



# **2023 NATIONAL GENDER RESPONSIVE DUMMY BUDGET PROPOSAL**

*When She Rises We all Rise*

## Summary of WALPE Social Services Budget Proposal

**Total Vote: ZWL249,605,000,000.00**

**Projected Total National Budget: ZWL600,000,000,000.00**

**Percentage allocation to Social Services = 42% of Total Projected Budget**

*Projected exchange rate: USD1: ZWL 516.00*

**Vote to Education is 42.88%**

<b>Salaries and Manpower Development</b>	<b>15.45%</b>
<b>Acquisition of Learning Materials</b>	<b>2.80%</b>
<b>Construction of new class blocks &amp; new Schools</b>	<b>8.01%</b>
<b>Basic Education Access Module (BEAM)</b>	<b>6.41%</b>
<b>COVID19 Support underserved and poor schools</b>	<b>0.40%</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>4.81%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37.88%</b>

**Vote to Health is 42.27%**

<b>Salaries and manpower development</b>	<b>20.64%</b>
<b>Acquisition of drugs &amp; maintenance of equipment</b>	<b>2.80%</b>
<b>Construction and expansion of health centres</b>	<b>6.01%</b>
<b>COVID19 recovery programmes</b>	<b>6.41%</b>
<b>Free sanitary pads</b>	<b>4.40%</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>2.00%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>42.27%</b>

**Proposed vote for water and sanitation services 7.83%**

<b>Water purifying chemicals and increasing water abstraction capacity of towns and cities</b>	<b>3.43%</b>
<b>Borehole drilling in rural areas</b>	<b>3.17%</b>
<b>Rehabilitation of sewer systems in cities and towns</b>	<b>1.23%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7.83%</b>

***Energy vote for sustainable energy in critical community institutions 5.51%***

<b><i>Solar installations in underserved &amp; marginalized schools &amp; health centres</i></b>	<b><i>4.34%</i></b>
<b><i>Solar installations in markets and community centres</i></b>	<b><i>1.17%</i></b>
<b><i>Grand Total</i></b>	<b><i>5.51%</i></b>

***Women Empowerment vote 5.44%***

<b><i>Support for women smallholder farmers</i></b>	<b><i>4.18%</i></b>
<b><i>Support for COVID19 recovery</i></b>	<b><i>1.16%</i></b>
<b><i>Support for cross border traders &amp; retailers</i></b>	<b><i>0.10%</i></b>
<b><i>Grand total</i></b>	<b><i>5.44%</i></b>

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## Introduction

*“Government is committed to addressing structural barriers to women’s entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in order to ensure that they fully deploy their productive capacities and talent to bring value to their families as well as contribute towards sustainable economic development. The 2023 Budget will prioritize programmes that promote gender equality and empowerment for women and girls as part of measures to end poverty, achieve food security and universal health, reduce inequalities and promote economic growth.”* Remarks by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in the Budget Strategy Paper (2023): para 170 &171

1. On 28 July 2022, Hon, Mthuli Ncube, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development; presented the 2023 Pre-Budget Strategy Paper (BSP) in compliance with the Public Finance Management Act according to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED). The theme of the 2023 Budget is **‘Accelerating Economic Transformation’**
2. In his introductory remarks to the Budget Strategy, Hon, Ncube highlighted that the Budget Strategy is meant to improve transparency in the preparation of the National Budget, and that it forms the basis for a detailed budget preparation process that will culminate in the presentation and approval of the 2023 Budget by Parliament during the latter part of the year (2022).
3. On 19 August 2022, the Secretary for Finance and Economic Development issued the 2023 First Budget Call Circular and Articles 22 and 23 direct MDAs to identify, prioritize and integrate gender issues into their strategic plans and expenditure priorities as well as disaggregate performance indicators by gender. The Circular requires MDAs to prepare a pre-gender budget statement in support of gender equality and women empowerment programmes or projects.
4. It is important to note that the 2023 Budget marks the mid-point in the implementation of National Development Strategy 1:2021-2025 (NDS1). It entails that the Budget process need to enable stakeholders to review progress made so

far, as well as proposing recommendations on what can be done better to fulfill the nation's vision of becoming an Upper Middle-Income Economy by 2030.

5. WALPE acknowledges that the world over, there has been recording of rising commodity prices and inflation, disruptions to world trade and tightening financial conditions mainly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the current Ukraine/Russia conflict has negatively impacted economies globally, and the Zimbabwe has not been spared by this conflict with government acknowledging that it has been encountering challenges in providing quality services to its citizens<sup>1</sup>.
6. It is against this background that the Women's Academy for Political Excellence (WALPE) has found it compelling to produce this National Gender Responsive Social Services Budget proposal to be shared with the Parliament of Zimbabwe. In 2021, WALPE submitted gendered budget proposals to Parliament of Zimbabwe. The 2023 proposed Budget will also be shared with women in all the ten (10) Provinces to empower them with knowledge that can strengthen their contribution and participation during National Budget Consultations that will be conducted by the Parliament, later this year.
7. Women and youth marginally participated in national budget processes. Women have unique needs which are often left out in policy formulation. These include; the burden of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW), sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), sanitary wear, limited support extended to the informal economy, under-representation in leadership positions and decision-

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<sup>1</sup> Aljazeera Report by By Farai Shawn Matiashe; Published on 23 Mar 2022:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/3/23/russia-ukraine-war-is-hurting-zimbabwes-struggling#:~:text=Russia-Ukraine%20war%20is%20hurting%20Zimbabwe%E2%80%99s%20struggling%20economy%20The,are%20hurting%20people%20in%20Zimbabwe%20%5BFile%3A%20Waldo%20Swiegers%2FBloomberg%5D>

making platforms, including other social and cultural norms which oppress women in patriarchal societies.

8. WALPE seeks to empower women around the country to be able to add their voice meaningfully into the National Budget consultations. This Proposed Budget document highlights the lived realities or plight of women, young women, women with disabilities and girls and how they are affected by the different social services, in their day-to-day activities. The budget proposals therefore seek to add women's voices in influencing the policy makers to take note and include women's aspirations in the 2023 National Budget.

## **WALPE's Methodology.**

### **Desktop Review process**

9. In coming up with this Gender Responsive Social Services Budget, WALPE carried out a document review process of the different documents relevant to National Budgeting, the Constitution, the 2022 Census Report, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), National Development Strategy 1(NDS1), including Academic papers and reports by development partners. The key reference point in this document has been the National Budget Strategy (2023) and the 2023 First Budget Call Circular (19 August 2023).

### **Focus Group Discussions**

10. WALPE carried out focus group discussions with women in the different districts and communities that it implements its activities. This included physical and online consultations with the Women Leadership Networks (WALANs) and Women led Community Based Organisations (WeCOBs). These consultations helped in unearthing the lived realities of women from the grassroots levels, representing diverse communities rural, urban and compound settings.

## **Key Informant Interviews**

11. WALPE conducted key informant interviews with respondents with expertise in the different areas relating to gendered budgeting principles. These include the Academia, leaders of Women's Rights Organizations, gender consultants/experts. This was in order to enrich the document with practical recommendations to the lived realities of women, highlight the Zimbabwean context, as well as noting the key issues to be included in coming up with a Gender Responsive budget for social services.

## **Overview of the 2023 Economic Outlook**

12. Overall, both global and domestic increases in energy and food point to a difficult economic outlook for ordinary citizens, and can be double-fold for majority of women. This has manifested in suboptimal production, multi currency regime and the absence of international finance. Regionally sub-Saharan African economies project a decline in inflation as economies recover in the post Covid-19 era. In as much as it can be acknowledged that the Government of Zimbabwe has made some efforts towards alleviating the general poverty faced by citizens, more still needs to be done for citizens to afford at least a decent lifestyle, with the minimum basics.

13. Reports by the World Bank (2022), states that more than 70% of the population still live below the poverty datum line (PDL) and the extreme poverty rate rose from 29% in 2018 to nearly half of Zimbabweans in 2020, as the pandemic delivered another economic shock to the country. The country's unemployment rate is estimated to be close to 80%. However, that rate doesn't reflect the income losses from reduced working hours, unpaid leave, and the decrease of opportunities for formal and informal sector activities which was exacerbated by the pandemic, and drove thousands of the poorest people in the country into unemployment, leaving millions of Zimbabweans on the brink of starvation.



Additionally, the informal economy is widespread and only 5% of workers have formal jobs<sup>2</sup>.

14. The rise in commodity prices due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has exacerbated Zimbabwe's long-standing structural issues, which are characterized by rising inflation and continuous depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar and continue to undermine economic recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic and climate change shocks. Moreover, the high poverty rates and youth unemployment persist, fuel prices continue to rise, high levels of food insecurity and endemic corruption, as well as declining real wages as inflation soars. These highlight the risk of wider political instability<sup>3</sup>. Again, the local currency continues to lose its value against the U.S. Dollar, trading at 1USD: ZWL516 on the official bank rate and 1USD: ZWL 800 at the black market, as at August 2022.
15. In his remarks of the 2023 economic projection in the National Budget Strategy, the Minister of Finance highlighted that, the past four years Zimbabwe has witnessed positive transformation and structural changes across sectors such as agriculture, mining and infrastructure, among others, providing a strong foundation on which to build a stable economy. Hon Mthuli Ncube also noted that domestic economic performance continues to be weighed down by developments in the external environment, particularly the Russia/Ukraine conflict, uncertainty and impact of COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The Minister of Finance made remarks that the country has been enjoying a relatively stable macro-economic stability, over the previous year. This was being attributed to the foreign currency auction system that has been growing over the previous year, with the official rate trading at approximately 1USD:516 ZWL. Nevertheless, in the same remarks, the Minister of Finance alluded to the fact

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lloydsbanktrade.com/en/market-potential/zimbabwe/economical-context#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20surplus%20is%20expected%20to%20narrow%20to,position%20is%20fragile%20due%20to%20low%20capital%20inflows.>

<sup>3</sup> <https://country.eiu.com/zimbabwe>



that, the Domestic headline inflation steadily accelerated from 60.7% in January to 191% in June 2022 (BSP; 2023). The rising inflation has exacerbated challenges faced by ordinary citizens especially women.

16. The Budget Strategy Document (2023), states that maintaining the current positive economic growth trajectory will be critical in addressing key policy objectives such as poverty reduction and job creation, achievement of SDGs and other socio-economic development targets. However, on the contrary, the Civil Service/ servants continue to be underpaid, with the private and informal sector equally following suit by underpaying workers as well. This affects women more as they already are largely underpaid for the same work in most industries and informal sector spaces.
17. The Minister stated that the Government's 2023 national budget, focus will still be on containing money supply growth, convergence of the existing multiple exchange rates, curb arbitrage opportunities as well as increase the use of the local currency. This is indeed a positive ambition and projection on the part of Government. However, the issue of trust between the government and the citizens continue to deteriorate, owing to the general trend, of the Government failing to fulfill such promises and projections. Subsequently, most women in the informal sector, are not able to utilize the formal banking channels, neither are they able to easily access grants/loans to support their economic initiatives.
18. The Budget Strategy reiterates the need for the protection of core social programmes that benefit the poor including those providing resilience against adverse external shocks as well as opportunities for productive economic activities. Climate change is one of the shocks affecting the country, and its impact is more pronounced in rural, poor and marginalized communities. For women, such shocks affect them even more considering the different duties they

carry from the family to community levels. Generally, social protection programs have been weak and often ill-funded by the fiscus. The gap between the poor and the rich continues increasing, with no significant measures in place to ease the burden of the poor and vulnerable.

19. The BSP anticipates the economy to grow by 4.6% during 2022, a downward revision from the original 5.5% projection, and follows an estimated 7.8% positive growth trajectory for 2021. This positive 2022 growth projection is said to be supported by increased activity in all the productive sectors except agriculture that was weighed down by the unfavorable 2021/22 agricultural season and high input costs. Such projections are worrisome and most likely to have no impact in transforming people's lives. Zimbabweans especially women would not benefit much from jobless, ruthless and environmentally destructive growth. WALPE implores on government to initiate inclusive growth programmes and believes that economic growth should create jobs, improve conditions of living and be sustainable and climate smart.
20. The effects of the COVID19 pandemic on the other hand, continue to strain the livelihood of women, especially for those in the informal sector such as women running Backyard Home Industries (BHIs). During the previous years, the Government had pledged to support the vulnerable and those in the informal sector with some COVID19 cushioning allowance through the Netcash facility. However, these commitments have partially been fulfilled. As such, more interventions need to be made to alleviate the socio-economic status of women, especially for those in the informal sector. It is also important to note that even women that are formally employed are equally affected with these worsening economic conditions, which are COVID 19 induced.
21. Coming to unpaid domestic and care work, (in which mostly fall within that category) there is need for adequate supply of energy / power sources and

alternatives. In the 2023 Budget Strategy Document, the Minister of Finance made a commitment that, given the renewed focus on clean energy sources, priority during 2023 will be on completion of ongoing projects as well as developing new renewable energy sources. This was informed by the need to ease access to energy by all citizens, including those in the rural settings. WALPE, welcomes this notion by the Minister, and wishes to also highlight that, power supply continues to be an ongoing challenge for the country and promotion of clean energy such as solar is important for lessening the UCDW burden of women in rural areas and among the urban poor.

22. In terms of Revenue Collection, in line with the National Development Strategy, revenue collections will be enhanced through rationalisation of tax expenditures incurred as a result of generous fiscal concessions. Initiatives have already been taken through the adoption of a duty regime which strengthens Value Added Tax collections (BSP 2023). Government is anticipated to be modernizing tax systems, broadening the tax bases as well as introducing more efficient ways of raising revenue from existing revenue measures as well as those targeted at the informal sector. This position will translate to ordinary Zimbabweans carrying a heavy tax burden considering the majority are in the informal sector. It is important that government institute measures to address the tax disparity of private companies and mining conglomerates as well as the rich (generally referred to as Mbingas) who must equally carry their tax burden.

23. Therefore, WALPE urges the government to implement genuine gender responsive social protection programmes that take note of the diversity of women in different settings- including the urban poor, marginalised rural, women with disabilities as well as those in the informal sector.

### **Total project expenditures**

24. According to the BSP, the projected positive economic growth trajectory and attendant revenue and expenditure forecasts are subject to domestic and external risks, which, if they materialise, could significantly undermine achievement of the 2023 Budget objectives. Fiscal deficit is anticipated to be maintained at below 3% of GDP during 2023, with strict control on consumptive expenditures in order to provide more resources towards development expenditures such as infrastructure and social services.
25. Given the projections of the government, WALPE wishes to present the Gender Responsive Social Services Budget proposal being informed by the lived realities of women, in the prevailing economic context.

### **Specific Social Services.**

26. WALPE will put emphasis on the different social services which have more bearing on women, and in each section, WALPE will briefly highlight on the description of the service, justify its importance to women and girl's empowerment and then present a table summarizing key allocations of the vote.

### **Education**

27. There is a common adage which says "Education is key, Education is power." The right to Education is enshrined under section 75 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The Constitution states that every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to a basic state funded education, including basic adult education." Education is therefore a key social service which forms a basis for the development and growth of other sectors in society.
28. WALPE acknowledges the government's move to introduce free basic education in 2023. Access to free basic education has a potential if implemented



successfully to curb inequalities in accessing education and the enjoyment of the right to education.

29. More so, the SDGs, which the Minister indicated as forming the basis of the 2023 Budget Strategy, in Article 4: Governments are obliged to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, without discrimination. This is a key component of international cooperation in global development which recognizes the importance of education. Zimbabwe is also party to international instruments and made commitments on the right to Education, and it is expected to abide by such. For example, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) in article 17 provides for the rights to education. This provision shows the continental commitment towards education which resulted in the Dakar Declaration which demand that state parties allocate 20% of the national budget towards education.

30. Evidence has been gathered to the fact that education is very important in decreasing chances of child marriages, increase women's participation in decision making roles, and lesser chances of domestic violence abuse (compared to the uneducated ones). Zimbabwe has also passed a new Marriages law outlawing child marriages and liberalizing marriages.

31. However, in some sects of life, women are still considered as second class citizens that must be domesticated, and can have their right to education withdrawn, with priority being given to the other gender.

32. On the other hand, The COVID19 pandemic has not spared young women and girls from its effects on the enjoyment of the right to education. A report by the Plan International (2022) confirmed that the pandemic increased the risk of



abuse for young women and girls, including sexual exploitation, unwanted pregnancies, neglect with a significant number completely dropping out of school to date. It therefore becomes imperative that the national budget makes a deliberate effort to support the schools in communities that were hard-hit by the effects of COVID19. Moreso, the recent pegging of examination fees in U.S Dollars, by the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC), has burdened parents and guardians, with some completely failing to pay the required fees. This has been a direct threat on the enjoyment of the right to health especially by the girl-child, as society would generally prioritise the boy-child in such difficult scenarios.

33. WALPE acknowledges that it does not have direct access to the actual data of the ongoing programmes in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). In light of the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic, the economic challenges faced by women and climate change, WALPE believes that a vote slightly above the Dakar minimum threshold is necessary. We therefore propose a vote of 22% of the national budget to be allocated towards education. A proposed model budget is broken down as below:

**Table 1: Education Budget Allocation & Breakdown**

<b>Vote to Education is 42.88%</b>	
<i>Salaries and Manpower Development</i>	15.45%
<i>Acquisition of Learning Materials</i>	2.80%
<i>Construction of new class blocks &amp; new Schools</i>	8.01%
<i>Basic Education Access Module (BEAM)</i>	6.41%
<i>COVID19 Support underserved and poor schools</i>	0.40%
<i>Administration</i>	4.81%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37.88%</b>

## Health

34. Section 76 of the Constitution provides for the right to health, by stating that, every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to have access to basic health-care services, including reproductive health-care services. SDG 3 sets out the tone for global commitment towards accessible, affordable, and quality health care which results in the holistic wellbeing of the person. As such, national budgets must be directed towards adequately funding health including supporting mental health. Zimbabwe also subscribes to the Abuja Declaration (at Regional level), which sets a minimum budget allocation of 15% of the total national budget towards health.
35. The COVID19 pandemic has not spared the health sector in Zimbabwe as well. The health sector was overwhelmed, due to limited infrastructural, equipment, human and financial resources, as well as corruption resulting in losses of life by citizens. The introduction of the vaccination programme faced initial resistance by citizens due to limited awareness programmes. Moreover, the hard economic environment has seen more and more medical personnel continue to leave the country seeking better opportunities. This again keeps exposing the health sector, and compromising on the quality of health services to the ordinary citizens. The private health services are beyond the reach of many, looting and corruption has seen the health sector lacking functional key medical equipment such as cancer machines, also, the industrial action by staff members pleading for tools of trade and fair remuneration continue to affect the health care services in Zimbabwe. WALPE acknowledges that it has no direct access to the ongoing programmes in the health sector, neither does it have technical expertise on the key/critical components that may be required in developing a comprehensive expenditure plan in the health sector.

36. Nevertheless, WALPE proposes for the basics that should not be left out especially in trying to ensure the inclusion of women's issues in enjoyment of the right to health. What remains imperative to WALPE is that the Government has a key responsibility in providing adequate funding towards health, through adequately remunerating health sector workers, procurement of equipment, construction of more accessible health centres, and provide adequate sexual and reproductive health services including free sanitary pads for women and girls. WALPE thus proposes a vote of 18% of the total budget to be allocated towards health. Below is a proposed model of the health services budget breakdown:

**Table 2:** *Health vote by allocation & breakdown*

<b>Vote to Health is 42.27%</b>	
<i>Salaries and manpower development</i>	20.64%
<i>Acquisition of drugs &amp; maintenance of equipment</i>	2.80%
<i>Construction and expansion of health centres</i>	6.01%
<i>COVID19 recovery programmes</i>	6.41%
<i>Free sanitary pads</i>	4.40%
<i>Administration</i>	2.00%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>42.27%</b>

### **Water and sanitation services.**

37. The right to clean and potable water is provided for in Section 77 of the Constitution. The Constitution in section 73 equally provides for a clean environment. Goal 6 of the SDGs encourages States to ensure access to water and sanitation for all. The Minister of Finance in his Budget Strategy document he reported that an average of 78% of rural households now have access to improved water sources with Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland North leading at 84%. Similarly, about 66% of rural households had access to improved sanitation with Mashonaland East at 77%. He pledged that going forward, budget interventions will continue to scale up implementation of programmes and

projects targeting dam construction, conveyancing infrastructure and boreholes rehabilitation and drilling guided by the integrated approach to water in order to increase access to portable water and sanitation countrywide. WALPE welcomes the vision of the Government in improving water and sanitation situation in the country. However, WALPE draws the attention of the Government to the fact that the major urban cities like Harare and Bulawayo have erratic water supply and poor sewer systems which results in public health hazards such as cholera, typhoid and diarrhea.

38. In both rural and urban settings, women and girls are disproportionately affected by water and sanitation challenges as they are the ones who have to fetch water at alternative sources where they suffer serious challenges and abuse at water points. This increases the UCDW burden of women and girls which negatively impacts their participation in leadership and other spheres of life. It is therefore recommended that more water points are drilled around the country, and that local authorities are supported for them to be able to rehabilitate sewer infrastructure and effective water reticulation and waste management.

39. While WALPE acknowledges that it does not have technical expertise on the actual budget lines towards water and sanitation, it confirms that it has an understanding of the needs of women and girls in respect to water and sanitation. Notwithstanding other aspects which resources may be allocated under water and sanitation, such a dam construction, WALPE proposes a vote of ZWL 7,055,000,000.00 which can be summarized in the table below.

**Table 3: Water and sanitation allocation**

<i>Proposed vote for water and sanitation services 7.83%</i>	
<i>Water purifying chemicals and increasing water abstraction capacity of towns and cities</i>	
	3.43%

<i>Borehole drilling in rural areas</i>	3.17%
<i>Rehabilitation of sewer systems in cities and towns</i>	1.23%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7.83%</b>

## Energy

40. The quest for energy and power within households has been one of the major drivers of increased UCDW in women and girls across the country. The limited availability due to increased tariffs, increased load-shedding and limited alternatives continue to strain industry and households and the economy at large. Notwithstanding any other plans on improving the energy situation in the country, WALPE proposes that key focus of the national budget be on installing solar on all public institutions such as schools, health centres, vending markets and community centres. These institutions are accessible to women and they can be able to utilize the solar power for critical functions such as lighting of maternity wards and charging of mobile phones. Guided by the above, WALPE proposes a vote of ZWL1,275,000,000.00, distributed as follows:

**Table 4: Energy vote**

<b>Energy vote for sustainable energy in critical community institutions 5.51%</b>	
<i>Solar installations in underserved &amp; marginalized schools &amp; health centres</i>	4.34%
<i>Solar installations in markets and community centres</i>	1.17%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5.51%</b>

## Women empowerment

41. The Constitution in section 17, 56 and 80 provides for gender equality and women's rights by citing that every woman has rights to equal dignity, and equal opportunities in economic, political and social spheres. Zimbabwe is also a signatory to international and regional instruments that alludes to the rights of women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against



Women (CEDAW). The Minister of Finance in the Budget Strategy (2023) highlighted that Government is committed to addressing structural barriers to women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in order to ensure that they fully deploy their productive capacities and talent to bring value to their families as well as contribute towards sustainable economic development. He added that the 2023 Budget will prioritize programmes that promote gender equality and empowerment for women and girls as part of measures to end poverty, achieve food security and universal health, reduce inequalities and promote economic growth.

42. WALPE welcomes this move, and encourages the Government to fulfil such promises so that women will realise these benefits in real life. Women especially those in the informal sector have been encountering challenges in accessing capital loans. In as much as the Government came up with the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank (ZWMB), It remains inaccessible to the ordinary women around the country, because it is centralized. There is therefore need to decentralize its model especially in project support to include women in smallholder agriculture in rural areas and those involved in cross border trading.

43. WALPE has also established that there is a correlation between women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions with economic function. Women who are poor and economically disempowered are less likely to participate effectively in leadership compared to those with economic/ financial resources. WALPE reiterates that economic empowerment is critical in attaining gender equality in elected and appointed leadership in Zimbabwe.

44. Therefore, notwithstanding any other women empowerment interventions which the budget may support; WALPE proposes a vote of ZWL1,105,000,000.00 to be allocated as set out in the following table.

**Table 5: Women empowerment budget priorities**

<b>Women Empowerment vote 5.44%</b>	
Support for women smallholder farmers	4.18%
Support for COVID19 recovery	1.16%
Support for cross border traders & retailers	0.10%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>5.44%</b>

### **Social protection and Unpaid Domestic Care Work.**

45. Social protection programs refer to the help offered to individuals and families especially the poor and vulnerable to cope with the crises and shocks of life, including support to access basic rights such as health and education. On the other hand, unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) refers to all non-market, unpaid activities carried out in the households. These two combined, it therefore translates that social protection is a vital cog in ensuring that citizens live dignified lives and do not fall into destitution, want and extreme poverty. The COVID19 pandemic and the continuous economic meltdown continue to expose citizens to poverty, worse still for women they have always been at the receiving end, especially in dealing with UCDW.

46. The challenge with UCDW in Zimbabwe is that no value has been placed on it as yet, to enable the country to recognize its contribution to the economy and therefore put in place measures to reduce and redistribute this form of work.

Therefore, WALPE thus proposes that the national budget must set aside funds for national UCDW quantification survey which shall provide accurate statistics on UCDW in Zimbabwe.

47. WALPE also encourage the Government to fulfil the remarks by the Minister of Finance in the Budget Strategy document that, the 2023 Budget will provide resources to maintain or expand health care systems and provide effective support systems for the poor through social safety nets as well as ensure every child is back in class. These highlighted issues are critical social services that have a direct bearing on the lives of women and girls. Notwithstanding any other budgetary allocation which the government may make available for UCDW related interventions; WALPE propose a vote of ZWL170,000,000.00 which will go towards a national UCDW quantification process to be done by ZimStat and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission.

### **Brief points on other key areas of the economy**

48. In addition to all the various votes on social service areas which have been identified, there is need to touch on other key aspects of the economy such as land, mining, taxation, devolution, and debt contraction. WALPE thus continuously repeat and call the following actions by Government in the sectors below:

#### **Land**

49. The land audit report should be fully implemented, and the national budget should support and avail resources for rationalizing farm sizes and offer land to women who have been largely left out.

50. Furthermore, the national budget should not just compensate former commercial farmers but must also compensate former farm workers the bulk of whom were women.

### **Mining**

51. Women's quota in mining should be increased as we should move towards 50-50 access for men and women into this vital sector of the economy. There is need to allocate resources towards enhancing capacity of women miners and assisting them to mechanize their activities.

52. Mining companies should also be levied for environmental protection whose effects disproportionately affect women and increase the burden of UCDW.

### **Taxation**

53. The ordinary citizens are carrying a huge tax burden and with women being the majority working in the informal sector, they are the most affected by the presumptive taxes on the informal sector operations. WALPE thus proposes that wealth tax (Mbingas), luxury tax and corporate tax be pegged at such levels that the rich also carry their share of the tax burden which most of them are not currently doing.

### **Devolution**

54. Devolution is a critical aspect of complying with the constitution and also promoting development of communities. Funds being distributed to local authorities under devolution should also be utilized in projects which improve social services that directly benefit women such as water and sanitation facilities, rehabilitation of schools and health centres among others. WALPE also

encourages Government and Local Authorities to consult women on the utilization of devolution funds, so that their concerns are taken on board.

### **Debt contraction**

55. The country is faced with a debilitating debt crisis with external debt sitting at US\$8,09 billion (ZIMCDD; 2020); this poses serious challenges for the future of the country. As the country is implementing austerity measures to fund arrears clearance, the government is sadly contracting more debt without following lawful procedures. Worryingly, the government has been contracting resource backed loans which are equivalent to mortgaging the future.

56. WALPE therefore proposes that the government must adhere to the strict provisions of the Public Finance Management Act and the Constitution when contracting debt. Parliament must also exercise strict oversight given that the negative effects of unsustainable debt and austerity measures disproportionately affect women.

**...ENDS...**



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