

**Women Informal Cross Border Traders vs.  
the Socio-economic Challenges of Zimbabwe.**

A Case Study on Zimbabwean Women in Informal cross-border trade battling  
socio-economic challenges.

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**Abstract.**

This paper discusses the socio-economic challenges faced by Women informal traders in Zimbabwe involved in informal cross-border trade. The introduction begins the discussion on the challenges faced by Zimbabwean citizens. The section presents the research question "Why have the socio-economic disparities in Zimbabwe driven women to battle poverty via Informal Cross Border Trading?". The section provides a brief outline of the topics for discussion and analysis. The literature review consists of a collection of articles and reports that have researched informal cross-border trade, its effect on society and whether or not it should be moulded into the formal market and de-criminalised. The review also assessed articles that were concerned with ICBT not only in Africa but on other continents as well. It found that ICBT is not a characteristic that is specific to sub-Saharan Africa but is a phenomenon that appears all over the world as well yet does not come with the same pre-conceived notions. The methodology of this paper outlines the kind of data that will be used to answer the research question, explains the choice of the theory, and presented a few shortcomings of the research paper. The paper makes use of the theoretical framework of Globalisation from above and below to analyse the relationship between informal cross-border traders and the repercussions of the actions of the Zimbabwean government.

The analysis section made use of both empirical and statistical data for a holistic understanding of why women continue despite all of the challenges and shortcomings in the country. The analysis is separated into mini sections discussions on political agency and participation, healthcare, economic issues such as poverty and hyperinflation, food scarcity and the issue of clean water and proper sanitation. The analysis also took note of the impact of covid 19 on informal cross-border trade, and how it might have spurred on WICBTs to become even more resilient in their dealings than pre-covid regulations. In this paper, I conclude that there is a major interconnectedness between the legitimacy and agency of the elites, and the legitimacy and agency of the WICBTs. However, there are some instances whereby the impacts of government actions do not directly affect the WICBTs.

*Keywords:* Zimbabwe, Informal cross-border trade (ICBT), Women Informal cross-border traders (WICBTs), Globalisation from Above (GFA), Globalisation from Below (GFB), socio-economic disparities.

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## **Introduction.**

The main question at the top of the discussions for development in Africa is; ‘how we can develop Africa sustainably and for the benefit of its people?’ There have been various answers to this question and as a result has spurred on multiple avenues as to how African countries can fully develop infrastructurally, socially, economically, and politically. Given Africa's colonial and precolonial history, it has been difficult for some nations to figure out a way to develop that is suitable to not only the nation's characteristics but that are also suitable to the governed citizens. The kind of policies and government initiatives taken on by nations deeply affect not only the tone of society and their culture but also affects their economic environment and welfare. The main issues of development faced by many African nations, including Zimbabwe, are poverty, lack of opportunity for education, employment, and proper healthcare services. The issues faced in countries like Zimbabwe has left citizens scrambling for resourceful and innovative methods to earn a livelihood. Majority of these avenue are informal in nature and make up for the money that was not earned in the formal economy or is in addition to it. It is because of these socio-economic problems that this paper intends to answer the question: "*Why have the socio-economic disparities in Zimbabwe driven women to battle poverty via Informal Cross Border Trading?*"

The role that Zimbabwean women play in informal cross-border trade is very significant. They make up a majority of the traders and they contribute to the household earnings and become co-breadwinners, or in some cases, they become the sole breadwinners of the household. This paper makes an assessment of the resilience of these actors amidst and because of these socio-economic inequalities, and why they chose informal cross-border trading as either the main avenue or an additional avenue. The role that women play in the Zimbabwean communities is also important to note as they have shown that they are not bystanders in their situation, they use their resilience, like many others in similar situations, to take care of not only their household unit but also engage with others in their community to secure the enterprise and uplift whole communities. In many cases like these, the concept of, and practices of, ubuntu are prevalent and can be seen in these communities and the responsibility that these women have taken up regarding the role they play for society. The fights for equal opportunity, a truly free market, legalising and easing ICBT in foreign policies, and the security of financial and social welfare are also placed under scrutiny in this paper. With that scrutiny in mind, the role of these women participating in globalisation

from below is an interesting concept that will be explored to understand how globalisation operates at the micro level.

The discussions on Informal cross-border trade have been positive, negative, critical, and opportunistic in nature. They have proven that as regards this kind of avenue of enterprise, context and location are of great importance to safety, success, sustainability of each trade. Informal cross-border trading plays an important role in the economic empowerment of women in Africa. This type of trade is a crucial strategy for women seeking self-employment, poverty reduction, and wealth creation in the region. The paper will underscore the importance of recognizing and supporting the contribution of informal cross-border trade to the economic empowerment of women in Zimbabwe.

The socio-economic disparities that are witnessed in Zimbabwe and why these disparities are forcing some to become more involved in finding creative ways to earn a living. In the case concerning social inequality and poverty in Zimbabwe, the country's history, one would argue, has a lot to do with the current situation the society is in at present. The socio-economic disparities and issues in Zimbabwe will be analysed and discussed further in the paper to assess the severity of these issues which drive the women towards ICBT the only perceivable gateway. The socio-economic disparities applicable and relatable to that of women informal cross-border traders, that will be discussed and expanded upon are poverty, inequalities in education, income, employment and community safety and social support.

From the concept of Globalisation came the theorisation of Globalisation from above and below. The point of departure for this paper is that the existence of globalisation from below is urging globalisation from above to change its neoliberal characteristics to become more socially democratic. Globalisation is understood as a concept that encompasses the expansion of global communication and market connections, growing social and political interdependencies. It highlights the increasing interconnectedness across the world through economic, political, and cultural changes (Anderson, Peterson Toops, 2018, p. 464). It is therein from this understanding of the concept of globalisation that Margaret C. Lee (2014) presents the theoretical framework of

Globalisation working from above and below Both of which will be used to match and find understanding in the interconnectedness between the Zimbabwean government elite, and the Zimbabwean WICBTs.

### **Literature Review.**

While the literature circumventing the phenomenon of informal cross-border trade and socio-economic disparities in Sub-Saharan Africa is sizable, the purpose of this literature review section is to provide a broader picture of informal cross border trading, as well as the aspects the single out the involvement of women in informal cross border trade in other regions. Other pieces of literature might be used in the analysis, and some in the discussion section. The articles of literature brought here are for contextualising and understanding the particular area of the field that concentrates on the issues faced by societies which drive them towards ICBT. Amidst all the studies and reports and other academic articles analysing and discussing informal cross-border trading, this section will bring forth a few of the many to contextualise their relevance to this particular study. As mentioned beforehand, the question of why women in particular have chosen ICBT, to battle poverty because of their socio-economic challenges.

The literature that discusses informal cross-border trade globally is incredibly vast with different regions and nations holding their interpretation and perception of these activities either for the benefit of someone or for the downfall of someone or something else. One can also learn a lot about the regional and national communities that either support or vilify those engaged in ICBT for whatever political or socio-economic reason as the phenomenon usually arises when there are both issues and opportunities or the lack thereof in their regions or nations.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's paper "Informal Cross-Border Trade and Trade Facilitation Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa" written by C. Lesser and E. Moise-Leeman (2009), explores how ICBT disputes economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa and challenges the trade agreements already made by nations. The paper also discusses how ICBT has the potential, and to some places proves to be opposing the economic development of developing nations. The paper also assesses whether some trade measures can assist in convincing

and moving some informal traders over to formal trade. A benefit of such a study in the field is that it is backed by an organisation focused on the economic development of nations and their peoples, and this due to its being written in 2009, provides much insight on the topic and much background in understanding the characteristics of ICBT in Sub-Saharan Africa. A major takeaway from this paper is that they configured a list of measures that might work in encouraging informal traders to legalise their businesses. These include options like making the formalisation process easier and more accessible and affordable, reducing tariff fees, as well as importing and exporting tariffs for ease of travel and transaction, clarifying procedures of transit, taxation, and customs to remove suspicion and increase trust, and many other factors which may give one reason to remain in the informal sector. What is left to see, however, is whether the implication of such new policies has been done since their suggestion in 2009.

What is interesting is that the paper suggests for nations dealing with the issue of ICBT, that governments should conduct studies and surveys on them yearly to properly gauge the management of this. While it is a plausible suggestion, the likelihood of seeing the statistics is difficult to presume as people may not want to be upfront about their enterprises with their governments, depending on the kind of governing body in power. Although this may have been conducted in Uganda, one may perhaps see the same occurring in other countries. Finally, another takeaway from the paper is that the practice of ICBT as an avenue for earning an income is not only unsustainable but likely damaging to the economic development of nations and their other development initiatives. There are mixed takeaways from this study in that, what one can notice is that the activity of ICBT is perceived and presented in a negative way whereby, ICBT traders are part of the problem or have merely, done the country a disservice by highlighting the multitudes of issues that border control and the nation itself possesses. In a way their research questions were answered, but their shortfall was creating an air of 'blame game' on either the nation or the ICBT traders themselves, in comparison to other pieces of literature.

Cliff Ubba Kodero (2020) in "Development Without Borders? Informal Cross-Border Trade in Africa" presented the role that ICBT played in African economics and whether this is another avenue for development on the continent. From Kodero's (2020) paper, we learn that there is much negative criticism placed on formal or official trading amongst African countries, with the

existence and persistence of informal cross-border trade. The study assesses the factors that send people towards ICBT and the repercussions that are resultant from the engagement of ICBT. Kodero (2020) contends that the paper highlights the “...*untapped potential of ICBT and the ingenuity of its practitioners...*” (p. 1052). Kodero (2020) also mentions the ‘survivalist systems’ that are being formed as a result of the practice, and within the practice itself. The paper by Kodero (2020) also adds to the field of conversation on ICBT in the African political Economy by emphasizing the importance of citizens living in rural areas and small shanty towns on the country's borders. The paper also stresses that the lack of opportunities to engage in the nation's economy could negatively impact the nation's economic stability. I believe that the relevance this paper has to this field of study is such that it also highlights the potential that ICBT has as a method or 'other' avenue to engage citizens and to spark development and intra-African trade at a smaller scale. The development of rural areas and shanty towns is one of the few areas of concern that many African nations and other developing regions have, to move upwards and onwards as a society. That is to say, socio-economic security is the goal for many, the question thus of how we get there is incredibly diverse and specific to the nation and region concerned.

In 2018, Antoine Bouet, Kathryn Pace & Joseph made a study “*Informal cross-border trade in Africa: How much? Why? And what impact?*” which focuses on the scope of and the reason behind informal cross border trading in Africa. Their study encapsulated ICBT at a macro level and used survey-based studies on the countries Uganda, Rwanda, Namibia, Cameroon, Kenya, Benin, Botswana, and the West African organisation monitoring ICBT in that region. The findings from their study concluded that the populous engaged within ICBT was found to be mostly women and stated that the situation in Zimbabwe between the period of 2006 and 2018, the formal sector of Zimbabwe reflected male engagement whereas the informal sector reflected mostly female engagement (Bouet, et.al., 2018, p. 33). From this article, we can learn that informal trade may in some cases surpass the official trade statistics of most African nations, that ICBT has positive impacts on food security and poverty, and that it is common practice for most households beneath the poverty line.

The authors mention Zimbabwe as a trading partner for some of the ICBTs engaged in sub-Saharan Africa. While it is widely understood that ICBT weakens the potential for economic



growth in many sub-Saharan countries, it is however, paralleled by its ability to uplift households and maintain a form of development at the micro-level without interference or assistance from the government. We learn from their text that endeavours towards measuring trade in African countries have been attempting to be more organised and understandable, as regards keeping track of the trends and characteristics of ICBT in their nations and this might affect household income, national GDP, food security and many other factors that affect quality of life for the population. The relevance of this piece of literature to the field is such that it outlines and touches on many factors and indications as to why and how ICBT is so popular in Sub-Saharan Africa as a form of breadwinning. However, due to the large scope of the paper there still leaves room for better in-depth case studies on why the phenomenon is such commonplace in Sub-Saharan Africa but leaves room for theoretical backing for a more conceptual understanding of such a trend in the international political economy of Africa. The second relevance their study has made to the field is that it has compiled knowledge on ICBT across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The article “*Socio-economic and Political Challenges in Zimbabwe and the Development Implication for Southern Africa*” by David Mhlanga and Emmanuel Ndhlovu in 2021, provide the necessary background information for understanding the history of Zimbabwe's economic and developmental struggles and strides. The text discusses and analyses the discrepancies and potential for Zimbabwe regarding economic development, social challenges, and finally political challenges. This article insinuated and reasoned that as a result of the misfortunes and issues faced in Zimbabwe, led to both positive and negative repercussions in the neighbouring countries in Southern Africa (Mhlanga & Ndhlovu, 2021, p. 84). As regards the socioeconomic disparities faced in Zimbabwe the article brings forth the argument that it is unclear to pinpoint exactly what the source of Zimbabwe's issues are, but that they are a cause of the development issues in neighbouring countries and strained their resources (Mhlanga & Ndhlovu, 2021, p. 92). What is also particularly interesting about this text is that it also provides solutions to the issues surrounding and resulting from ICBT and socio-economic problems in Zimbabwe. A shortfall of this study however was that it could have gone more in-depth into exploring the poverty and healthcare issues faced concerning ICBT and Zimbabwe.

The literature on Informal cross-border trade is not limited to mainly Africa but also includes the other continents with developing nations, such as Asia, Central America, and South America. As regards ICBT in Asia, some of the literature refers to this phenomenon as "...*cross-border entrepreneurship*...", which denotes and removes the connotation of cross-border trading or informal cross-border trading as being illegal. The paper "*Informal Cross-Border Trade Sarawak (Malaysia)-Kalimantan (Indonesia): A Catalyst for Border Community's Development*" by Awang, Abd Hair; Sulehan, Junaenah; Bakar, Noor Rahamah Abu; Abdullah, Mohd Yusof; Liu, Ong Puay in 2013, discusses how formalised business enterprises start up from the point of the informal sector improve the communities that they are a part of, by way of job creation, creating avenues towards financial security which will translate to healthcare insurance should money be managed properly. The paper also focuses on the localisation of the trading, why it matters where the trading occurs where it does and how the trading in these border town areas affects the communities that reside there.

The unique aspect of informal cross-border trading that is highlighted in this particular text is that location and area of trade matter and determines the quality of one's trade be it successful or challenging. The aspect of location would also determine the kind of business being done, i.e., which kind of product is being sold and bought, which areas would accept certain types of produce, and how much the products or produce would sell for depending on the agreed upon exchange and as regards, the community, the kind of people engaged in the business of cross-border trade. For further relevance to the field, the research article also includes factoids on how ICBT is commonplace in Eastern Europe and Africa as a means of earning a livelihood and financial security, which in hindsight, increases the validity of the article, by insinuating that ICBT is not a phenomenon witnessed only in Asia. Another important takeaway from this article is the emphasis on a positive spill-over effect; if treated properly with the right policies and security measures from the government municipalities, the communities in the border towns will be able to sustain a financially secure lifestyle and will encourage the development of these towns.

Another particularly peculiar instance is the informal cross-border trade that also occurs in the European Union but is known under another name, that of informal entrepreneurial activity. The study "EU enlargement effects on cross-border informal entrepreneurial activities" conducted

by Mirela Xheneti, David Smallbone and Friederike Welter in 2012, shows how the ICBT is viewed from both a local point of view and the official perspective. While this is not entirely linked to that of ICBT in Zimbabwe, a comparison to the trends of discussion can be made. This piece of literature goes to show that this phenomenon is not particularly exclusive to developing nations. It does however prove that one's social class or economic capabilities within society, be they in the working class, the lower class with fewer financial options or the more affluent, either has the opportunity or capacity to act within the informal sector for whatever reason. Those reasons as to why they interact within ICBT are dependent upon their financial situations. One takeaway from the findings of their study was that in an economic system that works and is tailored towards the benefits of its citizens and sustainable economic growth and socio-political stability, people would see no need for unsustainable practices such as ICBT. The text also highlights the notion of skills sharing or those with particular sets of skills benefitting more from the concept of a "...*softer border...*" compared to that of "...*harder borders...*" like that which many African countries use (Xheneti, Smallbone, & Welter, 2012, p. 324).

In a study that is relevant, and was recently conducted in 2016, Mutsagondo, Karimanzira and Makanga explored the challenges of the women in the Ndau ethnic group and their engagement in ICBT. Their paper "Ndau Women, Informal Cross-Border Trade and the changing socio-economic Dispensation in Zimbabwe" places focus on this specific ethnic group because of their primary resistance to the ICBT before the 2000s and highlights how most women in this ethnic group are full-time informal traders. The study pinpointed that the reason for increased engagement was in part due to post-colonial repercussions and the issues Zimbabweans began to face as a society and presented the contrasting fact that ICBT was also around before colonial times, it merely had another name and different stigmatization. Although the court, the paper provides relevant empirical data after conducting surveys in the communities in question, while also taking into account socio-cultural values and norms (Mutsagondo, Karimanzira, & Makanga, 2016, pp. 3, 6, 7). A small critique of the issue, however, was whether they conducted an in-depth analysis of the policies in Zimbabwe during that period that inhibited not only just the citizens but especially women. The paper mentions the policies briefly but does not go in-depth as to how the government policies are angled towards impeding the activities of informal cross-border traders.

To conclude this section, the literature that covers Informal cross-border trade, is not only incredibly vast but provides various connotations to the practice and varying perceptions of the traders engaged with it. The literature selected for this review represent the broad spectrum of research studies on the phenomenon of ICBT. The literature was selected with the perception that they provided similar but different perspectives on the research on ICBT, and the importance of these articles is that it allows one to understand how ICBTs are treated and seen by certain governments and certain societies. There is the perceived difference by the society that sees no issue with ICBT, and only finds ICBT as a kind of paid hobby, but not necessary for survival. The other side of this is that ICBT is viewed as somewhat negatively, it is perceived to be a nuisance to government legitimacy, economic growth of the country, and the society views it as a necessary method to evade the issues of the society. The society in the former explanation would be such that their socio-political issues would not be of the same calibre.

What the pieces of literature miss is the theoretical connection shared between the governing body's actions which exacerbate the socio-economic issues in the country and how this affects those in the lower classes. There is a connectivity in everything but the connectivity itself I think is not discussed to the extent that it should. Past studies have researched affects, of ICBT on economic growth, and societal development, but there is still need for further research into how ICBT and how ICBT should be officially recognised by governments of Africa as a viable path towards sustaining the societal welfare. Further fieldwork research in to these matters is also greatly important with every global event, natural disaster and or viral pandemic, the characteristics of WICBT and the policies that either bind or support them are bound to be affected.

## **Methodology.**

The paper analyses how their actions affect the livelihoods of their families and others connected with them. The paper also assesses how their actions are repercussions to those acting in the elite prism of globalisation from above. That is to say that women's entrepreneurship is par with the 'survivalist mentality', and the onslaughts of capitalism played a role in the inspiration behind this project. In this methodology section, the following criteria will be covered; an explanation of the

research approach used, an outline of which research methods/strategies/techniques will be used, and an outline of the theoretical framework that will be used for the research.

This paper will take a critical approach regarding the case of Zimbabwean Women engaging in ICBT to battle socio-economic disparities. This will be such that a critical perspective will be used to assess the role of power, agency and societal structures which influence the severity and impacts of socioeconomic disparities. This paper will assess the information and case of women informal cross-border traders from a postcolonial perspective. Using the postcolonial perspective entails an examination of how the knowledge of the WICBTs has been contoured, fabricated, and broadcasted within colonial and imperial contexts (Epstein, 2014, p. 294). It also means that there will be an assessment of how the processes of knowledge sharing and retaining, regarding the WICBTs, continue to influence the comprehension of this phenomenon today (ibid.). This approach would also entail that following the theorisation of globalisation from above and below, the approach towards the case will assess the norms, behavioural patterns, and power relations between the Zimbabwean government and the Zimbabwean WICBTs (Epstein, 2014, p. 294).

### **Choice of Theory.**

The purpose of this section is to provide a reason for the theory chosen and to outline its relevance to the study and how it will assist and guide the analysis of how the socio-economic disparities in Zimbabwe, drove the Zimbabwean women towards Informal cross border trade. As regards theory choice, the theorization of globalisation from above and globalisation from below was used for the sake of this type of study. The theorisation of this concept and phenomenon provides a different kind of insight into both the macro and micro actions of the actors involved in the issues faced in Zimbabwe. The theorisation allows for an in-depth analysis of not only those actions taken by the government, but other elite forces also influencing the social, political, and economic situation in Zimbabwe and the actions of the average citizen in the labour force.

The theorisation of 'globalisation from above and below' was expounded upon by Robert Falk (1997) and was adjusted to the case of Africa's struggle towards economic development via the informal sector by Margaret C. Lee (2014). This theoretical framework of globalisation from above and below offers both a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspective as to how the processes of globalisation are carried out, what characteristics they bring about in both the lower and upper classes and allows for a framework of interconnectedness between the upper classes and the lower classes (Falk, 1997, p24). The theorisation although able to function at the international scale regarding the case analysis, it also allows for a bird's eye view and an ant's eye view of how the theoretical framework operates at national level. It is thus deemed suitable for the assessment of WICBT in Zimbabwe because as the lower classes, in comparison to the governmental elite, WICBTs operate in such a way that also affects the legitimacy and agency of the government.

To which the former outlines the hegemonic power of institutions and organisations and countries engaged in globalisation, and the former entails the average citizens engaging in the processes of interconnectedness. It is from the latter understanding that this study attempts to understand the impact of, and challenges faced by, informal cross-border traders as a result of globalisation from above and how they might utilise globalisation from below as a combatant tool. It is reasonable to suggest that the actions of the agents acting at globalisation from above, influence the lives and actions of the agents operating at globalisation from below. Yet is it too far to suggest the same the other way around? That 'globalisation from below' influences globalisation from above, the more there is resistance and outrage towards agents that also act in globalisation from above and below (NGOs, international communities etc)? An outline of this query will be seen in Figure 1. in the theoretical framework section, and with this visualisation one might get a better viewpoint as to how the role of Zimbabwean Women in ICBT can also affect globalisation from above.

### **Data.**

As this paper assesses the socio-economic disparities in Zimbabwe, that drive the women towards ICBT, the data collected for this study was qualitative in nature. Given that there was a lack of capacity, financial aid, and in respect of time, to travel to Zimbabwe to conduct fieldwork on the

research matter, the collection of data was restricted to second-hand information. The data used for the analysis will be empirical will be interpreted per the research criteria. The evidence for the analysis to answer why the socio-economic disparities in Zimbabwe continue to drive the Women informal cross-border traders towards the enterprise will be extracted from the sources. Some of the sources of such information for the paper will be borrowed from some academic articles. Other data will be selected from the official reports made by organisations, government-sanctioned officials, news stories and interviews made by journalists and other academics within the field of intra-African trade and development.

Some of the empirical data used for the analysis was taken from peer-reviewed articles focused on informal cross-border trade in Zimbabwe. The time period being used to analyse WICBTs is from the hyperinflation experienced in Zimbabwe from the 2007 financial crisis until post Covid-19. The empirical data used were about the ICBT, WICBTs and the dynamics between them and the societies they were part of, how their continued engagement in the entrepreneurship was viewed by themselves and by the state. The empirical data also borrowed from NGO and government programmes put in place targeting the processes of ICBTs and those operating in the informal economy. The paper takes note of the large span of knowledge on this topic and makes use of some of the articles that discuss and recommend policies by researchers and NGOs to aid those engaged in ICBT. These articles were viewed and assessed from a postcolonial perspective. The empirical data will also include reports from official organisations dealing with and supporting the WICBTs in Zimbabwe. The data will also include some news articles reporting instances in which WICBTs experience difficulties or are perceived as an issue for government officials and those operating at the 'globalisation from above' level.

The information collected came from reports on events, policies put in place, the responses of WICBTs to the challenges caused by Covid 19 pandemic and information outlining the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe. There was the use of information collected form Surveys, online datasets created by the World Bank Group, the Human Development Index, the Poverty Index, the constitution of Zimbabwe, comments made by former and present Presidents of the Republic of Zimbabwe etc.

The information that was interpreted for the research came from the World Economic Forum, the Human development index, the Inequality Index, and the World Trade Organisation. The information presented by the World Economic Forum consisted of calculations of hyperinflation witnessed in Zimbabwe both after the 2008 financial crisis and the financial crisis caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The Human development index was created and is used on the understanding that proper development of a society can be seen from the opportunities the citizens could have for standard of living, education, employment, and quality of life. The information collected from the Human Development Index presented data on life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, and gross national income per capita. What is important for this research however and will be stressed is the value of the HDI simply because it summarises the quality of life of Zimbabweans and where the country is in terms of providing its citizens with opportunities for a good and sustainable quality of life.

The data collected from the Inequality Index was numerical in nature. The information presented on the index was such that it rated the inequality of Zimbabwe out of 100, and the lower the number the more inequality that country faced, and the higher the number the more equality was experienced in the country. This information will be used to determine the severity of inequality experienced in Zimbabwe that led the WICBTs towards choosing the trade as though it were their only option to evade poverty and starvation.

This information was also interpreted from a postcolonial perspective, meaning that the paper operates with the understanding that the pre-conceived notions of WICBTs in Zimbabwe will be unpacked and assessed by how these came about and how the perceptions of them are affecting their lives and livelihoods. These statistics, and statistics from other NGOs assessing employment and social welfare in Zimbabwe will also be used to assess the severity of the social inequalities faced in Zimbabwe. One will take note, however, that not all factors might be taken accounted for as because the enterprise is considered a shadow economy, some people would prefer to remain in the statistics for safety reasons. With this in mind, the numbers are merely an indication but not an exact representation of the percentage of the population that is engaged in ICBT.



## **Theoretical Framework.**

### **Globalisation: from above and below**

Over the past couple of centuries, globalisation has had many definitions, and conceptualisations, potentially due to the change in the global world order and the global culture. The main definitions and remuneration of the globalisation phenomenon, for the sake of this project, can be understood as a concept which refers to an intensification of worldwide interconnectedness. It is from this phenomenon that researchers, such as Margaret C. Lee in 2014 and Robert Falk in 1997, developed the theoretical framework of Globalisation from above and below to explain the repercussions of neoliberalist systems of nations.

Firstly, the theoretical framework for ‘Globalisation from above’ is rather synonymous with the attributes of neoliberalist theory (Lee, 2014, p. 11). In the same way that neoliberalism speaks on the agency of states, the agents that act to provide the idea that one has complete control of the “...*legality and legitimacy*...” in financial transactions, including when it concerns illegal/ informal actions (Lee, 2014, p. 12). This is to say that official agents acting within the frame of globalisation from above, have the ability and legitimacy in their roles and the way that they behave in the state system because of their official positions. For some countries, this might mean that regardless of their actions, if there is a way to legitimise it or look the other way, they would not face the same consequences as those operating at lower positions in the social system. Agents involved in Globalisation from above would include the government elites, such as politicians and lawmakers, and those elites with the most financial influence over the nation's markets (Lee, 2014, p. 12).

Secondly, ‘globalisation from above’ can be understood as the socio-political and functioning features of the concept of globalisation (Falk, 1997, 19). These functions are in correlation with the international market influences that direct international and national policies as well as the delegation of governmental power (Falk, 1997, 19). Regarding international trade, and perhaps following the world systems theory within globalisation thought, the labour force and marginal groups of the global north compel the elite to abide by human rights and environmental law guidelines to reduce the amount of exploitation that the financial elite have over the labour forces in the global south (Falk, 1997, p. 18). One can understand the power of the elite powers by

their ability to influence and affect the livelihoods and living standards of others. This fact also signals the amount of legitimacy and power assigned to the elites by the average public, and in terms of international relations, how the actions of the elites and politically powerful in the global north affect the elites of the global south. They would not be in the same level of influence, thus as regards political and financial development of the global south, they must look to the elites and politically powerful in the global north for not only legitimacy but guidance in governance.

Over the past couple of decades, the gradual movement of states away from socialist thought and political practices, meant that capitalism, through democracy, took over instead of the policies that would enable nations to look after their people (Falk, 1997, p18). The countries vying for neoliberalist societies, as an alternative, engaged their people to work for the state so that the economy would work for them, instead of the other way around. With the alternative of the socialist state, the people saw their efforts in the way that the social welfare looked after them, and this kind of scenario had not been witnessed since the industrialization period in the first world countries and is gradually being lost (Falk, 1997, pp18-19).

The alignment of government policies, that become more commerce orientated and show a reduction of employment in governmental institutions and social welfare positions, i.e., government jobs (Falk, 1997, p. 19). These jobs would intern reduce the opposition from socialists that would be in more support of social services provided by the state, as opposed to policies directed towards commerce (Falk, 1997, p. 19). This concept of governments realigning their policies to be more open to commerce and creating policies focused primarily on commerce can be attached to the way the present political economy of Southern Africa and Zimbabwe. For Zimbabwe, there has been the circulation of the notion of nations being open to business and encouraging atmospheres for businesses to thrive under low taxes and works for larger businesses involved in the trade. With commercially aligned policies, there is also the diversification of capital working per the society. The diversity of capital is rapidly growing in a global system that is determined by financial trends and the procurement of the right to academic assets as opposed to the production and business of goods and services (Falk, 1997, p. 19).

The process of globalisation ebbs and flows throughout the history of the global political system shows, and perhaps, exacerbates, the injustices and inequalities within states. The agency shows how the benefits reaped from the advantages presented by globalisation, are mostly reverted over to the elites that would have constructed those systems. The advantageousness of the system creates and exacerbates the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' globalisation continues (Falk, 1997, p. 19). In this regard, the situation can be linked to what might be experienced in many of the global south countries and those of Sub-Saharan Africa whereby the globalisation schemes enacted result in the continuation of power and advantage whereby the rich elite continue to get richer, and the disadvantaged even more so disadvantage, which also increases the margin of inequalities (.ibid). There is a challenge of survival in store for the state that focuses on the social welfare of its people, in the wake of globalisation impacts on state policies (Falk, 1997, p. 19).

Finally, that being said, globalisation from above is considered to be hegemonic in characteristics (Lee, 2014, p. 12). The active bodies in this system are usually states, international corporations, "...*international organizations, international financial institutions, and global governing institutions...*" such as the EU (Lee, 2014, p 12). That is, regarding this paper, any action made by the hegemonic powers that will affect the socio-economic situation of Zimbabwean citizens will also be considered as a method for the hegemonic power to be exercising their legitimacy either in line with a plan of their own or in retaliation to the actions of those operating in the level below. With operating at the level of globalisation from above, there is the notion of having judicial power and state-like power to act when interacting with those operating at globalisation from below level (Lee, 2014, p12). One might be able to single out the actions of hegemonic agents by their corporate sales figures, official statistics, and economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as regards for states, the Poverty Index (Lee, 2014, p12). What might add and benefit the view of these hegemonic powers is also assessing their success via the human development index which assesses the

*Globalisation from below* places focuses on the societies encouraging socialists to press the need for liberal leadership to be focused on benefitting society (Falk, 1997, p.20). Governments and the elites of neoliberal and capitalist nations will not be able to benefit financially from globalisation processes unless they are aligned, and or aided, by political backing governmental

economic policies must be in support for the benefits to be reaped (Falk, 1997, p. 20). The so-called “...*grassroots forces*...”, the otherwise informal cross-border traders and other informal workers, have many intermingling and parallel relationships with the governmental policies and capitalist policies, and these relationships might be advantageous or disadvantageous to the grassroots forces (Falk, 1997, p.20). The system of globalisation from below refers to the way much of the world’s population experience globalisation (Lee, 2014, p.12). 'Globalisation from below' refers to the movement of people and goods across borders that involves low amounts of capital and informal, often semi-legal or illegal transactions (Lee, 2014, pp 12-13). Even though this kind of globalisation is experienced in the developing world and other countries in the semi-periphery, it can also be witnessed in first-world countries (Lee, 2014, pp12-13).

Regarding the case of Zimbabwean WICBTs battling socio-economic challenges, the women at the ‘grassroots’ of the country, also referred to as the lower class, with fewer opportunities also paved a way for themselves to operate and earn money that would go to their necessities. Some because the actions of the elite were harming instead of helping them, and others because they could not reap the same benefits that the elites could, due to not being on the same level, and the benefits themselves were not designed for nor catered to them. They were instead argued to be catered towards sustaining an already existing order. In these scenarios which became common in countries that had dictatorships, segregation, inflation, multiple instances of civil unrest and much more, the citizens instead take matters into their own hands every day. This is because relying on the government left them in bad shape since the Zimbabwean government’ elites shifted their focus towards more capitalist values. Evidence of this shall be presented in the analysis.

Firstly, globalisation from below does not present as the only socio-political mandate going tete-a-tete with globalisation from above, and the arising of these forces is dependent upon a multitude of socio-economic factors (Falk, 1997, p. 20). The convoluted nature of ‘globalisation from below’ results in it having both cooperative and conflicting connections with the influential organizations and strong actors of globalisation from above (Lee, 2014, p 13). Globalisation from below is heterogenous and diverse, encourages and encompasses bottom-up politics, and is also characterised by the contradictions in society because of the diversity (Falk, 1997, p. 20). Global

capitalism has made traditional electoral politics rather ineffective against globalisation, and the only way for societies to be taken care of is if leaders in line with the welfare of the society should join forces and initiate the change. That is, political leaders within the state of the social democratic variety, combat economic globalisation by initiating policies that protect the average citizens unable to benefit from globalisation from above (Falk, 1997, p. 20). The way these mobilizations could occur involves leadership ideologies, social agenda efficiency, attention to wealth and income disparities, and the reduction of poverty (Falk, 1997, p. 20).

However, the stipulation that agents acting within globalisation from below act against those in the level above is slightly misconstrued. It is the fact that they aim to be as successful as the elites operating at the level above, and the manners in which some go about getting to that level also create a discrepancy in the amount of control that the elites have over the economic trends of the nation (Lee, 2014, p. 14). This can be seen in many instances in developing nations where the informal market interferes with the formal circulation of currency within the country, such as is witnessed in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, and the like. It is also with such a discrepancy in mind, that nations like Zimbabwe create pathways to also interact with and have influence over the circulation of money through taxation on mobile money transfers. Both of these instances shall be expanded upon in the Analysis section.

Secondly, there is the argument that the agency or power of the lower classes operating in globalisation from below is such that the fact that they are uncontrollable. The fact that they are perceived to be uncontrollable, would encourage economic and political elite groups to rally for policies that better care for them (Falk, 1997, p.20). Falk introduces the idea that such change in their perceptions would also force the elites to initiate better social contracts that restore some sort of balance to the interest of the people and the markets and reduce the disparities between social classes. This is important because the agents who act in the lower social classes such as the “...traders, international migrants, street hawkers, small entrepreneurs...” are those that hope to gain enough financial security to reach the same level of financial security as those operating at the globalisation from above (Lee, 2014, p. 14).

Thirdly, a factor that is also an issue for globalisation politics is that of the environmental kind. That is that Falk (1997), explains that societal issues of ecological nature may also force market-oriented governments to also consider the well-being of their nation (p. 21). This would be by making policies angled towards environmentally sustainable policies to protect the natural and agricultural health of not only the societies in the regions concerned but also the environment itself. While this article was written in 1997, this issue still stands true as a ground for environmentalists that take stands against their governments for ignoring the impact that hegemonic powers have on the environment. This particular fact may not be extensively used in this paper's analysis because its level of relevance is not entirely at the same level as the others but is also a concern regarding the preservation of the environment of the rural-agricultural areas in Zimbabwe.

A fourth instance of globalisation from below is the importance of socio-political engagement from the labour force. The militarization of the labour force makes it as though the labour force is a self-organised militia group facing off against the elites within the hegemonic power (Falk, 1997, p. 21). The mobilization of citizens, especially the labour force, against globalisation from above also appears in the form of strikes against the standing political authority in government and the nation's economic elites. Falk (1997) presents the example of the strike that occurred in Canada, but this instance can also be tied to the 2016 protests against the administration of the former and late president of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe's presidency and governance (Falk, 1997, pp.21-22) (The Guardian, Zimbabwe police battle rioters protesting against 'harassment', 2016,). The introduction of such an instance of globalisation from below is because globalisation from above has made it such that there is an increase in unemployment due to a lack of popularity and financial security in organised labour like that of governmental jobs. The structures that otherwise undermine the neoliberal approach are described as strong and elusive, making it difficult to effect real change, hence the social uprisings and riots because the people would feel that they need their voices heard by the government forces that undermine their power as the labour force (Falk, 1997, pp.21-22).

The last instance of globalisation from below that will be used to assess the socio-economic disparities faced in Zimbabwe, that lead to WICBT, is another instance of “...*participatory politics*...” (Falk, 1997, p. 22). This kind of “...*participatory politics*...” is concerned with identity

politics within and of the society, which, according to Falk (1997), has resulted in a loss of control from the government over the people. A positive aspect of this is the freedom of thought expression etc, that is experienced with globalisation from above. This loss of control is resultant of global networks of affiliation growing and sparking nationalist resistance movements (Falk, 1997, p.22). The cases whereby participatory politics is witnessed are in the democratic spaces at local, regional, or transnational levels. In these cases, the groups mobilizing against globalisation from above would turn to transnational entities such as the African Union, and the United Nations for their concerns to be heard about the socio-economic disparities. Some scholars like Falk (1997) would argue that such democratic lobbying would indicate the infant stages of the road towards global democracy (p. 22).

***Theoretical Conclusion:***

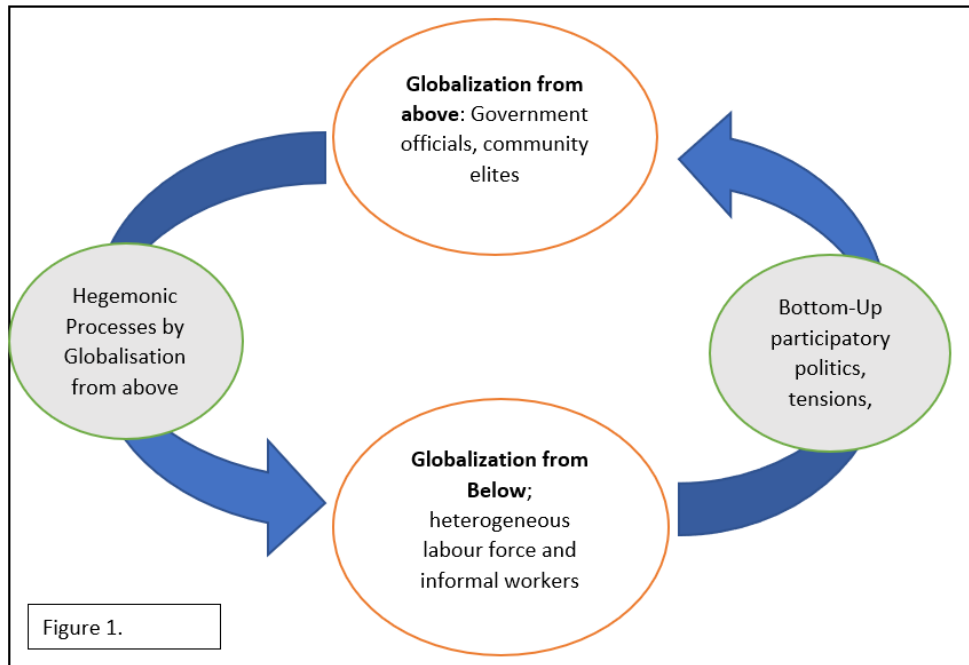
The theoretical frameworks that will be used within the analysis are both globalisation from above and Globalisation from below and the trade aspect of globalisation in terms of the income distribution. It will also use the aspect of globalisation theory that enables and encourages intra-African trade among the ordinary citizen via informal cross-border trade this would be intra-African trade at the micro level. The use of this Globalisation from above leads to the conceptualisation of globalisation from below. This is because those operating at globalisation from below did not have the same socio-economic opportunities as those active in globalisation from above. The agents and networks in question from globalisation from above are the governments in question, the political parties in charge and other elites with the most influence financially and politically, these operate at hegemonic frequencies. Whereas concerns globalisation from below, these include traders at the supposed lower class working to earn an income, other black marketers, and other illegal agents, who also operate at the hegemonic levels, including smugglers, drug traffickers etc.

That the repercussions, or results of globalisation from above are, part in parcel, of the existence of the informal actions of those operating in globalisation from below. The visualisation of such can be seen in the illustration of their relationship in the diagram below in Figure 1. The theorizations encompass two main spheres of focus that would explain the situations in Zimbabwe that would make women informal cross-border traders further involved in the informal market to

make ends meet. The first sphere of focus would be that of globalisation from above which places focus on the elite or otherwise 'hegemonic' powers of the state and other elite groups within the Zimbabwean government and the 1% of the population that is financially and socially well-off. Agents and networks in question when regarding that globalisation from below are traders who operate in the informal market, or black market, (between countries or within their own country), and those who engage in smuggling and drug trafficking. For the sake of this project, a slight comparison between the legality of the actions of these agents will be made in the analysis later on.

The second sphere is in Figure 1. Illustrates the actions made by the operatives in Globalisation from above and how these might affect those operating in globalisation from below. The second sphere reflects the top-down political actions of the elites and the unity found within their operations. The third sphere will represent the position of those operating in globalisation from below, and they are characterised by tension, diversity, and some contradictions due to them being many and diverse. The fourth sphere is representative of the actions carried out by the agents of globalisation from below and reflects their bottom-up participatory politics. The relevance of this illustration of the theoretical framework is such that, it provides a visualisation of the interconnectedness of agency of the WICBTs and the Zimbabwean government. It represents how they affect one another be it negatively and or positively.





### Critique of globalisation from above and below

Globalisation as a concept, theory, and process, is rather difficult to define finitely, has many conceptualisations attached to the theory and can be applied to multitudes of instances in international relations and international political economics. This can be seen as both a negative and positive aspect of this theory when used in research as its supposed flexibility allows for both intriguing interpretations, of cases in international relations and international political economics, and on the other hand due to its constantly changing along with the international system.

There are multitudes of factors that make the theoretical conception of globalisation from above and below, applicable to the case of many nations and regions. Some of these factors involve the durability and stability of the theory throughout the history of international political economy, the similarities of the theory to that of neoliberalist thought, and the complexities held with both globalisation from above and below. The perceptions of the agency of globalisation from above seem to be centred around their political and economical agency but does not give way to a discourse analysis of their perceptions. For this project I include into the agency of the governmental elite, the discourses of the politicians of the ruling party ZANU PF as they are representatives of the ruling government and reflect the perceptions of WICBTs and ICBTs in general in Zimbabwe, and how they affect the legitimacy of the government.

According to Lee (2014), neoliberalism is suggested to be a kind of institutionalization of capitalism that has developed to ensure the continuation of capitalism and to constrain the impact and strength of the labour force (p. 9). In a similar way to the agents and powerful institutions engaged in globalisation to the point where the success of nations is assessed by their economic accomplishments instead of by the wellbeing and development of their citizens. One instead asks how much a country's GDP is to assess their success and their power, as opposed to assessing the social standing of its citizens. Would it not be more prudent to ask 'what percentage of the nation lives above the poverty line? Is it not more prudent to check the Human Development Index as well to assess the development of nations and whether, amidst their GDP growth, is their level of the HDI also improving or is it worsening? Then is this not a more holistic representation of the success of a nation? From a Social

Globalisation from below is value and norms driven, whereas globalisation from above is driven by economy and legitimate power so it would make sense that the two clash with one another (Falk, 1997, p.20). As regards globalisation from above, the agents active within this theoretical framework are vast and with the assistance of technology how the labour force and others act within this level is increasingly changing its face. The militarization of the labour force, as Falk (1997) explained, might not only show itself in the form of physical protest it may also show itself in the form of hacking government databases, like Hillary Clinton's leaked emails, in the form of social media riots as witnessed in the Black Lives Matter Movements.

## **Analysis.**

The following section will involve an analysis of the impacts of globalisation from above which lead to the rise in activity of globalisation from below. For the sake of the analysis, Globalisation from above will be referred to as 'GFA' and Globalisation from below will be referred to as 'GFB'. About the results of 'globalisation from below', an assessment of the reasons why Zimbabwean Women operate in informal cross-border trading in GFB. The main focus of this paper is the Zimbabwean women engaged in Informal cross Border Trade, and how they might be affected by

the actions of the elites and the governmental forces in GFA. This is because, at the beginning of this analysis, the assumption is that their actions might be considered to be reactionary, and the purpose of the study is also to figure out whether the actions of the elite cause their actions to be reactionary as opposed to being interactive with that of the actions of the elite.

#### *Zimbabwe's history:*

From the time of colonialist Rhodesia in the 1800s to an independent Rhodesia characterised by white minority rule in 1965, to the 29 years of Mugabe's Administration, Zimbabwean society has overcome many hurdles, and socio-economic challenges (BBC, 16 December 2022). The present socio-economic challenges in Zimbabwe are such that the country experienced and is still experiencing hyperinflation, food shortages, suppressed freedom of speech as regards politically angled media or any media critical of the government, and civil unrest (BBC, 16 December 2022). Today, Zimbabwe has been found to have the second largest informal economy with, according to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study, "...over 60% of the population relying on informal activities for their source of income...", which would also entail that approximately 40% of the population is engaged in the formal economy (Nthuli, 1 October 2020). What this would show is the high unemployment in the formal economy and hints also at the lack of employment opportunities because, most, they cannot afford to pay new employees. The high value also shows that the population are not only self-employed but has the potential to be engaged in entrepreneurship, it is merely the access to the necessary training. As regards social barriers to elevating oneself in Zimbabweans society via entrepreneurship, there is an economic difficulty. The cost of registering one's business in Zimbabwe is incredibly expensive, and the processes that are involved in formalising one's business are incredibly difficult unless one has the necessary connections and resources (World Bank, 2020).

All of these factors affect the opportunities and potential for those operating informally to formalise their businesses. As concerns informal cross-border trade, the Zimbabwean government has also made it such that trading across borders difficult because one must have the necessary documents and as of 2017, there is the process of a "... *pre-shipment inspection for imported*

*products...*” (World Bank Group, 2020 p.63). From a social point of view, the traders should remain formal because the government has failed to create a situation whereby one can formalise their businesses and work in a society whereby, they can put food on the table and look after their families in a way that the government has not been able to do because of the GFA socio-economic initiative. The traders are not lazy or financially uneducated, they simply do not see the system working in their favour as most of the funds they would be spending would not be going to their livelihoods, but to a system in which they are unable to sustain without plummeting back into the depths poverty. Additionally, the difficulty of conducting business in Zimbabwe links to the traits of an agent acting within GFA whereby the actions or lack thereof are political, whereby they could alter the situations if they wanted to.

#### *The Position of WICBTs in Zimbabwe:*

Before the analysis of the impacts of socio-economic disparities in the country, one must first understand the position of women in Zimbabwe, how this came about, and the concept of gender equality in Zimbabwe. This section provides further context into the main influences and interconnectedness that the black women of Zimbabwe have had and been included in, regarding traditions, cultural values, and matters of economic and political circumstance. The rise of feminism in Zimbabwe is arguably attributed/ credited to the interruption and damage left over by colonialism to connective relationships and the interconnection between the people and the land (Shaw, 2015, p. 13). During the colonial times, while the black women of Zimbabwe were being taught domesticity by the wives of the colonialists, they found avenues in cookery, crockery, and holistic medicines to insert the agency into political society (Shaw, 2015, p. 14-15).

As regards, societal culture, there is a linkage and level of authority and respect attached to those in touch with the spirits of the ancestors. The legitimacy of the role and the person is determined by the role that they play in society, and what level they are at in that role (Shaw, 2015, p16). Pre-colonial times witnessed the Shona tribe women being in positions of authority and great influence through positions of spirit mediums, herbalists and even those believed to bring about the rainy season. These roles have a lot to do with how Zimbabwean women are viewed in today's

society because it shows that even before colonial times women still had equal access to roles that men filled and that they were attributed the same amount of respect and authority in official roles as men were. Equality did not come with the colonialists, contrary to what some Western literature on the rise of feminism in Africa would lead one to believe, it was already embedded within the culture. Examples of this can be seen in the Zimbabwean war hero Ambuya Nehanda who was a spirit medium who encouraged revolt during the first war against the colonials in 1869-97 (Shaw, 2015, p. 17).

Regarding the feminine involvement in ICBT some Women's informal cross-border traders are the main breadwinners of their household because of the unavailability of formal jobs in Zimbabwe (Muzvidziwa, 2015, p. 126). The women would travel for long periods, from one week to two weeks to buy goods and to sell them in neighbouring countries or to bring some of the goods back to Zimbabwe where they could earn in US dollars which has stronger economic value (Chiukira, 2021, p 117). The women who would be engaged in ICBT could be either married or unmarried individuals and despite this still face issues of gender violence throughout their journey and even while at work when purchasing and selling goods, and even at border posts during transit. These particular challenges reflect a separate challenge whereby it greatly affects the quality of life with issues such as HIV/AIDS and other viruses such as COVID (Ruwisi, May 2020). Such gender violence acts would even take the form of rape, assault, extortion and many more. One could say that on top of trying to feed a family, an extra challenge and nail to the coffin is protecting oneself at work when not accompanied by a trusted male for protection.

The issues of poverty, food insecurity and inequality is what brings together and drives the Zimbabwean WICBTs into action. It has been a fight for the right to economic growth and a free market, the fight towards equal opportunity, and the fight towards gender equality and rights. One could say that it is people, and their greed and the gluttonous need for more, and for improvement and for that shiny thing, that is blocking many a nation and many a people from development and contentedness. This selfishness is not hidden by any chance as some elites of developing nations do not even make an effort to hide their exploits. So, because of their actions, the people of these selfish elitist regimes take matters into their own hands because they see that the officials who

swore to protect and work for them for the masses to have access to better livelihoods have not met their end of the bargain. The existence of the WICBTs is proof that African citizens have already been involved in intra-African trade and this is not reflected in national GDP calculations and therefore difficult to spot regarding strengthening the economies. While this is not surprising it also shows a crack in the strength of the governments social system if a large amount of the population is engaged in the informal market as opposed to the formal.

*Are the Socioeconomic disparities caused by Globalisation from above?*

From the information presented beforehand in the literature concerning the socio-economic challenges faced by Zimbabweans, it is safe to say that there are multitudes of reasons for engagement in informal cross-border trading. These might be resultant from poor governing, exacerbated hyperinflation and economic instability, inadequate healthcare services, and for some increased food insecurity. Figure 2. below shows the results of a 2008 fieldwork study on the reasons behind continued ICBT activity by Zimbabweans. This figure bears relevance because this was a study conducted during and after the effects of the 2008 economic crisis.

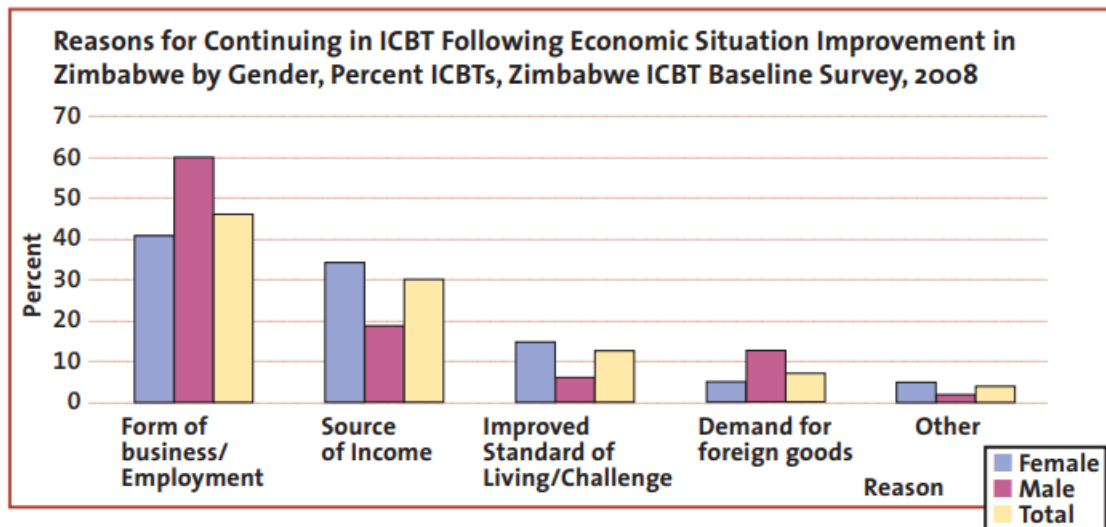


Figure 2. (Retrieved from Capacity4dev.europa.eu library, 25/5/2023).

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) covers three scopes; Health, Education, and the Standard of Living (UNDP, Human Development Reports, 17 October 2022). The lower the MPI value, the better the living conditions faced by the society as witnessed with 0.00% whereby the dimensions for poverty have been reduced to the point of being undetectable by the index (UNDP, Human Development Report, 17 October 2022). However, by comparing the data of Zimbabwe to that of Zambia, Zimbabwe's MPI value sits at 0.110 which entails that the nutrition measured is 18.7% of the population that are nutritionally deprived. Where Zambia is concerned, the dataset presented them as sitting at 0.232 which is significantly higher than that of Zimbabwe (UNDP, Human Development Report, 17 October 2022). This high value shows that Zambia's conditions as regards to poverty of its citizens are rather low in comparison to Zimbabwean, even though they have similar history in terms of being colonised by the same colonial power the United Kingdom. The significance of such a comparison paves the way for another research, however, from the data, we can conclude that as the conditions are worse, this amplifies the need for high activity in an informal economy, and since Zambia is Zimbabwe's neighbouring country, the informal trading across these borders is most likely very high. It also reveals that as regards WIBTs in Zimbabwe, the main reasons why the Zimbabwean communities would be doing better is due to their high activity to evade the problems of poverty.

The Human Development Index (HDI) however, provides insight into examining the gradual progressions in the pillars of human development, these being life expectancy from birth and mortality rate, access to and quality of education, and quality of life (UNDP, Human Development Index, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Zimbabwe's HDI value sat at 0.602 which was an increase of 0.008 from 2017 (UNDP, Human Development Index, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022). The value reflects a slight improvement in conditions, this may not be due to government improvements, the improvements in entrepreneurship and the circulation of money throughout the country, and a global movement that was not necessarily restricted as witnessed by the Covid-19 regulations.

Zimbabwe's HDI value for 2021 after the Covid-19 Pandemic experienced a decrease from 0.600 in 2020 to 0.593 in 2021. This was also characterised by approximately 59 years the life

expectancy, 12 years of education and a gross national income per capita of 3.810 (UNDP, Human Development Index, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022). The presentation of these values is necessary because this data can be seen in the behavioural patterns of the Women Informal cross-border traders during these periods in the empirical data. Where Zimbabwe is concerned, the decrease in Human development value indicates that not only is a shift in the state of quality of life and economic development eminent, but it also shows the validity and legitimacy of the reasons for the increased and steady activity of women ICBTs.

### *Political Agency,*

When one discusses political agency, one must also involve Human rights and the right to protest or express one's political concerns. The right to protest and express one's concerns against wrongdoings of government and governmental officials, or elite friends of the government. Strikes by citizens and opposition met with armed forces, gas tanks, water tanks, beating, arrests, and political leader disappearances (Amnesty International, 18 April 2023). The Mugabe administration and the Mnangagwa administration have respectively, produced further issues in the country to make matters worse, or have done little to address the major issues that affect the majority of the population. The issue is thus that they wish to keep political power within the elite groups of the government and any opposition be it the civil protesting author, or a rising political opponent, those not within the elite GFA circle are not safe to practice their basic human rights (Amnesty International, 18 April 2023). This factoid also hints at the fact that ICBTs do not want to or are afraid to voice their opinions out of fear of being oppressed by government agents who will either make their lives more difficult than they already are, or they will make them disappear like many who oppose the actions and inactions of the Zimbabwean government. The construction of infrastructure, such as roads throughout the country, is a small step but does not address the main issues which involve creating opportunities for jobs to the locals and giving the necessary training, and the simplification of processes for the legalisation and formalisation of ICBT.

Politically, the agents operating in GFA, being the policymakers of Zimbabwe, can be argued to be part and parcel of the socio-political issues being faced. The questions one



might ask are 'why exactly is it frowned upon and does its existence damage the system already put in place by the government and its elites? The reasons as to why it might be frowned upon are that the money is neither circulating in the country which weakens the economy and simultaneously, the ICBTs are avoiding paying the high tariffs at border posts because, in one way, they may have already spent that only on bribing the officials at the border post to allow their wares through (Dzawanda & Matsa, 2023, p. 6). This is not to say however, that all informal cross-border trade is legal, other forms of ICBT involve or are involved with the smuggling of goods, and the stealing or commandeering of public vehicles to sneak the goods across the border without hassle from the police (Ruwisi, May 2020).

As regards the issues that followed after the Coronavirus pandemic and the national and regional lockdown, these impacts on ICBT were negative and dangerous. The Covid-19 regulations placed on migrants by the Zimbabwean government placed many families in danger of starvation, as their livelihoods were dependent on ICBT where which is the sole income for the breadwinners of many households (Ruwisi, May 2020).

#### *Health Care,*

As regards the situation of health care in Zimbabwe, this is another reason for WICBTs to be still active to earn enough money to pay for private and public healthcare. The quality and availability of healthcare in Zimbabwe have decreased and the former has resulted from inadequate money funnelled into the healthcare system and the latter has resulted from a "...*medical brain drain*..." (Columbus Mavhungu, 7 April 2023, para 6). Both, medical workers would state, are the fault of government officials. The relevance that this has on the Women ICBTs is that this factor is another push for them to earn more funds to cover the costs of both the medical treatment and the consultation at the hospitals.

That the government uses "...*scare tactics and command approach*..." to alleviate the healthcare issues that they had caused (Columbus Mavhungu, 7 April 2023, para 4). The health

minister of Zimbabwe, Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, in 2020 saying that the administration will place a ban on health tourism whereby citizens leave the country to other neighbouring practises for either medical assistance or for medical practices (Columbus Mavhungu, 7 April 2023). This situation would only come about as a result of inadequate healthcare services in Zimbabwe in comparison to its neighbours, such as South Africa. The ban on this kind of migration not only shows a falter in the strength of the elite but also shows that the governmental bodies are still grappling for control over their citizens. If the citizens don't spend money on governmental hospitals, then they don't spend money on the system, and the cycle continues.

With this in mind, politically, the citizens diverging from the system structure, the government claims and reactions reveal that this would reduce the legitimacy of the government-issued healthcare system of the nation, as a result. They instead blame the citizens for the failure of the system because they are not engaging in the system, as opposed to addressing the issues that they had created. The nation is thus perceived as money hungry and focalised on the attempt to increase economic growth within the country when in reality, for most successful social democratic nations, the more sustainable path towards economic growth is whereby the government focuses on the people and stabilising the needs of the society. This political action made by a government official shows the retaliation of the members operating at globalisation from above. Placing or insinuating that one will place a ban on healthcare migration is not only drastic, as some cases may be drastic and need to have the bureaucratic tape waived, but it indicates that the legitimacy of the state is wavering. The elites and government officials see in this regard that the citizens are no longer relying on the state to keep their promises, they are instead perceived as empty promises.

From the recent healthcare amendments of 2021, after the Covid-19 Pandemic, the constitution of Zimbabwe stated that the Zimbabwean government will make the appropriate, “...*practical*...” and “...*preventative*...” measures regarding the quality of healthcare services (Zimbabwean Constitution, 2021). These recent amendments merely state that they will make an

effort to either placate or just barely meet the needs of the many citizens who have no choice but to either receive assistance from the government and other healthcare NGOs that frequent Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was such that, with the closure of borders, some with whatever stock they had left, either had to increase or reduce the prices of their goods to earn enough income to tide themselves over for most of the lockdown and since they were unable to cross borders, they rely on others who migrate across borders undetected to get their wares for trade (Ruwisi, May 2020). This is not only risky but also reduces the amount of profit that these women would earn unless they were doing it themselves. In addition to these risks, there is also the issue of trusting the smugglers with the funds to go and buy the goods and to bring back the goods so they can be sold in Zimbabwe. The other additional issue is that of healthcare services, and access to medication should the family fall ill with coronavirus, and in addition to this, there is the need for money to pay for the over expensive medications to treat the coronavirus symptoms. Everything is connected and the issues will only be made worse by corona, however, due to the resilience of the Zimbabwean women as today women were raised, any solution in a tight spot can be found if there is still a will to live.

### *Economic security*

As regards economic security, the employment opportunities to be had in Zimbabwe are very slim. This is due to a multitude of reasons that are also multifaceted. As everything is connected it is safe to say that it is difficult for one to find a job because there might be no jobs to provide as there might be no money to pay for the extra labour, nor the business ventures themselves. Many corporations have gone bankrupt as a direct result of the economic situation in Zimbabwe. Unless one has the money to get past the red tape on certain business ventures then it is very difficult to navigate the corporate environment in Zimbabwe.

The inflation of the Zimbabwean economy is another factor to drive the Zimbabwean housewife and others to see the opportunities to use ICBT as a viable option for their economic security. The Zimbabwean inflation rate as of 2021 was calculated at 98.55% which was a decrease from 2020 which witnessed inflation of 557.20% (Macrotrends, 2023). Following this decrease,

in the same year, 2021, Zimbabwe witnessed economic growth at USD\$28.37B which is a positive instance in comparison to what economic growth was during the pandemic where in 2020 economic growth sat lower at USD\$21.51B (Macrotrends, 2023). The data provided here shows how badly Zimbabwe's economy was hit by the covid-19 pandemic and how the government is also struggling and doing what it can to gain back its national and international legitimacy economically. This progress had to prove that President Emmerson D. Mnangagwa's administration is serious about Zimbabwe being "...*open for business...*" and how the potentials are "...*limitless...*" (African Development Bank, 4 November 2022.). It would also do one well to note that the president meant that Zimbabwe was open for business to the international community to come in and invest via foreign direct investment. This would reveal the agency of the GFA at the elite and national level whereby the administration seeks legitimacy in their actions by bringing funds into the country for there to be more money circulating through the country. This would also explain the 165% increase in tourism in international arrivals into Zimbabwe in 2022 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2022, p. 1),

As regards the unemployment rate, the statistics that Zimbabwe has faced for unemployment are thus, 5.17% as of 2021 and during the covid19 pandemic, this was 5.35% (Macrotrends, 2023). The last figure registered in 2020 is interesting because this was during the height of the pandemic and many businesses were either at a standstill or were hindered by the regulation put in place. One must however take note of the fact that those who were informally employed, such as informal cross-border traders, were not included in this calculation for unemployment. The significance of this information is that it was officially supplied by the Zimbabwean government, as though the formal economy and those engaged in formal employment provide an accurate representation of employment opportunities in Zimbabwe.

*Access to Clean Water and Sanitation*

Another major issue to push WICBTs towards the trade is that of Access to Clean Water and Sanitation measures. Although there may be some sort of evidence proving the government's involvement and engagement in ensuring proper access to water for its citizens, it appears as though the NGOs and other international organisations are more involved in the water and sanitation endeavours necessary for Zimbabwe's proper quality of life. Organisations such as UNICEF, CARE International, UNDP and many more have dedicated themselves to reaching the parts of society that the Zimbabwean Government appears to be struggling to assist (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 25 April 2019).

Access to Borehole and proper drinking water from mineral water bottles is expensive in Zimbabwe especially because one may not have access to proper drinking water and especially if the water supplied by the Zimbabwean city councils is not always safe enough to drink (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 29 November 2021). There have been many cases of cholera as a result of these insecurities and deeply affects not only one's quality of life but on a much larger scale, the future of the population (UNICEF, 29 November 2021). The money is needed to buy these things as city council water is usually unclean and must undergo boiling and filtering to purify the water for it to be drinkable. One can assess these factors and notice the multiple layers of those operating at GFB such that those at much lower levels have fewer options than those at higher levels. WICBTs operating at a higher level, those in urban areas or those who are the second breadwinner of the family have the option to use the profits earned from the trade to purchase either a borehole or multiple gallons of water that are safe enough to use in the home (Ruwisi, May 2020).

Following the issue of Water and Sanitation disparity is that of Food Security, and or famine. Next to the main factors that affect quality of life is Hunger and due to droughts in many of the rural areas of Zimbabwe, food scarcity is a real issue for many (African Development Bank Group, 29 May 2019). The scarcity is what leads some, especially the women of the household to venture out, across the border to trade in whatever they can, it is not food production but even clothes, cigarettes even though South Africa has tariffs against these, dermatological cleaning products and many more (Dzawanda & Matsa, 2023, p. 9).

From the evidence presented above it is also safe to say that the repercussions of globalisation from above are making the Zimbabwean women more engaged in ICBT globalisation from below. The connection between those acting in GFA and those acting within GFB lies in political participation and the circulation of money in the economy. These are the main avenues where the operatives of globalisation from below can retaliate to those operating in globalisation from above. As regards society, one cannot exist properly without the other. They are ultimately connected in that regard. So, when the inequality rate of Zimbabwe sits at 28.00 one must understand the reasons behind why they engage themselves in informal cross-border trade because it yields the most income to keep them out of poverty as mentioned previously, especially if it is a widow-dominated household or single parent household with the female having the responsibility of livelihood protection (World Economics, 2022). The high low level of equality presented also provides further insight into the matter as to why women involved in ICBT remain in the trade. In some countries like that Slovakia and the like with very good rates of equality above 80.00, one would note that within these societies, governments had also made the initiatives to provide job opportunities and prioritised single-parent households where it is the woman who is the breadwinner (World Economics, 2022).

*Examples of Zimbabwean Women's actions and any help they might have received from NGOs, unions, and other agents of 'above' and agents of 'below'.*

They no longer want to conform to the system that placed or allowed them to enter into the very predicament in the first place the mistakes of the Zimbabwean government after the land reform policies changed the economic capabilities and capacity of Zimbabwe's labour force. People were forced into situations that they did not have enough knowledge of. That is, people who were not educated in subsistence farming and large-scale farming, were unable to fill the shoes of those that used to own the land they were gifted. This was one of many of the major changes that the Mugabe administration had made, although, intending to uplift the black population, it ended up being the downfall of the nation's economic capacity.

To reiterate, the argument is not on the specific processes of globalisation but on the agents that act within the frames of globalisation from above. The values and the notions of development and how they view success in those frames. The Social reality created by these agents in GFA has dictated the proceeding repercussions of their action by way of perceived 'insubordination' from the agents acting within GFB. As mentioned before, the government's main concern has been the economic growth of Zimbabwe and whether the larger percentage of the population is involved in such a development is un-remarkable from the elite's perspective. So long as the elites are making money, there appears to be no issue and the cries of the citizens seem to be of no consequence.

Informal cross-border traders have received assistance from the international organisation for Migration (IOM) and other national organisations like the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA) (Ruwisi, May 2020). Organisations such as these have petitioned on behalf of Cross border traders to allow for ease of their trade movements, and processing at the border posts, and has also petitioned for better rights for them as members of the Zimbabwean economy. This is also a prime example of political participation from those operating in Globalisation from Below against the issues exacerbated by those operating in Globalisation from above. It is also in this instance in which the agents of globalisation from below are forcing the hand of the elites because it shows that they will not conform anymore to the system they have created. One must also bear in mind that such an attribute coincides with the characteristics of those operating in globalisation from below in that, although their diverse set of needs and values, they can come together against the elite to achieve goals that will benefit the majority lower class population. The trade tariffs and other economic issues do not affect the informal economy alone, those who operate in the formal economy also have a hand in operating in the informal economy in Zimbabwe which in turn sustains the circulation of money in the informal economy and supports livelihoods (Chiukira, 2021, p. 13).

## **Conclusion.**

The socio-economic challenges in Zimbabwe that many citizens are forced to face are so convoluted and interconnected in the disadvantages are such that the citizens might as well be drowning in their issues. This is a metaphorical way of describing and summarising the issue but from the evidence and literature provided on the matter of surviving and trying to succeed in Zimbabwe, it would be as though one is drowning in their problems. The economic situation in Zimbabwe is such that one has to be incredibly resourceful or successful in their business to keep their head and the community they support, above water. The political situation is such that one has to dodge many restricting government policies to be considered a citizen acting lawfully and under the watchful eye of the government. The political aspect infringes on the human rights of many and poses itself to be almost contradictory to the nation's constitution. Health care in Zimbabwe in light of the other issues the country has, is merely another nail in the proverbial coffin. The healthcare services that should be available to the population are sub-par and unsuitable to the large population, and the illnesses that should be cared for go untreated due to government interfering policies, due to lack of economy to pay for the expensive medication and consultation, and the shortages of medical personnel and the utensils. This paper did not include the issues of electricity cuts because the matter, although important, does not necessarily bear as much relevance to ICBT as medical care, political interference from the government and the draining economic challenges.

While Zimbabwe's labour force is incredibly resilient in the wake of all of the issues, the important part that Informal Cross border trade plays in the stability of many lower-income households are important. The women of the household have much importance especially if they are the main breadwinners and their engagement in ICBT shows that they might be the very backbone of the nation's informal economy in that they allow for importing and exporting of goods, legal or not, they use the funds to pay for the educational, medical, and social needs of the members of the family. They travel frequently for long periods, even while not insured, to earn a living to keep a family afloat in an economy and political system that does the bare minimum.

As usual, when one makes a first assessment of the socio-economic challenges of a nation that would drive its citizens towards informal work, the issues go much deeper than what meets



the eye. The theoretical framework of globalisation from above and below allowed for a much deeper examination of the situation in Zimbabwe. With the neoliberalist policies and actions came the capitalist dream of success via economy, and political control are not agreeing with Zimbabwe as it was the supposed dream, but perhaps this dream many have been chasing is a nightmare for others. The nightmare for some is living in poverty, food insecurity and inequality and war as a last resort. There is a huge shift that is coming about regarding the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe because when situations become as tense as they did before the fall of the Mugabe administration, another one is bound to happen.

One then questions whether Zimbabwe is going to get to a place socio-economically whereby a majority of its population has escaped poverty, has opportunities for work and education, and societal well-being is a priority of the government. That being said, the opportunities for work and education must be so much so that, one earns enough income to live comfortably above the poverty line and the education provided must be accompanied with the necessary tools to put the skills learnt into practice. The informal sector in Zimbabwe is rife with educated professionals without job security and opportunities and this is before considering the employability of the youth. Over the years, it has proven that informal cross-border trading yields enough income to sustain one's livelihood and one's family through complications of hyperinflation, the viral pandemic that would issue border lockdowns, and is a way to dodge or break out of poverty. The resilience of the women traders is reminiscent of the Ghanaian proverb, "Two men in a burning house must not stop to argue", and this is to mean that while acknowledging the issues, it is still better to fight for one's life continuously, and together (Amoh & Johnson, n.d.). It begs one to think that if the Zimbabwean government worked together with its people instead of working its people to the ground for the benefit of the elite, the country would have been in a better place instead of being at the mercy of greed.

At the beginning of this research, there was the assumption that the government might have been doing everything that it could to make the lives of its citizens worse. The question was why the WICBTs have opted for this trade amidst all the challenges, and why have they stayed in the country. The answer to this is that they are resilient and stubborn in the face of what would, could and might kill them. There is no other real solid option for them, especially if they want to keep

their families together, as Zimbabwean women were raised to be the glue that holds the families together and assists the husband, should he be present, to uplift the family in socio-economic standing. The Women involved in the trade are also not merely fighting for themselves but for their families and for future generations. Informal cross-border trading allowed them to easily make those things happen and brought them and their surrounding community out of poverty. On the other hand, the Zimbabwean government has done enough to hinder their trade but has also carried out the bare minimum to help the majority of the population out of poverty. President Mnangagwa's slogan of Zimbabwe being open for business does not tie into their initiatives regarding the softening of borders, because if he meant that Zimbabwe was open for business with foreigners, does that not also entail all countries that are not Zimbabwe? It is a classic case of shooting oneself in the foot. As regards socio-economic issues that citizens are facing, more often than not it is due to the non-socially inclined governments that ignore these issues or sweep them under the proverbial rug and pretend that they are not there. The softening of borders is what is going to help many African nations realise the African Union's goal of a free trading area and the promise of the free movement of goods and people throughout the states.

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