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**The Public Mood on Zimbabwe's Inclusive Government**

**Introduction**

After protracted political negotiations to resolve Zimbabwe's chronic political impasse, which were facilitated by former South African President Thabo Mbeki under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a tripartite agreement was signed by incumbent President Robert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), Morgan Tsvangirai of the main Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) and Arthur Mutambara of the splinter MDC-M formation. The Global Political Agreement (GPA) was a framework for the three partners to work together to resolve the country's multi-layered crisis and the institutional framework was inaugurated with the formation in February 2009 of a coalition government commonly referred to as the Inclusive Government (IG). The IG received a mixed reception from the Zimbabwe public, with some praising it while others condemned it as a poor substitute for a democratically elected government. Afrobarometer sought the public's adjudication on this matter by asking Zimbabweans their opinions on a number of issues relating to the IG. This Briefing Paper presents the survey's findings.

**The Afrobarometer**

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, markets and living conditions. The survey is based on a randomly selected national probability sample of 1200 respondents representing a cross-section of adult Zimbabweans aged 18 years or older. A sample of this size yields a margin of error of  $\pm 3$  percent at a 95 percent confidence level. All interviews are conducted face-to-face by trained fieldworkers in the language of the respondent's choice. Fieldwork for the Afrobarometer in Zimbabwe was undertaken in May 2009.

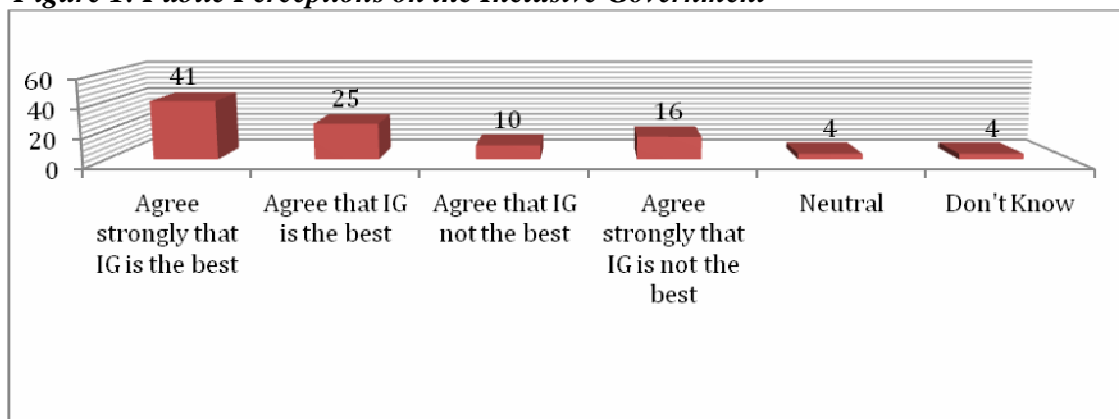
**Perceptions of the Inclusive Government**

The survey first asked respondents to indicate whether, in their view, the Inclusive Government was "the best way to resolve the recent post-election crisis" or whether some alternative way should have been pursued (see Figure 1 for full question wording). A full two thirds either "strongly agree" (41%) or "agree" (25%) that creating the IG was the

best way forward. Only a quarter (26%) thinks that “coalition government is ineffective” and that “another way to resolve the crisis” should have been pursued. The other 8% was either indifferent (4%) or professed ignorance (4%). This is not entirely surprising given the depth and longevity of the crisis. Most people welcomed *any* intervention that provided some escape from the abyss.

It is also instructive that since the possibility of bilateral talks between ZANU-PF and the MDC was first put to Afrobarometer respondents in Round 2 (2004) and again in Round 3 (2005), Zimbabweans have always expressed a desire for the two parties to “sit down and talk with one another.” In 2004, 68% of our respondents expressed this sentiment and this increased to 70% in 2005. So, in a large sense, the GPA and the IG were in fulfillment of a long felt public outlook.

**Figure 1: Public Perceptions on the Inclusive Government**



*Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Statement 1: Given the political divisions in Zimbabwe, creating a coalition government was the best way to resolve the recent post-election crisis. Statement 2: Government by coalition is ineffective; leaders should have found another way to resolve the crisis.*

Who supports the coalition government option and who would have preferred “another way”? The most visible line of cleavage and polarization in the last decade has been a partisan one, particularly between the then incumbent ZANU-PF and the MDC-T parties. The survey findings indicate that the coalition government formula has bipartisan support, but some partisan differences are evident. There is a relatively small (5 percent) difference between ZANU-PF (70%) and MDC-T (65%) with regard to support for the coalition government approach. But this gap widens to 13 points with regard to preference for an alternative solution (32% for MDC-T and 19% for ZANU-PF). This suggests that the MDC-T aligned respondents were keener for a more wholesome solution whereby their party would be in firmer control rather than being forced into a shotgun marriage in the form of the IG. In other words, the MDC-T people were more inclined to question the prudence of a compromise solution rather than a fully-fledged MDC-T government.

Equally significant is that up to 11% of ZANU-PF people preferred neither solution or said they “don’t know,” compared to just 3% of MDC-T respondents who opted for these non-committal answers.

**Table 1: Support for the Coalition Government by Political Party Affiliation**

	ZANU PF(%)	MDC (%)
Coalition government was the best option	70	65
Leaders should have found another way to resolve the crisis	19	32
Don't Know	11	3

The coalition government also attracts broad support in both rural areas (the perceived stronghold of ZANU-PF) and the urban centres (the perceived MDC-T's heartland) with 65% of the former and 68% of the latter lending support. Equal proportions from both residential areas support the search for another solution (26% of the rural folk and 27% of the urban dwellers). A significant minority in both urban and rural areas is therefore unhappy with a coalition government.

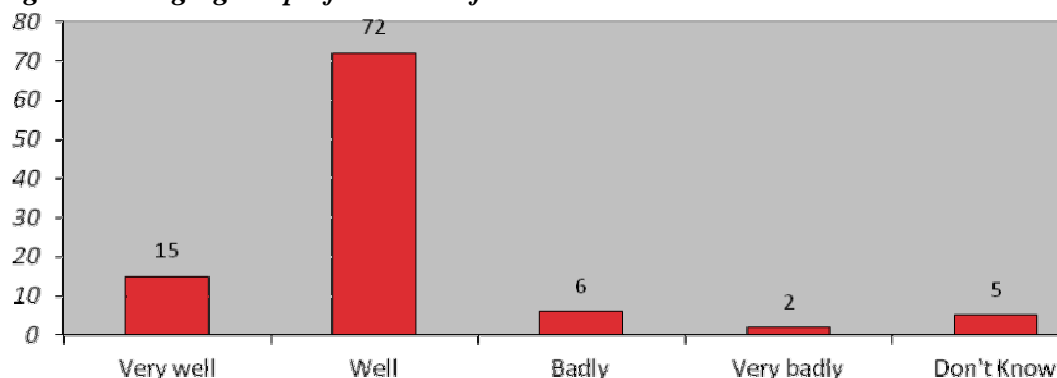
Generationally, the coalition government option gets more or less equal support from all three age groups: 65% among the youth (18-30 years) and old aged (51 years and above); 68% among the middle aged. But more of the youth (31%) demonstrate a yearning for an alternative way than is the case with either the middle aged (25%) or the old (20%). Clearly the older generation had little appetite for a prolonged search for another solution even if it could have been more viable; the youth were less convinced that the solution proffered by their elders is the best one. It could well be that the older Zimbabweans are more exhausted by the crisis which started when the two older age groups had already reached adulthood. A larger proportion of the younger generation actually achieved adulthood during the crisis and knows not a better Zimbabwe.

The survey also exposes a distinct regional divide. The IG receives its greatest support in Mashonaland provinces with Mashonaland West topping the provincial league with 74% support, followed by Harare (73%), Mashonaland East (72%) and Midlands (71%). The Mashonaland provinces were also the ones worst hit by the elections-related violence and other disturbances on the march to the June 2008 presidential run-off. It appears people in these provinces were too keen to embrace any solution that would deliver them from the dark past. The IG solution is least supported in Matabeleland (Matabeleland North (53%), Bulawayo (54%), and Matabeleland South (58%)) and in Manicaland with 55% support. It could be that people in western Zimbabwe – most affected by the 1980s disturbances – yearn for a Government that excludes the erstwhile ruling party which they blame for those disturbances. The people of Bulawayo most desire an alternative answer to Zimbabwe's political crisis, with four in ten (42%) opting for "another way", followed by Manicaland (29%), Midlands, Masvingo and Mashonaland Central (all at 28%).

### **On Performance of the Inclusive Government**

The government in any country is entrusted with providing basic social and economic services to the citizenry. This includes ensuring that there is adequate infrastructure for development, providing an efficient health delivery service, and creating employment, among other things. The study sought to find out what people think about the general performance of the IG so far (Figure 2). An overwhelming proportion of the respondents (87%) were upbeat about the performance of the IG, giving it positive ratings. On the negative side, 8% of respondents rated the IG's performance as bad or very bad.

**Figure 1: Judging the performance of the Inclusive Government**



Question: How would you judge the overall performance of the Inclusive Government so far?

The formation of the IG created a crisis of expectations as Zimbabweans hoped that a new political dispensation would ease the majority out of desperate poverty. This study therefore measured the public's assessment of how the IG is handling certain aspects by asking the question: "How well or badly would you say the inclusive government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?" and then listed 18 items for assessment. It is however important to note that the Study was conducted in May 2009, three months after the inauguration of the IG. The assessments given are therefore based on the IG's three month work performance.

**Table 2: Assessing the Inclusive Government's Work**

	Positively	Negatively	Don't Know/HHE
Managing the economy	71	17	12
Improving the living standards of the poor	59	30	11
Creating jobs	33	52	15
Keeping prices stable	82	13	5
Ensuring availability of basic commodities	89	8	3
Narrowing gaps between the rich and poor	45	40	15
Reducing corruption	45	38	17
Reducing crime	49	37	14
Improving health services	64	30	6
Addressing educational needs	51	44	5
Providing water and sanitation services	52	40	8
Providing reliable electricity supply	42	51	7
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	56	39	21
Protecting our rivers and forests	40	39	21
Combating HIV/AIDS	66	23	11
Maintaining roads and bridges	24	68	8
Providing housing	32	47	21
Empowering women	60	23	17

Question: How well or badly would you say the inclusive government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?

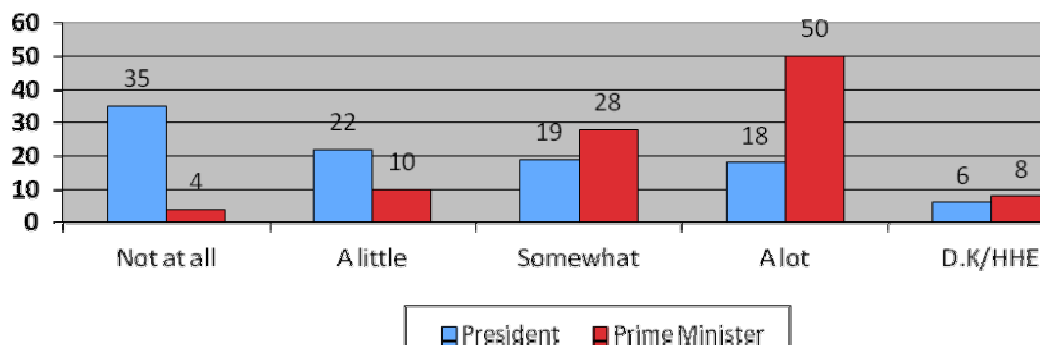
Zimbabwe has been facing an acute social and economic crisis with virtually all indicators pointing towards regression. Many Zimbabweans viewed the formation of the IG as a panacea to the multi-layered crises bedeviling the country. To them, dawn was approaching and thus they were upbeat that the IG is doing a commendable job on almost all of the listed economic items. The performance of the IG is particularly impressive compared to that of the previous ZANU-PF government. For example, 82% credit the IG for controlling inflation (compared to only 3% in 2005), managing the economy (71 percent in 2009 up from 6 percent in 2005) and reducing the income gaps (45% versus 4% in 2005). Even when unemployment is hovering above 90 percent, a third thought the IG was doing a good job in creating jobs (against 3% in 2005!).

Apart from the economic mayhem, a social sector crisis has been evident in Zimbabwe with most of the country's public infrastructure facilities (roads, railways and bridges) and public utilities (electricity and water) having virtually collapsed, further destroying service delivery capacities amid worsening livelihoods. Despite advanced stage of decay in social service delivery during the previous government's era, Zimbabweans judge that the IG is doing about twice as well as the previous government in provision of water and sanitation services (52% in 2009 up from 31% in 2005), addressing educational needs (51% in 2009 versus 45% in 2005) and 64% think it is handling basic health services well versus 33% in 2005. In short, the IG receives more subdued praise in the social sector than in the economic domain.

### On the Inclusive Government Leadership

After the formation of the coalition government, Robert Mugabe remained the President while the leader of the larger MDC faction Morgan Tsvangirai was sworn in as Prime Minister. It was felt imperative for the Study to measure public opinion on the leaders of the IG. From a public opinion perspective, MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai is clearly the key beneficiary of the IG; he is trusted by many. As of May 2009, an overwhelming seven in ten (78%) of the total respondents stated that they trust the Prime Minister 'somewhat' or 'a lot'. Levels of trust for the President are way below those of the Prime Minister as less than four in ten (36%) of the total respondents expressed their trust in him.

**Figure 2: Trust in Political Leaders**



*Question: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?*

Apart from showing explicit trust in the Prime Minister, respondents further approved of the job performance of the Prime Minister after three months in office. Eight in ten (81%) approved the performance of the Prime Minister while only 8% disapprove. Job performance for the President was not well rated: just about one quarter (24%) of the total respondents say that they approve of his job performance, two thirds (67%) disapprove and one in ten (9%) were indifferent over the matter. Thus, the Prime Minister was at the time riding high on a wave of support and trust but it remains to be seen whether he will be able to maintain such high support and trust.

### **Conclusion**

As of May 2009, Zimbabweans across the socio-economic and political spectrum, invested considerable support in the three-month old Inclusive Government and praised it for stopping the regression that had eroded the very core of their lives. Overwhelming majorities say they are supportive of the IG and that, overall, it has performed well. Given the government's modest achievements to date, this groundswell of approval may have as much to do with a sense of relief and hope as to real improvements in concrete conditions and prospects. Further, this support is not free; it needs to be anchored in performance and this may be the Achilles heel of the Government. The next few months will be decisive.

This Briefing Paper was prepared by Eldred Masunungure and Anyway Ndapwadza, Mass Public Opinion Institute.

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