

Can Zimbabwe be saved from the Brink of Collapse?

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Abstract: Zimbabwe, a country in the Southern Africa, is known as the “house of stones” which named the country with Shona language. In the past, Zimbabwe has been called as “the breadbasket of Africa”. However, Zimbabweans are living among no power, no water, and no money. What have caused for such situation and how can people save Zimbabwe from the brink of collapse?

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1 Current Situation of Electricity

Zimbabwe has struggling on generate sufficient power for 20 years, therefore countries like Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia became Zimbabwe’s electricity helpers. From 2000-2008, the recession caused southern African countries the crisis of dollar and hyperinflation that Zimbabwe had a hard time to pay imports.

Zimbabwe has one hydro power plant and four-coal-fired generators with capacity of 2,240 supported the use of power in this country. Once Kariba’s water levels low due to the drought season, the hydropower only can provide a third of power. The coal-fired plant also face the challenge that the major coal supplier, Hwange Colliery, has difficulties to provide enough coals. The other three small coal-fired plant are not able to work when they fail the plan to repair and upgrade them. The six power generation agreements did not help Zimbabwe’s power situation gets better while the corruption of government and funding deficiency.

A precarious situation is that Zimbabwe generates electricity to mining companies poorly which maintain the main economy sources. The poor economic situation would destroy the output of agriculture and the reduction of mining could put the country into recession. Different from the mining of platinum relied on the producers’ own power, gold mining import their power from uncertain national grid.

2 Why is Zimbabwe running short of electricity?

For years, Zimbabwe has relied on hydropower and thermal energy generation. The low water levels in lakes and shortages of investment in thermal station equipment left Zimbabwe in a power crisis. Households and industries have no power for 16 hours in a day. A renewable energy policy has been proposed but never successfully launched. But from the perspective of Zimbabwe Energy Council Executive Director, Panganayi Sithole, the main problem is not just the country is lack of resources on equipment but execution sector of Zimbabwe takes too long to adapt a new government policy as such renewable energy plan has never take into action since 2017 until now. Although Zimbabwe is eligible for installed capacity with 2000 megawatts, the total power that station in Kariba, Hwange, Munyati and Harare can generate is 1200 megawatts while the demand of the country is 1500 megawatts. The renewable energy plan is projected to add 1000 megawatts or higher which meet the power demands by 2025 and 1600 megawatts by 2030. The potential resources that will be able in the renewable energy policy are solar, small hydropower, biomass, geothermal and wind. Take an example of solar power, it can provide up to 20 MJ/m² per day, which can generate up to 600MW.

A potential of 1000MW could possibly generate from biomass in the form of bagasse, agricultural and province garbage etc. Although the speed of winds may not be enough to generate power, wind can be used for water pumping. Back to the challenge of initiating the renewable energy policy in Zimbabwe, many companies worried that if the government decision will maintain long enough for them to apply such plan in real life. Political issues and unsupported government make investors to hesitate change their energy resources once the policy has launched. Funds deficit broke the base for government encouraging people to apply renewable energy. Therefore, Energy and Power Development Deputy Minister, Magna Mudyiwa, proposed that the government could encourage investors to apply renewable energy by assist them getting lands and by loosed tariff policies for them.

3 What has the government done for electricity?

Zimbabwe Technical Team Engages Eskom (South AFRICA electricity public utility)

Zimbabwe technical team meets the electricity public utility, Eskom, for decreasing the power import debt with payment of ten million dollars. Energy and Power Development Minister Fortune Chasi implied that they are waiting for another meeting with relevant official from South Africa to discuss the balance that Zimbabwe owe and how much power that South Africa could provide for now. For now, even Fortune Chasi is not certain about the amount of electricity that Eskom will provide. However, the government has already had a plan to provide sufficient power for mining companies while allow them to import electricity from South Africa while they need to pay a cost recovery tariff to ZESA. Currently, solar equipment and projects are on their ways.

4 Whether the civil society and the political opposition in Zimbabwe could play a critical transnational role in Zimbabwe?

The roles that the civil society should play: altering current situation, ensuring human rights and right of the constitution, exercise civil rights culturally and politically, demanding accountability from government, arguing unjust social norms etc. In fact, Zimbabwean had put their strength to fight for their rights a few years ago, but the continuity and effectiveness were challenging for people since they all suffering from poverty, HIV infection, inflation etc. In order to achieve better economic situation, it is clear that reinforcing human rights, reforming economy, and domestic advocacy are essential to this process. In a country like Zimbabwe, economic and social supports from civilians are extremely important since the government is as strong as the developed and the developing countries. The cooperation between civilians and the government is the key to strengthen the country.

5 Possible ways to revive Zimbabwe's economy

Forces to stop the corruption: Corruption has been always constrained the development of Zimbabwe's economy for long. After the independence, the land did not give back to people but the army generals and political figures, who are lack of agriculture knowledge. As a result, the production of food has been decreased whereas no longer the "breadbasket of Africa". In fact, Mr. Mnangagwa has been criticized as the leader of corruption when the army took in charge of the Marange diamond fields as he was the defense minister.

Cooperation with foreign countries: 9 billion dollars is how much Zimbabwe earns other countries for 20 years that needs help from the IMF or the World Bank. As Mr. Mnangagwa had tried to negotiate with the IMF for new financial deals.