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Zimbabwe: New Survey Shows Tsvangirai More Trusted Than Mugabe

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A new survey released on Tuesday by the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) confirms that the majority of Zimbabweans, especially in Matabeleland, trust Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai more than they do Mugabe.

The report said Tsvangirai is clearly the key beneficiary of the inclusive government: 'An overwhelming seven in ten (78%) of the total respondents,' trusted him over Mugabe, the MPOI said. Only 36 percent of respondents said they trusted Mugabe.

Tsvangirai's work in the government was approved by 81 percent of respondents while only 24 percent backed Mugabe. The report however makes it clear that at the time of the research Tsvangirai was riding high on a wave of support and trust, and it remained to be seen whether he would be able to maintain it.

A big threat to this goodwill obviously comes from the behaviour of his coalition partners in ZANU PF. There is growing evidence that Mugabe's regime has been secretly fanning strikes in the public sector and continuously harassing MDC supporters, MP's and activists. Continued lawlessness on the farms, plus the seizing of assets belonging to the Meikles Group have all harmed investor confidence, while a refusal to address outstanding issues in the coalition arrangement itself have all undermined progress.

A significant revelation from the MPOI poll was that 76 percent of people in Matabeleland do not approve of Mugabe's inclusion in the unity government. Analysts say this is hardly surprising because of the Gukurahundi Massacres in the eighties which saw an estimated 20 000 people butchered in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. Another factor is thought to be a general feeling that members of ZAPU, who went into a unity accord with ZANU PF, were betrayed in the end.

The MPOI conducted what it termed the 'Afro barometer survey' comparing 'public opinion about various economic, civic and social issues across African countries.' The survey noted that 'despite many criticisms at its formation, the majority of respondents expressed a belief that the Inclusive Government was the best way forward.' It added that 57 percent said they would vote for the MDC led by Tsvangirai in a new election, with only 10 percent rooting for ZANU PF.

While the MDC has struggled to assert its authority in the coalition, as seen by the many violations by ZANU PF, its popularity and work in the government was still 'mirrored in the high approval rating for Morgan Tsvangirai.' The report further noted that Tsvangirai's job performance was viewed positively by members of both parties, the MDC and ZANU PF. Out of the respondents polled 71 percent 'expressed satisfaction with the way government was managing the economy.'

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