM survey on public attitudes to the GPA and political transition
6. [http://ochaonline.un.org/CERF allocates \\$5 million for protracted relief and recovery](http://ochaonline.un.org/CERF allocates $5 million for protracted relief and recovery)

7. High Commissioner's opening Address on the Rule of Law Tools for Post-Conflict States to the Transitional Justice Workshop, 27-29 September, 2004, <<http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane.nsf>>
8. See UN report of the fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to assess the scope and impact of Operation Murambatsvina by Anna Tibaijuka

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