

**PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE**

*Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2026*

*The Senate met at Half-past Two o'clock p.m.*

**PRAYERS**

(THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE *in the Chair*)

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF  
SENATE**

**SWITCHING OFF OF CELLPHONES**

**THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE:** I would like to remind the Hon. Senators to put your gadgets on silent or better still, switch them off so that they do not disturb the business of the House.

**MOTION**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

**(HON. SEN. TAWENGWA):** I move that Order of the Day, Number 1 on today's *Order Paper* be stood over until the rest of the Orders of the Day have been disposed of.

Motion put and agreed to.

**MOTION**

**REPORT OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION ON  
WARD 14 OF CHINHOYI MUNICIPALITY AND WARD 6 OF  
EPWORTH LOCAL BOARD BY-ELECTIONS**

Second Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the Report of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on Ward 14 of Chinhoyi Municipality and Ward 6 of Epworth Local Board By-elections.

Question again proposed.

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

**(HON. SEN. TAWENGWA):** I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

**MOTION**

**REPORT OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION ON  
BY-ELECTIONS HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2025, WARD 21 OF  
CHIMANIMANI, WARD 4 OF GUTU RDC AND WARD 12 OF  
MANGWE RDC**

Third Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the Report of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on By-Elections held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025, Ward 21 of Chimanimani, Ward 4 of Gutu RDC and Ward 12 of Mangwe RDC.

Question again proposed.

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

**(HON. SEN. TAWENGWA):** I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

**MOTION**

**REPORT OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION ON  
GUTU EAST AND INSIZA NORTH CONSTITUENCY AND  
LOCAL AUTHORITY BY-ELECTIONS HELD ON THE 14<sup>TH</sup> OF  
JUNE 2025**

Fourth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the Report of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on Gutu East and Insiza North Constituency and Local Authority By-Elections.

Question again proposed.

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

**(HON. SEN. TAWENGWA):** I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

**MOTION**

**REPORT OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION ON  
BY-ELECTIONS HELD ON THE 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025 WARD 8  
OF MAKONDE RDC, WARD 9 OF MARONDERA  
MUNICIPALITY, WARD 7 OF MASVINGO MUNICIPALITY AND  
WARD 16 OF NKAYI RDC**

Fifth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the Report of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on By-Elections held on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2025, Ward 8 of Makonde R. D.C, Ward 9 of Marondera Municipality, Ward 7 of Masvingo Municipality and Ward 16 of Nkayi RDC.

Question again proposed.

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN (HON. SEN.  
TAWENGWA):** I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

## **MOTION**

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN (HON. SEN.  
TAWENGWA):** I move that Order of the Day, Number 6 on today's  
*Order Paper* be stood over until all Orders of the Day have been  
disposed of.

Motion put and agreed to.

## **MOTION**

### **REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE**

#### **IN THE STREETS**

**HON. SEN. GWATURE:** I move the motion standing in my  
name that this House-

NOTING the increasing number of people living in the streets in Zimbabwe and most particularly in urban centres;

CONCERNED that such people lack access to basic essential services such as healthcare, education, clean water and proper sanitation, among other everyday needs;

APPALLED that most of these people are mentally sound, able-bodied and do not have any disabilities that may prevent them from working to uplift their lives instead of surviving on begging in the streets;

CONCERNED that the majority of these people do not have primary documentation, thereby limiting their access to education, a situation which hinders their ability to acquire skills and improve their socio-economic status;

AWARE that the Government, through the Department of Social Welfare, in partnership with civil society and community-based organisations, is doing its best to provide comprehensive support and social services to the homeless.

NOW, THEREFORE, calls upon this House to:

a) implore the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and development partners to immediately institute research on the root causes for the increase in the number of people living in the streets so that there is intervention from the responsible authorities.

b) Enact, review and strengthen legislative frameworks that protect the rights of homeless people so as to guarantee their access to education, healthcare and other basic social amenities.

c) calls upon the relevant authorities to come up with programmes that ensure that these people have access to social services and participate in economic activities.

d) meaningfully implore the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to have rehabilitative services/programs that specifically target these people living in the street, considering that most of them are young people who are socially vulnerable and end up falling victims to vagaries of substance and drug abuse.

**HON. SEN. CHAKABUDA:** I second.

**HON. SEN. GWATURE:** Thank you once again Mr. President.

I rise to move a motion in my name about street kids who live in

Zimbabwe. Street people are people who live in public life on the streets of a city. They are frequently homeless, sometimes mentally ill and often have a transient lifestyle. People living on the streets are mostly referred to as unhoused and homeless people, depending on the context, background and regional terminology. There are several terms used to describe them. In other words, street children are children who depend on the streets for their survival. They live in the streets, work on the streets, have support networks on the streets, or a combination of the three. Causes of street dwelling are: Economic poverty plays a major role, although other factors are of equally high importance. This can include parental death, parental neglect and other social factors, such as violence and abuse of children at home within communities. Therefore, domestic violence or abuse can drive them away from home. Family breakdown such as abandonment, displacement, or from a disaster, I can give an example: people with their houses being demolished; those people are likely to be street dwellers because they will have no money to rebuild another shelter, nor will they have a place to build another home.

Effects of street children: Street children face severe fiscal and social challenges. Deprived of basic needs and a protective adult support system, they are highly vulnerable to substance abuse and exploitation. Their situation also deeply impacts society by reducing future human capital and contributing to localised crime and social exclusion. Furthermore, the effects of this might generalise the lifestyle of manifest across several critical areas or towns such as Harare, Mutare, Bulawayo, to mention but a few. They also lack access to essential services such as education, protection, health care, clean water and proper sanitation, among other everyday needs.

In conclusion, I urge this House to consider this issue and act upon it so that this whole thing of street children and all street dwellers will be washed out because most of them are able-bodied.

Thank you.

**HON. SEN. KABONDO:** Thank you Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity. I would also like to thank Hon. Sen Gwature for bringing this motion, which is very important and concerning. It raises a concern about the increasing number of people living on the streets in our urban centres. What we see daily is not an urban

problem, it is a humanitarian crisis. Young people, women and children sleep in shop corridors and under bridges without dignity, safety or hope. This should trouble everyone who has a conscience in this House. Many of those on the streets are strong, capable young citizens who should be building our economy. Instead, they are trapped by unemployment, family breakdowns, drug abuse and inequality. Many also lack birth certificates and national identities which lock them out of health care, education and jobs. Without documents, they become invisible in their own country. After having said all this, I would like to commend the Government and the civil society for their efforts so far. However, the scale of the crisis demands urgent action. We need to do research to understand the true drivers of homelessness. We need stronger laws and social protection that guarantee health care, shelter and dignity for all. We need economic empowerment, vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes so our youth can be self-reliant, not dependent. Rehabilitation is also key. Many young people turn to drugs out of hopelessness. Counselling, health care and reintegration programmes can restore them to their families and communities. If we ignore this,

we face more crime, poor health and instability. Addressing homelessness is not just a matter of compassion; it is an investment in national security and development. I really want us to consider this and do something whilst we can when we are in this House. I thank you Mr. President.

**\*HON. SEN. MUPFUMIRA:** Thank you Mr. President, for allowing me to add my voice on the motion on street children who are homeless. I would like to thank the Senator for bringing this motion. Firstly, we know that the Government is supposed to look after everyone, especially children, because it is in our Constitution. If you want to look at the reasons, it is because of us. The issue of poverty has long been there, but our children were not found on the streets.

Due to our educational system, as well as copying from other countries, we are no longer able to look after each other. There is no longer extended family. Long ago, children would not live by themselves even if they did not have relatives. Their friends would look after children but these days we turn a blind eye to them.

There is an issue of parents abusing their children and especially by women. When you are married to a husband who has his own

children, the children are being abused by their stepmothers since the father is not the one who looks after the children and as a result, they end up running away from home. Children are abused and they run away from home. This husband, because he loves his wife, does not follow the children. The Government is trying to take these children to homes, but the children run away. They prefer living on the streets rather than going back to a normal home where there is a father and a mother.

We must respect ourselves and human dignity. Let us leave the Government aside because we are the ones who give birth to these children. When things are difficult, then we want the Government to chip in, when as parents we cannot look after them. As with last week, we were referring to older people affected by dementia. You know that we used to live as a huge family and relatives were always welcome. When visitors came, as children, you would leave your room to accommodate them.

However, now that relatives come, you hear children saying, this is my room and my bed but you know that next-door children are suffering. Children are doing what is called social justice. This is why

they are stealing from us because they will be looking at our houses, which are huge, double-storied, full of everything. So, in search of social justice, that is when they engage in burglary. In the end society is to blame. Some of us, our homes are now empty nests but some children do not have anywhere to sleep; instead of us looking after those children, we leave them to struggle alone.

Focusing on the chiefs, I think we are losing when it comes to our culture. Why are we not able to look after our children? I want women to think if I am deceased, the stepmother would not be able to look after my children. I think we should look after children with the hope that even if they are not ours, they will look after us in the old age. The issue here is not solely about Government, but it is us who are not able to look after the children. Social fabric has now broken down.

You find our children; we now have aunties, not our *tetes* as we know. When we grew up, we would respect everyone. When we were growing up, we had so many fathers; that is our culture, we were one big family, which was united. *Tete* was *tete* but now aunt is referred to with respect, to anyone in the streets. Now, we are not respecting

relatives, but we are respecting our friends. The Government is trying to put them in homes but children need proper homes where there is a father and a mother. What are we doing on our own to help the disadvantaged children?

We talk about drugs. Most children engage in drugs because they think it will lessen their burdens, but it is not so. We are blaming unemployment on drug use, but we have lost our responsibility. How are we raising our children because the children that we are raising, tomorrow they will be the elders. If we bring them up as individuals, they will have the right to go and engage in social justice.

I remember one year, when I was driving a new car, it was a Mazda 626 and I parked along Leopold Takawira. A child came and knocked on my window and asked for money. Then I told him that I did not have any; he destroyed my rearview mirror. I thought he was saying, you are saying you do not have money yet you are driving a brand-new car and you cannot give me bus fare. So, all of us are culprits when it comes to this issue. We are urging our chiefs and churches to come together and look at how we are living with our

children. Yes, the Government can assist but it is not the responsibility of the Government alone, the community must also assist.

Now, I do not even know my neighbour because of durawalls. I think we should do self-introspection. We should intro as families, churches to see social responsibilities we are involved in. Our chiefs should go back to our tradition so that our children will be looked after. Even as families, we should do an introspection of the orphans that are in our families or some who are disadvantaged. What are we doing as Senators so that the children will leave the streets? We should be united, but the blame largely falls on our families because there is no longer love. We are concerned about this world's futile wealth.

It is shameful that as families we do not check where the child is staying. It is very shameful. It is a topical issue that we should address and this starts with you and me. The Government is the umbrella that unites us, but what part are we playing? Some are throwing food in dust bins whilst someone is dying of hunger. We should ask ourselves and do an introspection.

We should unite, come together and bring back our *ubuntu* before we blame these children. We should look at the root cause of drug abuse. If you look closely, you will find that it is us who have caused that. I think we should go back to our *Ubuntu* where we used to help each other. I thank you.

**+HON. SEN. S. MOYO:** Thank you Mr. President for affording me this opportunity to me to add my voice to the motion that was brought before this august Senate, which talks about street kids. This is a very important motion. This is something that we all have to embrace into especially here in Parliament, so that we can assist these two individuals that I will talk about.

I think it is important that parents and the Government should look into this because these are the people who created problems that were never there. As we were growing up, there were no street kids. Maybe it is because the country is growing or there are many people, so children end up without places to stay. The first people I would like to blame are the parents. Parents are no longer disciplining their children as we used to be disciplined. There are many children who are no longer staying with their parents.

As we were growing up, we used to visit relatives. We would stay with relatives and they would make us work very hard and now, they are saying it is child abuse. We would spend the whole day without eating because we were not under the care of our parents but we stayed. We were assaulted using switches and were also beaten. They did not care whose child you are. You were assaulted for going to other places.

Nowadays, what is creating these problems is the Government by enacting laws. This is because now if you try to reprimand a child, the child will tell you, I am going to the police to report you for abuse. If you give the child some chores to do, the child will feel that he is being abused and prefers to go and stay in the streets. The child now thinks he is far much better than heeding the advice that you are giving.

The Government has taken sides with parents. We have taken what the Western world does because for whites, if a child has grown, they can move out and go wherever they want. Currently, our children also want to copy that. If a child is still attending school and if you ask him, why did you not go to school? He will run away and go and

take drugs. Mr. President, if you notice, these children no longer listen. You bear that child, the child grows and no matter what age, to us Africans, a child is a child. You could be old, but in the African setup, you will be a child. If they are grown-ups, they do not want to listen, they never listen to advice. We would appreciate it if we revert to our African culture. If you look at it now, children never take advice and you cannot reprimand them. Yes, we know that if a parent is not working, or if a parent is poor, then the children also suffer. If a parent has no money to send a child to school, other children will go to school without paying fees and some children mock them for failing to pay fees. They end up refusing to go to school and opt to stay in the bushes. These days, parents never give their children rules to follow. As we were growing up, we were being assaulted for doing wrong and if you reported that to your parent, your parent would say that is okay.

Right now, if you find a child seated in the bush and ask him why he did not go to school, he will go and report to his mother. The mother will then come after you to say, why are you reprimanding my child, yet you will be trying to assist. However, this is an issue

between parents and the Government. What we should do is that we should sit down with parents so that they can teach their children.

We also have problems with chiefs. If you go to the chief or the village heads, they will tell you that the Government has taken over all the powers. We no longer have power, because if we try to mediate, you find that you are approached by the police. That is why we no longer help.

I wanted to say that parents should be taught. We have also seen that we also have child pregnancies. You find that a mother who stays in the bush, the child also will stay in the bush. Yes, we know that poverty is causing a lot but the Government is to blame. The Government should look into this. A child should be given roles and by chastising my child, I will be trying to reprimand the child, so the Government should not interfere. The Government should not interfere with how I raise my children. If the Government wants to assist, it can do so by providing grants to the poor. Say, if they give them \$100, they can raise their children. It is difficult to control an adult. If I am not working as a husband and my wife is working, I cannot control her. It is the same with our parents. When a parent tries

to reprimand a child, the child threatens to report the parent. There is a problem because the parent is not being assisted for reprimanding her child. The Government is also not assisting so that these children can have a better life.

With those words Mr. President, I wanted to add what I have just said. Let us go back to where we used to be long back. As we were growing up, as I said, we never had street children. Like where I come from, in Matabeleland, no child ever used to live in the streets. If a child lost any of their livestock, they would be chastised, but they never ran away from home. We were being assaulted by people who were not our parents. That is why we are who we are now. You find a child wearing whatever they want and if you ask their parents, they will tell you that they are afraid to reprimand them because they said they were going to report us to the police. What we are saying is that people should start respecting each other. Thank you.

**\*HON. SEN. SHIRI:** Thank you Mr. President, for according me this opportunity. Firstly, I want to thank Hon. Sen. Gwature for her pertinent motion, which touches on the lives of street children. We heard that they are children, which means they are a product of

parents. A child is a child, the one in the streets or the one in the home. As Members of Parliament, as parents, we see them and we are pained because we want these children to be helped so that they are integrated back into their families and have a good life. You find that here in Zimbabwe specifically in Harare and Bulawayo our big cities, that is where we find a lot of these street kids.

These children run away from their rural areas where they have their parents, but they leave in their homes because of violence which is in the home. Then the children are abused and they find that it is better for them just to wander around instead of living in violent homes. Some of the children run away from hunger because they sleep on empty stomachs. They end up thinking that if they just wander, they might come across good Samaritans who give them food. Some leave their homes because they are now orphans. Either they have lost one of the parents or both parents and you find that the relatives inherit properties, but they do not inherit the children. They do not want to take the responsibility of taking care of the children. People are no longer able to do that. There are a lot of reasons, including the ones I have talked about. Some, because of abuse and

violence, will be staying with their relatives. They are abused and they cannot take it anymore because they are children.

They want access to education. Education is the gateway to poverty. If a child goes to school, they will do well. The only inheritance which we can leave to our children is education. You find that some of the street kids around are grabbing wigs. They are grabbing wigs from women's heads so that they can sell the wigs. Some, you find them at Chicken Inns. I was once buying a Chicken Inn for my grandchild and I was told that you should hurry up and get into your car because the street kids will grab your food from you because they will be hungry. These are children that we gave birth to and they were born by our relatives, they did not just fall from heaven.

I will go back to the point that I think we are failing as parents because these children have a history. Maybe they have lost their parents, but do you think there are no relatives to look after them? Long back, people used to look after each other. When it comes to *Zunde raMambo*, it was there so that it would uplift, it would look after the poor. Even in this country, we have a Children's Home, but

they are overwhelmed because of the number of children. Some babies are being dumped and they are taken there. Now that we are in winter, places such as Gweru and Marondera are very cold and the children will be in the streets.

In 2025, there were mentally disturbed children. She had twins. Many people just chipped in to help them because we could not take them. We just wanted the children to be helped. So, this winter, we are closed. You will find that these children will just be walking up and down without any warm clothing. They will be meeting a lot of children, Christians holding their *Bibles* coming from church. When it comes to the issue of children, it is painful because they are children who need our support.

The situations that these children come across - I have talked about winter, but we have heat waves, we have rain, and all these seasons will be taking place while these children are in the streets. You find these children at different stations, but they are mobile, so you really do not know where they stay because they will just be moving. At times, it is difficult to identify them because they will be mobile. Some of them are being used in drug trafficking because these

children are vulnerable. On top of that, they are used in criminal activities. Some are being used in robberies by thieves and being sexually abused in the streets. We should look after our children. As a nation, it is our duty to look after our children and their parents. When you engage most of them, they will tell you their history and where they came from. Some will say their parents are late because they do not want to return to their toxic situations. However, if you continue engaging them, you will find that maybe the parents are there, or they have lost one of the parents, but because of the painful situations, they do not want to go back.

I once came across a child who was staying with an abusive stepfather who would abuse him physically. On some days, he would not go to school until the teacher realised the child had many stories. These children are being abused to the extent that they think that living on the streets is much better.

Some children leave their homes due to peer pressure, often following their friends, which is detrimental. This is one of the challenges these children face. Peer pressure affects not only children; we adults are also aware that there are very few social workers

available, making it difficult to provide adequate support. While some social workers are working to reunite these children with their families or place them in homes, I want to express my gratitude for the efforts of Her Excellency, the First Lady. She is actively removing children from the streets and transforming their lives. We are witnessing many children being given a second chance, excelling in school due to their intelligence, which contributes to their resilience.

When these children receive love and support, they recognise the value of education and are motivated to move forward with their lives. Numerous programmes are in place and we have seen many children developing their theses and taking the initiative to mentor others. These children express a desire to return to school and further their education. They want another chance to start their own businesses and pursue their education.

As a nation, we should advocate for the Department of Social Services to receive adequate funding so that it can effectively assist children in the streets. In the Midlands where I come from, there are many children in various homes, including the Midlands Children's Home which houses a significant number of them. When a child turns

18 at the children's home, they are released regardless of whether they have secured a job. The authorities in these homes often feel compelled to release them to make space for new arrivals. Unfortunately, we have seen some of these young adults wandering the streets because they have nowhere else to go.

Mr. President, children are our responsibility, all of us, so that we look after them. We should take those children, the orphans and look after them. There will be no avenging spirits, because a child is a child.

Mr. President, as I stand here, I want to share that I have adopted a child and am raising her. To me, a child is a child, regardless of their background. I have sent him to school and he has earned a degree. I hope he will qualify for the Presidential Scholarship to continue his education. However, if you learn more about her history, you will see that many people lack empathy for street children. Some of these children have legitimate reasons for ending up on the streets, yet we often label them simply as street kids. When they ask for food, we should take time to engage with them and understand their stories instead of making assumptions. Instead of engaging with them, we

often judge these children. As Members of Parliament, we should advocate for increased funding for this department so that it can take children off the streets. They need enough time to visit and communicate with these children, allowing meaningful engagement that can lead to effective support. By doing so, we can ensure that our children receive basic accommodation and food. These children need our support. As leaders, it is our duty to reduce the number of street kids in our communities. Our country is home to numerous organisations and churches dedicated to assisting these children.

We must come together and acknowledge that by taking responsibility for engaging these children, we can help them leave the streets. It is important to recognise that there are no street kids; every child originates from a community led by local chiefs and yearns for a sense of identity. Living on the streets denies them the opportunity for a fulfilling life.

Mr. President, I, therefore, strongly support the motion that we value our children as they are the future leaders of our nation. What will our country become if we allow many children to roam the streets? These children, unable to find work, are exposed to harsh

conditions and negative influences. The language they adopt reflects their environment, and it is our responsibility to ensure they are not left to navigate this alone.

As a compassionate society, we should support those who are already working to assist these vulnerable children. Nothing is impossible when we remember that every individual is created in the image of God. We must take action to help reunite these children with their families, shelter them and enable them to return to school.

**THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE:** Hon. Senators, I have told you time and again that when we are conducting business in the House, you should put your phones on silent. Increasingly, I am seeing Hon. Senators leaving their phones on and disturbing the business of the House. Some of you are even answering phones during the flow of business. It must stop immediately before I embarrass you.

**HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI:** Thank you Mr. President for this opportunity to contribute to this important motion, which was moved

by Hon. Sen. Gwature, a motion that amplifies the growing phenomenon of people living on the streets in Zimbabwe.

Mr. President, whereas the motion talks more specifically about street kids, I seem to observe that we have gone beyond just street kids. We have street communities. We have classes of people that live on the streets. Some know no other home except the streets. Some were born in the streets, grew up in the streets, married in the streets and brought forward children in the streets. These are different from the other classes that ran away from homes for several reasons.

So this challenge, Mr. President, is very complex and it needs us to step on the accelerator pedal with caution because we must remember, in fact I urge the Senate to approach the issue with empathy and caution so that we do not condemn every person that we see on the street as some rogue, as some stubborn person that they know no other place. I do not oppose the motion. I certainly like it; it is sweet, but in some aspect, the motion seems to assume that many street dwellers are mentally sound. I have seen many that are not mentally sound, but they add to the population of the street communities as well as street kids because whereas they could be

mentally challenged, they are not short of amorous desires. They also mate and produce children on the streets.

Some are not able-bodied and many are there because they are unwilling to work. Many people are willing to engage in productive, meaningful work, but we all know what the challenge could be. So, we do not want to conclude that these people are a nuisance. It is a complex issue, Mr. President, with certain root causes, which I view unemployment as one of the causes for underemployment, rural-urban migration; people are finding more opportunities in urban areas and they desire to be in the urban areas. So, they desire to run away from digging *pfumvudza* holes to come to look for work in industries

Family breakdown which colleagues have walked through, drug and substance abuse, loss of livelihood due to economic problems are some of the causes, Mr. President. We also have a lot of child-headed families; there is no proper shepherding where you have got child-headed families and there are lots of them. We simply do not know the statistics. Mr. President, thousands and thousands of children look after each other and they do not have standards, they do not have the

required guidance, they do not have the parentage that most of us here have enjoyed.

I agree with colleagues that let us look at ourselves, let us look in the mirror, introspect, examine ourselves and say, are we still *abantu* or have we lost it? – [HON. SENATORS: *Hear, hear.*] - It is important that we understand that the structures that we had as *vanhu/abantu*, never allowed children to wander in the streets; that is perfectly true. So, part of the blame is the loss of *chivanhu/ubuntu*. I completely agree with that.

Mr. President, if you go to our Constitution, the Constitution of this land, which is a beautiful document done by the people for themselves in 2013, it demands that the State takes reasonable measures to ensure that every person has access to shelter. I am not apportioning blame just to the Government, but there is a constitutional provision that demands that the Government behaves like that. Every single person should have accommodation, should have shelter under this Government, in a prosperous country called Zimbabwe where the GDP is growing as we have never seen, 57

billion now per year. It should be possible to support every single person because the economy can do it Mr. President.

Section 75 guarantees the right to education. When it is a right, it is a right. A right is a right. It is provided for in the Constitution of the land and that right must be enjoyed. Section 76, Mr. President, guarantees the right to healthcare. The motion speaks to these issues. Section 82 provides for protection for people with disabilities. So, these provisions were built in the Constitution for a purpose. The Constitution prophesied that there will be poor people. It prophesied that in Zimbabwe there shall be people with disabilities. It prophesied all these things and demanded that the State must step forward where people fail to make sure that the gap is filled - [HON. SENATORS: *Hear, hear.*] - The increasing number of people on our streets should therefore concern us not only as a social problem but also as an indicator of gaps in the fulfilment of our constitutional rights. There are gaps in the fulfilment of this and we must make deliberate steps to make sure that these gaps are closed Mr. President.

We also talk to issues of documentation as a hindrance to the ability to enrol in schools, without documents you cannot enrol and

you cannot write exams. So, the Government should conduct targeted mobile registration for the street communities so that they can get these identity documents, leading to the ability to enjoy certain rights.

Mr. President, let me talk to issues of rehabilitation rather than removal. We have seen celebration of clean streets because the police have gone in there to chase people, to arrest them, to send them to far and beyond. I know of children that are stored way out there, not even at *Sikhombela* or *Gonarezhou*, out there where the only sound they hear is of chirping birds and the only thing that entertains them is big trees, baobab trees, that is being irresponsible Mr. President. We must not condemn these people. We must strengthen rehabilitation rather than removal because removal is just temporary. Removal is creating clusters of people in courts who are stateless, who are loved by no one, who are isolated, who are in economic *Gonakudzingwa*.

Mr. President, it should be possible to have transitional housing facilities in every district and in every town. It should be possible and very easy to do that. Public works should be able to do that so that people can have halfway homes as they get rehabilitated; then they

can be released into society, not from the streets and not from the angry chills of June Mr. President.

Let us talk of economic empowerment and street communities. As I have said in my introductory remarks, we have street communities and these communities remain there on account of many possible reasons, including poverty Mr. President. We must be very careful, that we do not get tempted to criminalise poverty. We must deal with poverty. We must not punish the poor.

In conclusion, I wish to say homelessness is not merely a welfare issue. It is a developmental issue, a human rights issue and a governance problem. The test of a caring community is not how you look after billionaires nor is it how you look after millionaires. A State that holds the hand of the poorest picks them up and ensures they have a comfortable life is a caring State that deserves kudos from its citizens. A State that fails should enjoy the opposite of praise. It must be blamed Mr. President.

A good State must look after the most vulnerable, those who are disabled, those who do not have anything to eat and the homeless. The State should not be busy putting together policies that make sure that

the rich become richer. For that reason Mr. President, I support the motion because it is a well-thought-out motion.

*Hon. Sen. Dr. Chief Ngugumbane having passed between the Chair and the Hon. Senator speaking.*

**THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE:** Order, order. Hon. Sen. Chief Ngungumbane, could you please sit somewhere for the time-being.

**HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI:** For that reason Mr. President, I support the motion very strongly because it talks to the real issues of our communities. I support it with a little bit of adjustment. We must be alive to the issue that it is not a choice to be on the streets. There is some reason for people being there. There are some catalysts for people being on the streets and we must deal with those serious fundamental issues if we are to deal with this problem. Thank you Mr. President.

**^^HON. SEN. MOHADI:** Thank you Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity. I will not say much but a few words in support of the motion brought into this august House by Hon. Sen. Gwature.

When we talk of children, we need to put our minds together so that we support what we put into this House. I also want to support what Hon. Sen. Shiri indicated, that we all need to support each other in this issue. If we do not help each other in the upbringing of our children, it means they will be lost children. The generations to follow will be lost in the near future because we will not be able to talk to them; we will not be able to reprimand them. They choose to stay in the streets and do whatever they want. If we are to look at this generation, it is certainly not going to be a future generation that is going to be hopeful. Where we expect to have future leaders, we realise that we will be failing as parents. We need to have children who will be doctors and engineers but with this kind of behaviour in our children, we will certainly fail because we will not be able to reprimand them.

Mr. President, allow me to thank those who managed to take these children back to school. Some of them took these children back to their homes but the efforts were not that fruitful because there are so many children in the streets.

Mr. President, in the different constituencies we come from, especially in the borderline areas, these children suffer from early pregnancies, child marriages and divorces because they will not have matured to be doing elderly stuff. We need to strictly look at this situation and show that we bring a positive change to our children because it is our main focus as parents and as leaders in this House. We need to ensure that these children are well looked after. So, we are not saying our Government is not doing anything. I am saying the Government has ensured that there is BEAM but instead of it helping our children to go to school, as leaders, we are taking our relatives and our grandchildren. They are the ones that are put under BEAM, yet the ones that really deserve to be in those programmes are left out.

Therefore, we need to ensure that in our services, we carry out our duties appropriately. These children, some of whom have grown up, even though they have not had opportunities to go to school, we can take them for short courses like dressmaking and carpentry which will assist in ensuring a better future for them but the challenge is that we are a bit relaxed in ensuring that they get a better future for themselves.

It appears we are okay seeing them wake up in the streets, involved in drugs and if we are to say something, we are only quick to say we cannot control them because if you are to say something, you will be arrested under human rights issues.

Right now, even if we talk about the upliftment of these children, it does not mean we have much. With the little we have, we need to assist them. Even in soccer tournaments, if we take these children to participate in sporting activities like soccer, this can improve their lives. Where I come from in Beitbridge, there are some children who, despite the fact that they do not have much, are talented in netball. They were recruited for different netball teams. As we speak, some of them are now playing for the national team and others are in university. This has assisted in helping these children to get out of drugs and improve their lives through sport, which can assist them in their lives tomorrow.

With those that are grown up, right now in Beitbridge, we have 400 school leavers who were recruited into different menial jobs. Some of them, after finishing these short courses are now making cakes, soaps, dressmaking and some of them are even making

uniforms. I recruited some of them in my shop so that they operate from there. I am not saying it is because I am able but it is because of some of the few plans that I am realising can assist these children if you are supporting them.

If you can allow me to go back to culture and go to Chiredzi. They have a way of bringing up their children in their culture and the children are not going to school. During the holidays, the grown-ups are taken to cultural activities. The males are taken to a cultural activity whereby they are taught how they can be better elderly people. Still in Chiredzi, this is where I saw girls who have not yet indulged. They ensure that they are taught the cultural practices of the Shangani people. This is where we then look forward to getting our future doctors and lawyers, amongst the other professions.

You can consider, as Hon. Members, to go to these areas to see how they are managing to ensure that they teach their children. Yes, we used to do it but now, because there are different issues that are contributing to the negative practices in how we handle our culture, then you would find that practices are no longer followed accordingly.

With these few words, Mr. President, thank you and I support this motion by Hon. Sen. Gwature in this august House.

**HON. SEN. GWATURE:** Mr. President, I move that the debate do now adjourn.

**HON. SEN. MATIBIRI:** I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

## **MOTION**

### **RESUSCITATION OF THE COTTON INDUSTRY**

**HON. SEN. MANYENGAVANA:** Mr. President, I move the motion standing in my name that this House:

NOTING that the cotton industry, once famed the ‘white gold’ for Zimbabwe, thrived in the early years of Zimbabwe’s independence, supporting over 400 000 small-holder households, mainly in Gokwe, Kadoma, Chiredzi and Muzarabani Districts;

FURTHER NOTING that this industry supported ginneries, oil expressers, and textile mills, thereby contributing significantly to rural incomes, gross domestic product (GDP) and, in the process, earning a lot of foreign currency;

DISMAYED that production fell from 353 000 tons in 2012 to just below 70 000 tons in 2023 owing to low producer prices that were offered, late input deliveries and climate change vagaries;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the cotton industry collapsed in the early 1990s, leaving some of the infrastructure underutilised thereby turning them into white elephants, for example, ginneries in Kadoma;

NOW, THEREFORE, resolves that the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement undertakes a massive programme to resuscitate the cotton industry by ensuring timeous payments to cotton farmers and timeous distribution of seeds to all farmers involved in cotton growing, thereby building trust in the cotton industry.

**HON. SEN. MATIBIRI:** I second.

**HON. SEN. MANYENGAVANA:** Mr. President, cotton production can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Zimbabwe and the business flourished so well. We had several companies that were established because of the production of cotton in our

country but the situation just changed. The other issue I want to talk about is where cotton is grown. Cotton is grown in the lowveld areas like Chisumbanje, Gokwe, Sanyati and Kadoma. These areas have low rainfall. The situation just changed due to some factors which I am about to highlight.

Mr. President, our cotton companies have suffered the most, the factor is the pricing issue. Cotton farmers are getting very low prices, which is as little as 30 cents per kilogramme. It is not giving value addition to cotton, which has resulted in some farmers leaving the growing of cotton. The other factor that affected our cotton company is because of support from the Government. In the past, the Government used to support our growers. Now, there is a problem in getting inputs to farmers. As I have highlighted in the past, the biggest buyer of cotton is the Government, which is COTTCO and it is not paying farmers in time. Sometimes it will take up to three years before it disburses the money to the farmers. Therefore, farmers are finding it very hard to go back to the field.

Most of our clothes are made from imported raw materials. It is like carving a Zimbabwe bird with a stone from Western

countries. We have got the climate and everything but the problem is the support. Farmers need support to produce cotton. If we go back to yesteryears Mr. President, cotton was next to tobacco. Now, cotton farmers have stopped growing cotton because it is not giving anything to them. So, Mr. President, my motion is saying we can do it. Yes, in 2022, there was a policy that came from the Government to increase the production of cotton but we have failed to meet the target. My motion is therefore asking the Minister to take the cotton farmers seriously so that the crop production goes back to its past.

There is hope to revive cotton farming in Zimbabwe. We can boost our local textiles by promoting our farmers to produce cotton. So, my motion Mr. President, is for Government to support the local people, support the farmers and to create companies that will give value addition to cotton. Mr. President, we need to promote the farmers, make sure they will be paid in time for their produce and get a fair price on their product, not these thirty cents per kilogramme.

We also need to promote the local industries because, as of now, Mr. President, as a country, we are receiving cheap material from China, even as far as Tanzania, our neighbouring countries, South

Africa and Zambia. So, we need to retool our industry and promote the production of garments. In the past, there were a lot of companies that were making garments. The likes of Modzone in Chitungwiza, Paramount and Merlin. These companies used to make a lot of good towels but that has since stopped. When we grew up, we used to get good towels from Merlin but it has stopped because there is no cotton production.

My motion is: let us promote cotton. It will help a lot in the employment of our people as a country Mr. President. It is also going to help in cotton production. It will also help in providing seeds that will be used in the production of cooking oil and cattle feeds. So, cotton helps a lot in the country and hence, the production of cotton has to be increased. It is an essential product and crop in the country.

Mr. President, there is tobacco, which is regarded as the golden leaf and cotton is regarded as the white gold. So, if we promote the production of cotton, it will also help the purse of the country. My plea to the Ministry and the Executive is, let us promote the white gold to ease their business for Zimbabwe.

I also want to conclude Mr. President by saying that it is very possible that cotton can help Zimbabwe. Cotton can also increase the production of a lot of sectors, as the value chain of cotton is not only the garments that can be produced from it. It goes as far as, like I said, cooking oil, feeds for the cattle and so on. All these things Mr. President, will help Zimbabwe.

**HON. SEN. MATIBIRI:** I rise to second this motion on the unfortunate development of one of Zimbabwe's most promising crops, cotton. Indeed, I agree Mr. President that cotton was once famed as Zimbabwe's white gold, contributing directly to the gross domestic product and foreign currency earnings. Cotton as a crop also supported many households, especially in the dry areas of Zimbabwe, to mention but a few, Muzarabani, Gokwe, Kadoma, Chiredzi and so forth. The recent collapse in the production market of cotton has left many families in these areas vulnerable at the household level due to loss of employment, and with it, revenue earnings for the country.

At the heart of this motion, Mr. President, is a call to reconsider and support the production, marketing and processing of cotton. The call finds rhythm with the recent pronouncements by the President of

Zimbabwe to support an expanded cotton input programme in the 2025-26 season, which is aiming to produce more than 300 000 tonnes of cotton. This programme, which is dubbed the Cotton to Clothing Strategy, is also aimed at increasing local production, processing and competitiveness in the entire cotton value chain.

Over the years, cotton production has declined in Zimbabwe from a peak of 350 000 metric tonnes to just 28 000 in 2024/2025 season. This is very sad news. It seems to point to the reality that cotton as a crop in this country is dying. If this trend is not monitored five to ten years down the line, we will forget about this crop but not only forgetting about the crop, we will forget about the contribution that it has done and which contribution we must not downplay.

What has happened to the entire cotton production ecosystem is a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. It has happened in other sectors Mr. President. The steel production sector had almost collapsed but we are where we are today. We are proud of Manhize producing and conquering the region. So, it is possible to revisit if we have got an economic strategy, a plan and a realisation that this crop can once again occupy the commanding heights of our economy.

From falling global prices to delayed payments, climate change and labour unavailability, Zimbabwe's cotton production ecosystem has simply neglected this crop. This is not to say cotton has lost economic significance in Zimbabwe. A revived cotton industry would go a long way in eliminating cheap second-hand clothes that are flooding the market. Not only that, the importation of cheap second-hand clothes into the country has dealt a fatal blow to our local clothing industry, with loss of employment, condemning many families to poverty, penury and want.

Our cotton must support the manufacturing sector. This is the essence of cotton to cloth, which the Government has pronounced. I want to echo what has been advanced by Hon. Sen. Manyengavana in his motion that it is saddening to realise that our national fabric is made from imported cloth. That is something that we must be ashamed about. We import a cloth from outside the country, then we put our national symbols on it and wear it with pride. It is something that should not be acceptable. I resonate; I stand in fide, solidly with this example that it is like carving the Zimbabwean bird from a soapstone that has been imported from Japan. What is that? What are

we saying about our capacity to produce our own goods, our own symbols from our own raw materials? It is a point that we must ponder.

We need to support a deliberate effort to retool for maximum production. We need maximum investment in the cotton industry if we are to revive the clothing industry in this country. Over the years, the machines have grown old and outdated. I am being informed that our machines would produce maybe five blankets in an hour when global technologies are such that they can produce thousands and thousands of blankets over the same period. So, retooling becomes a necessity if you want to revive this cotton industry.

Our textile industry can only be competitive if we install state-of-the-art technology to turn cotton into cloth. A revived textile industry will add value in many sectors. We need competent research in terms of what has happened to the cotton industry because, at this rate, we just have to declare that cotton has been phased out and we have to live with the consequences of that. Mr. President, this motion is a call by the cotton-producing areas in this country, the drier areas of our region that you must bring back our source of income. You

must bring back our source of livelihood. You must bring back our source of employment.

When viewed from our desire to create our only local clothes, it is a call to reclaim our identity as a country. I so submit Mr. President and thank you.

**HON. SEN. KUPFUMA:** I move that the debate do now adjourn.

**HON. SEN. MATIBIRI:** I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

## **MOTION**

### **STRENGTHENING NATIONAL RESPONSE TO NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

**HON. SEN. MDHLURI:** I move the motion standing in my name that this House-

NOTING with concern the increasing prevalence and high mortality rate caused by Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD's) such as hypertension, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory illness, and mental health conditions across Zimbabwe;

ACKNOWLEDGING that NCDs now account for a significant proportion of preventable deaths in both urban and rural areas, posing a serious public health and development challenge;

DISTURBED by the limited access to early diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care services, especially in public health institutions and high cost of medication and specialised care of NCDs;

ALARMED by the growing risk factors contributing to NCDs such as unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, alcohol and tobacco abuse, air pollution and lack of public awareness;

NOW, THEREFORE, resolves to:

a) call upon the Ministry of Health and Child Care to strengthen the national response to NCDs through increased funding, awareness campaigns, and decentralisation of diagnostic and treatment services;

b) recommend the development and enforcement of public health policies that promote healthy lifestyles, regulate harmful substances and integrate NCD prevention into primary health care;

c) urge the Government to prioritise the training and deployment of health care professionals with skills in NCD management, particularly in underserved areas;

d) encourage collaboration with development partners, civil society, and the private sector to support screening research and public education on NCDs; and

e) further call for regular Parliamentary oversight on the implementation of national and international obligations relating to NCDs, including budget allocations and performance of prevention programmes.

**HON. SEN. KABONDO:** I second.

**HON. SEN. MDHLURI:** Thank you Mr. President. I rise to move the motion that this House,

- noting with concern Mr. President the increasing prevalence and high mortality rate caused by Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD's) such as hypertension commonly referred to as BP, diabetes commonly referred to as sugar, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory illness, and mental health conditions across Zimbabwe;
- acknowledging that NCDs now account for a significant proportion of preventable deaths in both urban and rural areas, posing a serious public health and development challenge;

- disturbed by the limited access to early diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care services, especially in public health institutions and high cost of medication and specialised care of NCDs;
- alarmed Mr. President by the growing risk factors contributing to NCDs such as unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, alcohol and tobacco abuse, air pollution and lack of public awareness;
- now, therefore, resolves to:
  - a) call upon the Ministry of Health and Child Care to strengthen the national response to NCDs through increased funding, awareness campaigns, and decentralisation of diagnostic and treatment services;
  - b) recommend the development and enforcement of public health policies that promote healthy lifestyles, regulate harmful substances and integrate NCD prevention into primary health care;
  - c) urge the Government to prioritise the training and deployment of health care professionals with skills in NCD management, particularly in underserved areas;
  - d) encourage collaboration with development partners, civil society, and the private sector to support screening research and public education on NCDs; and

e) further call for regular Parliamentary oversight on the implementation of national and international obligations relating to NCDs, including budget allocations and performance of prevention programmes.

**HON. SEN. KABONDO:** Thank you Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to add my voice to the motion brought by Hon. Sen. Mdhluri on non-communicable diseases. This is an important motion because it affects people of our age group here. After all, we have eaten, drunk and smoked everything, so we know the outcome of that. Non-communicable diseases are diseases that are not transmissible directly from one person to another. They are non-infectious. As it is, non-communicable diseases account for 43 million deaths annually, according to the World Health Organisation statistics. This then means that these NDCs account for three out of four deaths and it illustrates the magnitude of these diseases.

According to statistics, the leading NCDs are cardiovascular diseases. These include heart attacks and strokes, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases like asthma, and diabetes, which accounts for more than two million deaths directly and indirectly annually. This

also includes the diabetes-related kidney diseases. The risk factors of these diseases can either be behavioural or environmental.

Understanding them is crucial so as to know how to tackle them.

When it comes to behavioural risks, the factors are tobacco use.

Tobacco use accounts for more than eight million global deaths per year. Unhealthy diets such as the consumption of too much sugar, for those who like sweets, salt or trans fats, physical inactivity contributes to obesity.

I think we should also put a law that once or twice a week, we leave our cars downstairs and walk up the mountain for wellness. The fourth one is the harmful use of alcohol. It increases the risk of various non-communicable diseases such as liver cirrhosis and some types of cancer. Mr. President, environmental factors include exposure to pollutants. This is true for people who live and work in mining towns and because of exposure to polluted air, they are prone to lung diseases. I remember when I was growing up in a mining town, our parents, after every shift, were given a pint of fresh milk.

They were working in the colliery and every time we asked, they would say they were being given a bottle of fresh milk so that

they could clear their throats and lungs of the coal dust. We do not see that anymore. It is a debate for another day. Social economic determinants like poverty, limited access to healthy food and healthcare, and higher rates of NCDs; we then call upon our Minister of Health and Child Care to strengthen the national response to communicable diseases through education. This can be done through awareness campaigns, through policy changes, limitation on tobacco. How can we limit this, through tax increments on unhealthy products like sugar and sweetened beverages, including tobacco. I thank you Mr. President.

**+HON. SIBANDA:** Thank you Mr. President, for the opportunity to add my voice on the motion brought by Hon. Sen. Mdhluri on non-communicable diseases. These non-communicable diseases keep increasing, like diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer. If you realise, most of us do not take time to visit our doctors for checkups to know which diseases we suffer from. Like right now, there are these diseases that have been mentioned like lung diseases. Cancer is a non-communicable disease as well. It shows itself in several ways that cannot be easily realised.

If you are to figure out that you are suffering from cancer, it is a deadly point because most cancers are not treatable. They can only be treated when there is just a wound. These wounds can be treated in most cases. In most cases, cancers that show as a wound normally come out as such but cancers like breast cancer, cervical cancer, lung cancer, or stomach cancer take quite some time for one to figure out they are suffering from that disease, just because people will not be visiting their doctors for checkups.

If we are to do awareness campaigns, even some of us in this Senate, we realise it at a later stage that we are suffering because we are not taking time to go for checkups with our doctors. Diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure, with time, people would at some point say they are being affected by supernatural things. They will say they have been beaten by unforeseen things. This is because people will not be visiting clinics for checkups and yet they will be suffering, figuring out that they are not well.

In most cases, people would be given some ailments to prevent them from conditions that will exacerbate their suffering. Let us say for people with asthma, if they visit places that are being painted, they

will be given certain medication or milk to ensure that the condition is not exacerbated. There is a lot that we can look at regarding these non-common diseases. Some will be saying we can use traditional herbs, but as Africans, we do not have a measure for these traditional herbs. It is good, but we need to take great care each time we take these herbs.

Furthermore, when we hear that maybe a particular individual got help from taking the amarula plant, we just go on to take the same plant without any appropriate measure. People differ because of our biological makeup; what works for another person might not work for you. You realise that if someone takes the same medication or herb and the next person takes the same drug and the same measurement, they might not respond well to the same treatment. So, let us ensure that we look for appropriate treatment for these diseases.

There is so much in this country that has made us suffer from these non-communicable diseases, like the food that we eat, the workplaces that we operate from and certain things that we use. Hon. Sen. Kabondo indicated that we also need to exercise. If we exercise, this will help us. Most people in their different workplaces, like

uniformed forces have their particular days where they engage in sports; like a whole barrack would commit to a certain particular sporting activity. In Parliament, we also have a particular day where we are encouraged to go and partake in sports.

Most of us are going to die because of obesity, among other issues, because we do not do physical exercise. We can keep assuming that maybe one day I will do sports but we need to take great care of ourselves and ensure that we do not suffer from these non-communicable diseases. I thank you.

**THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE:** Thank you Hon. Sen. Sibanda for teaching us about these communicable and non-communicable diseases. I thank you.

**HON. SEN. MDHLURI:** I move that the debate do now adjourn.

**HON. SEN. KABONDO:** I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

**MOTION**

REPORT OF THE JOINT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND THEMATIC COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE PETITION BY THE POWER OF TOUCH INSTITUTION ON THE REVIEW OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS THAT HAVE A BEARING ON THE SENIOR CITIZENS

**HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA:** Thank you Hon. President. I move the motion standing in my name that this House considers and adopts the Report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and the Thematic Committee on Human Rights on the Petition by the Power of Touch Institution on the Review of Laws and Regulations that have a Bearing on the Senior Citizens.

**HON. SEN. NCUBE:** I second.

**HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA:**

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 According to Section 149 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, read together with Appendix E, of the Standing Rules and Orders of the National Assembly on petitions, every

citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to petition Parliament to consider any matter within its authority, including the enactment, amendment or repeal of legislation.

1.2 On 15 August 2025, Parliament received a petition from the Power of Touch Institution, represented by Mr. Francis Dembetembe and Ms. Beatrice Sithole, requesting Parliament to review laws and regulations that have a bearing on senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals. The petition was examined for compliance and found to be admissible and was subsequently referred to the Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. Given that the matters raised directly implicated the rights, dignity and welfare of older persons. The Committee considered the petition jointly with the Thematic Committee on Human Rights.

1.3 The petition raised issues of law, policy, administration and public service delivery affecting older persons in Zimbabwe. In particular, it pointed to the fragmentation of the legal framework governing older persons, the inadequacy of social protection programmes, the absence of dedicated

institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring of the same and the limited recognition of the social and economic contribution of senior citizens and retired professionals.

## **2.0 Petitioners' Prayer**

2.1 The petitioners beseeched Parliament to take legislative and oversight measures to improve the conditions of senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals in Zimbabwe. Their principal prayer was that Parliament should cause an urgent review of all laws and regulations bearing on older persons and facilitate the enactment of a new and comprehensive Senior Citizens, Pensioners and Retired Professionals Act.

2.2 Specifically, the petitioners requested Parliament to consider the following measures:

Commission an urgent review of all laws, regulations and socio-economic conditions affecting senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals, with a view to adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to reform.

Cause the enactment of a new and comprehensive Senior Citizens, Pensioners and Retired Professionals Act that consolidates and harmonises the rights, protections and benefits of older persons. In specific terms, the laws should provide for the following:

- Define an “older person” or “senior citizen” to include every Zimbabwean aged fifty-five years and above.
- Establish a department in the relevant Ministry headed by a Director to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the proposed legal framework, supported by adequate budgetary and human resources.
- Decentralise this office to all provinces and ensure that major public service points such as hospitals, clinics, banks, ports of entry, supermarkets, hotels, polling stations and educational institutions have properly manned older persons contact desks.
- Require publication of comprehensive quarterly reports on the economic, social and political status of senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals.

- Ensure that public broadcasters and taxpayer-funded media adequately cover issues affecting senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals.
- Introduce unconditional and predetermined social welfare grants, adjusted for inflation and reflective of the cost of living and ensure that pensions and related benefits are indexed to the Consumer Price Index.
- Guarantee free access by senior citizens to public and private medical institutions of their choice and ensure the maintenance of functional geriatric wards.
- Enhance budgetary allocations to the Older Persons Fund and relax capital expenditure limitations to mitigate the hardships faced by older persons.
- Waive selected statutory and public service fees for senior citizens, including municipal rates, parking, birth and death certificate fees, conveyancing, capital gains and passport application fees.

- Establish inspection mechanisms for public and private old people's homes and provide relief to older persons supporting unemployed, orphaned or single-parent dependents.

### **3.0 Methodology**

3.1 In conducting its inquiry, the Joint Committee considered the petition as lodged by the Power of Touch Institution, including its admissibility record and annexures. The Committee also heard oral evidence on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 from the petitioners and from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

3.2 The oral evidence session enabled the Committees to appreciate, on the one hand, the lived experiences and proposals advanced by the petitioners and on the other hand, the policy, legal and administrative measures already in place or under development within Government. The Committees further utilised the petition itself, the oral submissions and the applicable constitutional and statutory framework in arriving at their findings.

### **4.0 Committee's Findings**

#### **4.1 Nature of the Grievances Raised by the Petitioners**

The petitioners submitted that there is widespread hardship among older persons in Zimbabwe, manifesting in poverty, inadequate income security, constrained access to health services, loss of dignity at public service points and weak institutional protection. The petitioners argued that although various statutes and policies touch on older persons, the current framework is fragmented and insufficiently coordinated. In their view, this fragmentation makes implementation difficult and weakens accountability.

The petitioners further emphasised that older persons were not a homogenous category. Some were pensioners, retired professionals and others were simply senior citizens who may have spent most of their lives in informal, peasant or communal livelihoods and therefore do not benefit from formal pension schemes. The Committees found this distinction useful because it illustrates the breadth of the social protection challenge and the need for responses that go beyond formal pensions only.

#### **4.2 Need for a More Coherent Legal Framework**

A central theme of the petition was the call for one comprehensive law dealing with senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals. The petitioners argued that existing laws use different terms such as “older persons”, “elderly” and “pensioners”, and that the lack of legal and administrative coherence creates ambiguity regarding coverage, implementation and monitoring.

Mr. T. Zimunga, the Social Protection Acting Chief Director from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare advised the Joint Committee that the Constitution already contains provisions on the rights of the elderly and that the Older Persons Act [Chapter 17:11], the Social Welfare Assistance Act [Chapter 17:06], the National Social Protection Policy Framework and the National Development Strategy 2 all provide a basis for interventions concerning older persons. The Ministry further submitted that it was already in the process of reviewing the Older Persons Act, reviewing the Social Welfare Assistance Act into a broader Social Protection Act and formulating an Older Persons Policy.

While noting those ongoing processes, the Joint Committee found merit in the petitioners' concern that the current framework remains dispersed across different statutes and policies.

#### **4.3 Definition of “Older Person” and Age Thresholds**

The petitioners proposed that an older person or senior citizen be defined as any Zimbabwean aged fifty-five years and above. Their argument was informed by the socio-economic realities of ageing in Zimbabwe, including diminished earning capacity, dependency burdens, poor access to health services and the vulnerability of many persons approaching or entering retirement.

Mr. T. Zimunga, however, advised that the Constitution refers to persons over the age of seventy years in relation to specified rights, while the Older Persons Act currently identifies an older person as one aged sixty-five years and above. The Ministry also indicated that the retirement age in the Public Service has been reviewed upwards and that changing the age

threshold across the board may require wider legal reform and constitutional alignment.

The Committees found that the age issue remains contested and requires careful policy and legal consideration.

However, the evidence received clearly pointed to the need for a more explicit and operationally useful definition, including differentiation between senior citizens generally, pensioners and retired professionals where appropriate.

#### **4.4 Institutional Arrangements for Implementation**

The petitioners proposed the creation of a dedicated department, headed by a director, to oversee the welfare and development of senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals. They argued that without a clearly identifiable institutional focal point, older person” issues are treated as peripheral matters and are often addressed only in theory rather than in practice.

In response, Mr. T. Zimunga stated that responsibility for older persons currently lies within the Department of Social Development and that there is an Older Persons Board provided

for under the law. The Ministry also indicated that older persons' programmes are decentralised across provinces and administrative districts and that there is a section dealing specifically with older persons under the Department of Social Development.

Notwithstanding those arrangements, the Ministry acknowledged resource constraints and indicated that Government has not yet appointed a substantive director solely responsible for older persons. The Joint Committees found that this admission was significant. It demonstrates that, although there is some institutional architecture in place, the petitioners' concern about visibility, coordination and implementation capacity was not without foundation.

#### **4.5 Social Protection and Income Security**

A major grievance raised by the petitioners related to the precarious financial position of older persons. The petitioners called for unconditional and inflation-adjusted social welfare grants, as well as improved pension and benefit indexation. They submitted that many older persons, including those who

were once professionals or public servants, now live in destitution and were unable to meet basic needs.

Mr. Zimunga informed the Joint Committees that the Older Persons Fund was operational and that older persons may benefit from several social protection interventions, including per capita grants for those under institutional care, food deficit mitigation, cash transfers, health assistance and support through the Basic Education Assistance Module for dependents. The Ministry also advised that Government was considering a universal grant scheme subject to fiscal space and the strengthening of the social registry.

The Committees found that while social protection measures do exist, they were neither universal nor yet sufficient to meet the scale of vulnerability described by the petitioners. The Committees also observed that inflation, currency instability and the cost of health care continued to erode whatever limited assistance is available to many older persons.

#### **4.6 Access to Healthcare**

The petitioners submitted that many senior citizens fail to access free or affordable health care in practice, notwithstanding policy statements or statutory guarantees. They raised concern over hospital charges, the cost of medication and the absence of adequately functioning geriatric services. The evidence highlighted the emotional and financial distress borne by families caring for elderly relatives.

Mr. T. Zimunga advised that persons above sixty-five years may access free treatment through the Assisted Medical Treatment Order issued in districts. It also indicated that Government, through the Ministry of Health and Child Care, was working towards a National Health Insurance Scheme that may broaden access to treatment for older persons.

The Joint Committees found a clear gap between legal entitlement or policy aspiration and the lived reality recounted by petitioners. Even where a scheme exists, inadequate awareness, limited fiscal support, administrative bottlenecks and pressures within public health institutions can undermine effective access.

#### **4.7 Public Service Delivery, Dignity and Prioritisation**

The petitioners repeatedly underscored the issue of dignity. The petitioners argued that older persons often experience disrespect, poor handling and a lack of priority treatment at public points such as hospitals, banks, supermarkets and other service centres. They proposed an older persons contact desks and more deliberate accommodation of older persons across the public service delivery chain.

Mr. T. Zimunga submitted that there was already a standing expectation among service providers that older persons should not queue and that Government is engaging local authorities on discounts and exemptions on selected local authority services for older persons. However, the petitioner's oral evidence suggested that the practical observance of such arrangements remains uneven.

The Committees found that the issue was not merely one of formal rules, but of enforceability, awareness, training and service culture. There is need for public institutions and private service providers alike to adopt more visible and standardised

arrangements that preserve the dignity of older persons and improve access to services.

#### **4.8 Older Persons as Caregivers and Bearers of Dependency**

##### **Burdens**

The petitioners drew attention of the Committees to the reality that many older persons were not only vulnerable in their own right, but also carry the burden of supporting unemployed children, grandchildren, orphans and single-parent dependents. In both urban and rural communities, older persons are often the final safety net for struggling households.

The Ministry acknowledged this challenge and noted that migration, unemployment and other social pressures have left many older persons caring for dependents with inadequate resources. The Joint Committee found that this inter-generational dependency deepens the vulnerability of older persons and should be expressly reflected in social protection design, targeting and budgeting.

## **4.9 Recognition of Retired Professionals and Social Value of Older Persons**

The petitioners also approached the matter from the perspective of national development, arguing that retired professionals and older persons represent a reservoir of experience, wisdom and institutional memory that should not be ignored. They proposed greater recognition and deliberate inclusion of senior citizens in advisory, governance and community structures.

## **4.10 Standards in Old People's Homes and Public Accountability**

The petitioners requested stronger inspection and oversight of public and private old people's homes to ensure world-class standards of care. In response, the Ministry advised that residential care facilities are presently largely privately owned and that standards for such facilities are being developed.

## **5.0 Committee's Observations**

5.1 The Joint Committee observed that the petition by the Power of Touch Institution was properly conceived and raised

matters of genuine public importance. The evidence led before the Joint Committee showed that older persons face multidimensional challenges encompassing legal uncertainty, weak institutional coordination, inadequate income security, constrained health access and dignity deficits at service delivery points.

5.2 The Committees further observed that Government had already initiated important policy and legislative review processes, particularly in relation to the Older Persons Act, the Social Welfare Assistance Act and an Older Persons Policy. These are commendable steps.

5.3 The Joint Committee noted that older persons were not a uniform category. Some are pensioners, some are retired professionals and some are elderly citizens outside the formal pension economy. Any future legal and policy response must therefore be broad enough to cover these categories, while still permitting targeted interventions where necessary.

5.4 The Committees also observed that the welfare of older persons should be approached both as a rights issue and as a

matter of national social policy. Zimbabwe owes older persons not only care and protection, but also dignity, recognition and inclusion.

## **6.0 Committee's Recommendations**

6.1 The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare should expedite the review of the Older Persons Act and related social protection legislation to produce a coherent and enforceable framework for the protection of senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals by December 2026. Going forward, Government should consider the feasibility of a consolidated legal framework relating to older persons.

6.2 The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare should strengthen the institutional focal point for older persons by formalising a unit or directorate with adequate staffing and coordination functions at national and sub-national levels by January 2027.

6.3 Treasury should progressively increase budgetary support to the Older Persons Fund, the Assisted Medical Treatment

Order and other social protection interventions targeted at older persons, with a view to improving access to service and reducing vulnerability in the 2027 National Budget.

6.4 The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, together with local authorities and relevant regulators, should develop standard service delivery guidelines on the treatment and prioritisation of older persons at public service points, including hospitals, banks, transport hubs and local authority offices by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026.

6.5 The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare should progressively adjust pensions and social grants, aligned to the Consumer Price Index and cost-of-living benchmarks starting budgeting in the 2027 financial year.

6.7 Treasury should comply with AMTOs extended to older persons while expediting the National Health Insurance Scheme by providing adequate resources in the 2027 financial year.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

7.1 The Committee concludes that the plight of Senior Citizens, Pensioners and Retired Professionals in Zimbabwe is structural, systemic and urgent. Existing laws and policies, while well-intentioned, remain fragmented, weakly enforced and insufficient to guarantee dignity, security and social inclusion owing to lack of financial resources.

7.2 The Committee, therefore strongly recommends the enactment of a comprehensive, consolidated Senior Citizens, Pensioners and Retired Professionals Act, supported by a powerful coordinating institution, as the most viable and sustainable solution to ensure that every Ministry, without exception takes full account of the rights and needs of older persons. I thank you. I move that the debate do now adjourn.

**HON. SEN. NCUBE:** I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2026.

*On the motion of HON. SEN. MUZENDA, seconded by HON.*

**SEN. GOTORA,** *the Senate adjourned at a Minute to Five o'clock*

*p.m.*