

The Rolling Blackouts in Zimbabwe: A Zombie to Economic Recovery Prospects (2013 -2014)

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Received: 14 December 2013 Accepted: 4 January 2014 Published: 15 January 2014

Abstract

Introduction-According to senior officials in the Energy sector, energy starved Zimbabwe will suffer longer and more frequent power shortages for the next 10 years. The country's power utility will extend power blackouts until it can boost capacity. Patson Mbiriri, Secretary for Energy and Power Development told an annual congress of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) in Nyanga recently, 'By about 2022 is when the country will be able to generate enough electricity for domestic and industrial needs,' said Mbiriri. Zimbabwe needs about 2200 megawatts of electricity at peak consumption but generates just below 1300 megawatts, while relying on imports to fill the gap (Staff Reporter 2014). Due to ageing equipment, power generation is often disrupted following breakdowns. In most cases, the generators operate below capacity. In recent months Zimbabwe could only afford to import 25 megawatts from neighbouring countries after major electricity suppliers in the region turned off the switches over non payment of dues.

Index terms— rolling, blackouts, zimbabwe, zombie and economic recovery prospects.

1 Introduction

According to senior officials in the Energy sector, energy starved Zimbabwe will suffer longer and more frequent power shortages for the next 10 years. The country's power utility will extend power blackouts until it can boost capacity. Patson Mbiriri, Secretary for Energy and Power Development told an annual congress of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) in Nyanga recently, 'By about 2022 is when the country will be able to generate enough electricity for domestic and industrial needs,' said Mbiriri. Zimbabwe needs about 2200 megawatts of electricity at peak consumption but generates just below 1300 megawatts, while relying on imports to fill the gap (Staff Reporter 2014).

Due to ageing equipment, power generation is often disrupted following breakdowns. In most cases, the generators operate below capacity. In recent months Zimbabwe could only afford to import 25 megawatts from neighbouring countries after major electricity suppliers in the region turned off the switches over non payment of dues.

"Most of our woes in terms of blackouts will end in 2015" Mbiriri said.

The then energy minister Honourable Elton Mangoma said Zimbabwe had whittled its debt to power providers to under US\$20 million from around US\$100 million in a bid to resume power imports. There were plans to revamp the Northern Kariba hydro power station and the Hwange Ethanol power station in the West of the country.

So much about the ignition to the discourse in this Paper laid before you. Up next is a statement on the logistics to carry out a survey to expose the Research Author: e-mail: srusvingo@yahoo.com Findings. In case you go away details on the said statement coming your way in just a moment.

2 II.

3 Statement on the Related and Relevant Literature Review, 43 Research Methodology and Research Findings

44 In order to achieve the required Research Findings in this study the Author made a hasty retreat to the private
45 media where he made a strategic stopover to study the various inputs on the said topic of this Paper to come up
46 with what the Author believed was the relevant and related Literature which exposed the Research findings to
47 underpin the study. Zano (2014) of the *Newsday* argued that the genesis of our power problems in Zimbabwe are
48 more to do with unfair distribution of power by Zimbabwe Electricity Authority (ZESA) and nothing else. Let
49 us hear him give his contribution. More details on this contribution in just a moment. a) ZESA must distribute
50 supply power fairly (Zano 2014) Zano (2014) did not mince his words when he presented his disappointing
51 performance by ZESA. It is disheartening that ZESA holdings is dismally failing to fairly distribute and supply
52 its power to its valued customers. High density suburbs in Harare like Glen View, Glen Norah, Budiro and
53 Highfields had been victims of the power Company spending days and nights without electricity. Sadly the norm
54 by ZESA is that electricity will be switched on at night around 10 pm and switched off around 5 am. What
55 boggles the mind is that 10 pm is normally after demand peak period (6-8) when valued ZESA customers are
56 doing most of their cooking for the day. But the sad reality is that the power is switched off by ZESA. Come 5
57 o'clock in the morning the power is switched off when people are waking up for the day to prepare their breakfast
58 and warm water for ablution in readiness to go for work. But sadly the power is nowhere to be seen (Zano 2014).

59 In January 2013, Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company (ZETDC), a subsidiary of
60 ZESA Holdings embarked on a comprehensive replacement of all conventional postpaid meters with pre-paid
61 meters. Currently ZETDC had installed prepaid meters in most suburbs countrywide. As consumers, people
62 thought they would finally heave sighs of relief after the power utility's on-going installation of these pre-
63 paid metres. Sadly the bad load shedding problem had actually worsened when every consumer expected an
64 improvement. People had thought that since winter was over the rate at which people would be utilising their
65 electricity would also be reduced, thereby minimising load shedding. Load shedding had a number of negative
66 impacts both on the nation's economy and social life of citizens (Zano 2014).

67 However, the economic costs of load shedding are well known compared to the societal effects. Load shedding
68 can affect a country's economy mainly because it slows down industrialisation and affects people's life styles.
69 During the daytime, it affects commercial and industrial operations. In the evening load shedding can also
70 affect students' studies. What about the people's electrical gadgets? Schools third term in Zimbabwe means
71 examination time. Most students prefer reading at night as the temperatures will be cooler compared to daytime.
72 It is so surprising that some places in the country never experience such disturbing load shedding timetables.
73 It is indeed upsetting to see a location very close to your home with electricity almost every day while it's a
74 complete blackout in your area. ZESA should take note of these incidents and start to distribute its electricity
75 fairly. All consumers whether poor, rich, black, white or yellow need fair treatment from ZESA. For the much
76 hyped *ZimAsset* to be fully implemented ZESA should play its part effectively. It is fundamentally true that
77 electricity is the back bone of each industrialised society and economy. Previous reports had it that this power
78 company is exporting electricity to neighbouring countries during the night time. As understanding citizens,
79 people including the Author, also thought that positive idea would lesson load shedding as the extra revenue
80 generated from exporting electricity during off peak hours would then be used to produce more electricity, which
81 in the case of Zimbabwe is not the case. Why it is like that? Somebody somewhere is playing God with the
82 people of Zimbabwe (Zano 2014).

83 Dai Mwari maramba (meaning may God forbid?).

84 Madanhire of *Newsday* again convincingly argued that incessant power blackouts as is the norm in Zimbabwe
85 pose a big challenge to economic recovery, let alone to a comatose Zimbabwe economy. In a feel good contribution
86 to the topic under active discussion in this Paper the Author argues the audience should never go away until
87 Madanhire's informative contribution on this burning issue is over. More details on this coming your way in just
88 a moment.

89 4 b) Blackouts Pose Biggest Challenge to Economic

90 Recovery (Madanhire 2014) It is no secret that the Zimbabwean economy is under siege from a host of internal
91 and external factors, a small percentage of which is beyond human control. However it is the internal factors
92 such as incessant power cuts, policy discordance, political rhetoric and corruption that tend to militate against
93 all efforts aimed at economic recovery more than the external factors or forces. The erratic power supplies have
94 been experienced since the beginning of September 2014. If left unchecked they are sure to spell a death knell to
95 the local industry and further push the comatose economy further down the drain. Domestic consumers have also
96 been caught in the crossfire and are now forced to adjust to unscheduled power cuts and run for hours if not days
97 on end without supplies from the perennially bungling ZESA. There is no doubt that the current power shortages
98 have raised the ire of consumers who after paying heavily for electricity in prepaid tokens, find themselves digging
99 deeper into their shallow pockets to buy gas, paraffin, firewood and even the dangerous candles to power their
100 homes. So the perennially bungling power utility should not take offence when consumers demand an explanation

101 to the current incessant power cuts. In fact the power utility should practise good corporate customer care and
102 corporate customer relations and take the initiative to keep its consumers aware of any developments affecting
103 the power sector. Industry, regardless of whether large, medium or small scale, formal or informal, has been the
104 main victim, forcing many to switch to expensive power from standby generators (Madanire 2014).

105 By its very nature, power from diesel or petrol powered generators is only supposed to be an interim or
106 emergency measure, because if it is allowed to run full time, it tends to erode envisaged profits. Relying on
107 standby generators to run industry should not be accepted as the norm in a country striving to jumpstart an
108 ailing economy because of the energy sources prohibitive costs. But from the looks of things use of generators
109 seems to have become a norm instead of an exception. The cause given by the authorities in the troubled energy
110 sector that the current power shortages were due to planned maintenance work and diversion of some 200 or
111 so megawatts to power winter wheat cropping is not convincing enough considering that most winter wheat is
112 being or has already been harvested. The only plausible explanation for the current power utility was that it was
113 caught flat footed after it failed to invest in alternative energy sources when it became clear that the demand for
114 power would keep rising. The people at ZESA should have been pro active and invested heavily in alternative
115 energy sources such as solar, biogas, methane gas and wind to cater for domestic consumption and dedicate the
116 national grid to power the manufacturing and other high energy consumer sectors. Government should stop
117 labouring us with energy policy documents that do not translate into workable programmes. The ZANU PF
118 government's economic blueprint policy, *ZimAsset*, risks turning into another Paper tiger if problems bedeviling
119 the energy sector are not addressed urgently as they have a bearing on the envisaged economic turnaround
120 strategies (Madanire 2014).

121 Anon (2014) is a perfect example of a consumer who is bitterly incensed by the incessant power cuts by the
122 perennially bungling ZESA. Please do not go away before he makes his sabre rattling contribution coming your
123 way in just a moment. c) ZESA losing millions in load shedding (Anon 2014) The intensifying but unexplained
124 load shedding all over the country by the perennially bungling Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (renamed
125 Zimbabwe Electricity Sometimes Available) is losing us millions in United States dollars. Is it noticeable that this
126 chaotic and merciless load shedding situation facing Zimbabwe only intensified immediately at the appointment
127 of the new board chaired by Herbert Murerwa. As it turns out now, an improvement in Zimbabwe's energy
128 situation was obviously too much to expect from an ex-Minister who is not only well versed with complex energy
129 matters but well past his sell -by date to be appointed to be ZESA Board chairman. It boggles the mind what
130 business model, if at all, ZESA is now using to generate its revenue. The now good for nothing parastatal only
131 recently intensified the supply and fixing of prepaid meters in all the households, companies and institutions and
132 after that as consumers, we find ourselves with our money tied up in a product or service which is suddenly not
133 there because of unscheduled and selective load shedding (Anon 2014).

134 Amazingly in Zimbabwe you find that one section of an area whether residential or industrial can still have
135 the luxury of having their light on during broad daylight while another one just across the road can have no
136 electricity for up to 19 hours a day. After the installation of a prepaid meter at a certain house in Harare, the
137 average power consumption was calculated to be \$20 a week, but with the intensified load shedding people had
138 witnessed in the past months in 2014, that same amount of electricity worth is sitting unconsumed in the meter
139 for two weeks. The simple book-keeping calculations tells us that this adds up to a loss of revenue to ZESA from
140 an expected revenue of US\$100 to US\$52 a month (Anon 2014).

141 So far so good about the rough and rocky terrain provided by the related and relevant Literature Review and
142 Research Methodology, adopted for the study in this Paper. Up next is the Summary, the details of which are
143 coming your way in just a moment.

144 5 III.

145 6 Summary

146 The ignition key to the discourse in this Paper kicks off with a heart-wrenching revelation by Permanent Secretary
147 in the Energy Ministry Pattison Mbiriri that Zimbabwe had to grapple with power shortages up until 2022 when
148 the country is projected to have enough of its energy supply. Currently the disheartening power supply and
149 demand statistics for Zimbabwe are a demand of 2 200 megawatts against a meagre power supply of 1 300
150 megawatts to throw a frightening power deficit of 900 megawatts to be imported from neighbouring SADC
151 countries such as South Africa and Mozambique who have a surplus power supply. But sadly for Zimbabwe the
152 militating factor is the required liquidity to finance that power import some of whom have been suspended for
153 non payment.

154 After this ignition to the discourse came the Statement of the relevant and related Literature Review and
155 relevant Research Methodology adopted to expose the required Research findings for discussion and interpretation
156 in this Paper.

157 The first to attack the power utility was Zano (2014). His weight of attack centred on the unfair distribution
158 of electricity in which he complained that a street across the road may have the luxury of having electricity 24/7
159 while the neighbour across the road may go for 19 hours without electricity to rue the day he/she was ever born
160 a Zimbabwean.

161 The second to attack the power utility yet again was Madanhire (2014). His weight of attack was the adverse

162 effect that incessant power blackouts was going to have on the prospects of economic recovery for the country.
163 Internal factors more than the external factors did the most damage to the prospects of economic recovery. And
164 those that readily come to mind are incessant power cuts, policy discordance, political rhetoric and unpunished
165 corruption at senior level in both the private and public sectors of the Zimbabwean economy. Madanhire (2014)
166 further argued that the current power shortages had raised the ire of many consumers who after paying heavily
167 for electricity in prepaid tokens but find themselves paying more to buy gas, paraffin, firewood and even the
168 dangerous candles to power their unpowered homes.

169 The third and final contribution in the then ongoing discourse on incessant power cuts countrywide was Anon
170 (2014). His argument is that for the entire period that the power utility is in a power blackout, the revenue
171 generation capacity of the financially hamstrung power utility is at a standstill to mean that the revenue loss
172 could be as high as 50%.

173 The long and short of it is that things are not looking good for ZESA in terms of revenue generation, customer
174 care and customer satisfaction. Thereafter with the summary out of the way what remains undone which is up
175 next is the Conclusion. Please don't go away in case you miss the Conclusion coming your way in just a moment.

176 7 IV.

177 8 Conclusion

178 According to Rusvingo (2008) ??enkel (1984) defines a Research Hypothesis from which a Conclusion is derived
179 as:

180 The Rolling Blackouts in Zimbabwe: A Zombie to Economic Recovery Prospects ??2013 -2014) 'A statement
181 about the value that a parameter or group of parameters can take.

182 According to ??enkel (1984:343) Given the overwhelming evidence as given elsewhere in this Paper including
183 the Summary above which is again loud and clear for all to see the Alternative Research Hypothesis namely:
184 Incessant power cuts in Zimbabwe are a zombie to the prospects of economic recovery is to be resoundingly
185 accepted while the Null Research Hypothesis as articulated above is to be resoundingly rejected in light of the
186 overwhelming evidence which is pre the Alternative Research Hypothesis while at the same time overwhelmingly
187 anti the Null Research Hypothesis.

188 With the exciting Conclusion of the study conveniently out of the way up next are the Recommendations
189 which are primarily designed to address what was not done right vis-à-vis the issue of the incessant power cuts
190 in Zimbabwe. So details on this coming your way in just a moment.

191 V.

192 9 Recommendations

193 Before the Author addresses the Recommendations section of this Paper the question to ask himself is what it is
194 that Zimbabwe did not do right to create the problem of a shortage of electricity?

195 From the Author's perspective the genesis of the problem of why Zimbabwe as a country has a shortage of
196 electricity is because of the low foreign direct investment (fdi) inflows into the country. Zimbabwe needs foreign
197 direct investment to address the underlisted:

198 ? The ageing equipment at most power stations in the country are in need of a massive injection of capital
199 to replace them to avoid constant breakdowns of power generating equipment to normalise power supplied in
200 the country. ? To attract fdi Zimbabwe needs to put in place policies that attract foreign direct investors. The
201 yet to be finalised Land Reform Programme of 2000 and the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment law
202 of 2007, to name just a few are not attractive to foreign direct investment where foreign 'direct investors' are
203 required to be minority shareholders in a 51/49 investment share model in favour of the locals where the country's
204 regional peers such as South Africa and Mozambique, to name just a few have no such xenophobic laws on their
205 statutes. ? Zimbabwe's diplomatic relations with the West 1 All said and done about what should be done
206 right in Zimbabwe time is now opportune to make a statement about the key assumption to reassure the beloved
207 Reader that everything in this Paper is above board for transparency, accountability and probity.

208 does not inspire confidence. The frequent use of public fora a such as the United Nations General Assembly
209 and EU-Africa to name, just a few, to throw brickbats at Britain and United States of America is deplorable
210 on the part of His Excellence President Mugabe. The two super powers have emerged to become the prefects
211 of this modern world of increasing complexity. They are the custodians of the foreign direct investment for
212 which Zimbabwe is in desperate need as testified by her extensively damaged and destroyed infrastructure. For
213 Zimbabwe, without fdi there is no infrastructure development.

214 10 VI.

215 11 Key Assumption

216 In presenting this Paper the Author would, right from the outset, wish to reassure the beloved Reader that all
217 the facts and figures herein contained were stated as they are on the ground without fear, favour or prejudice.

218 And the mission of this statement is to make sure the factual contents of this manuscript are that they are above
219 board and beyond reproach.

The rough ride through the incessant power cuts in Zimbabwe to impede the prospects of economic ^{1 2 3}

Therefore the definitions of a Null Research Hypothesis H_0 and an Alternative Research Hypothesis, H_1 are that:

'The Null Research Hypothesis represents an assumption or statement that has been made about some characteristics (or parameter) of the population being studied. The Alternative Research Hypothesis specifies all possible values of the population parameter that were not mentioned in the Null Research Hypothesis (H_0).

Therefore for this Paper whose title is 'Incessant power blackouts: A Zombie to the prospects of economic recovery (2014) the Null Research Hypothesis (H_0) in respect of the aforementioned title or topic of this Paper shall respectively be:

H_0

Incessant power cuts in Zimbabwe are not a zombie to the prospects of economic recovery.

H_1

Incessant power cuts in Zimbabwe are a zombie to the prospects of economic recovery.

Figure 1:

220

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²West as used in this context refers to the United States of America, European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

³The Author, Dr Silas Luthingo Rusvingo is a member of the church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA), Anglican Church, Avondale Parish, Diocese of Harare.

221 recovery to the nation of 13 million citizens is certainly in need of a prayer for Zimbabwe to close the discourse
222 in this Paper.

223 Consequently and in conformity with Christian tradition the Author 2 VII.

224 The Short Prayer for Zimbabwe (Pew Paper 2014) , a Christian by religion will shoulder the responsibility
225 to pray for Zimbabwe and so please do not go away before the prayer for Zimbabwe coming your way in just a
226 moment.

227 .1 Ngatinamatei.

228 Mwari munesimba rese musingagumi, imi makatipa netsitsi mbesa dzepasi munguva yadzo: Tinokutendai
229 nekuzvirereka pamusana kwekunaka kwenyu kukuru, tichikutendai kuti mutipe girasiya rokudzisevenzesa
230 nokufanira kumbiri yenyu, nerokubatsira vanoshaya nerokunyaradzwa kwedu: nokuna Jesu Kristu Tenzi wedu.
231 Amen.

232 (meaning, Let us pray. Eternal God you crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the
233 earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory for the relief of those in need and for our own
234 well being: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen).

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