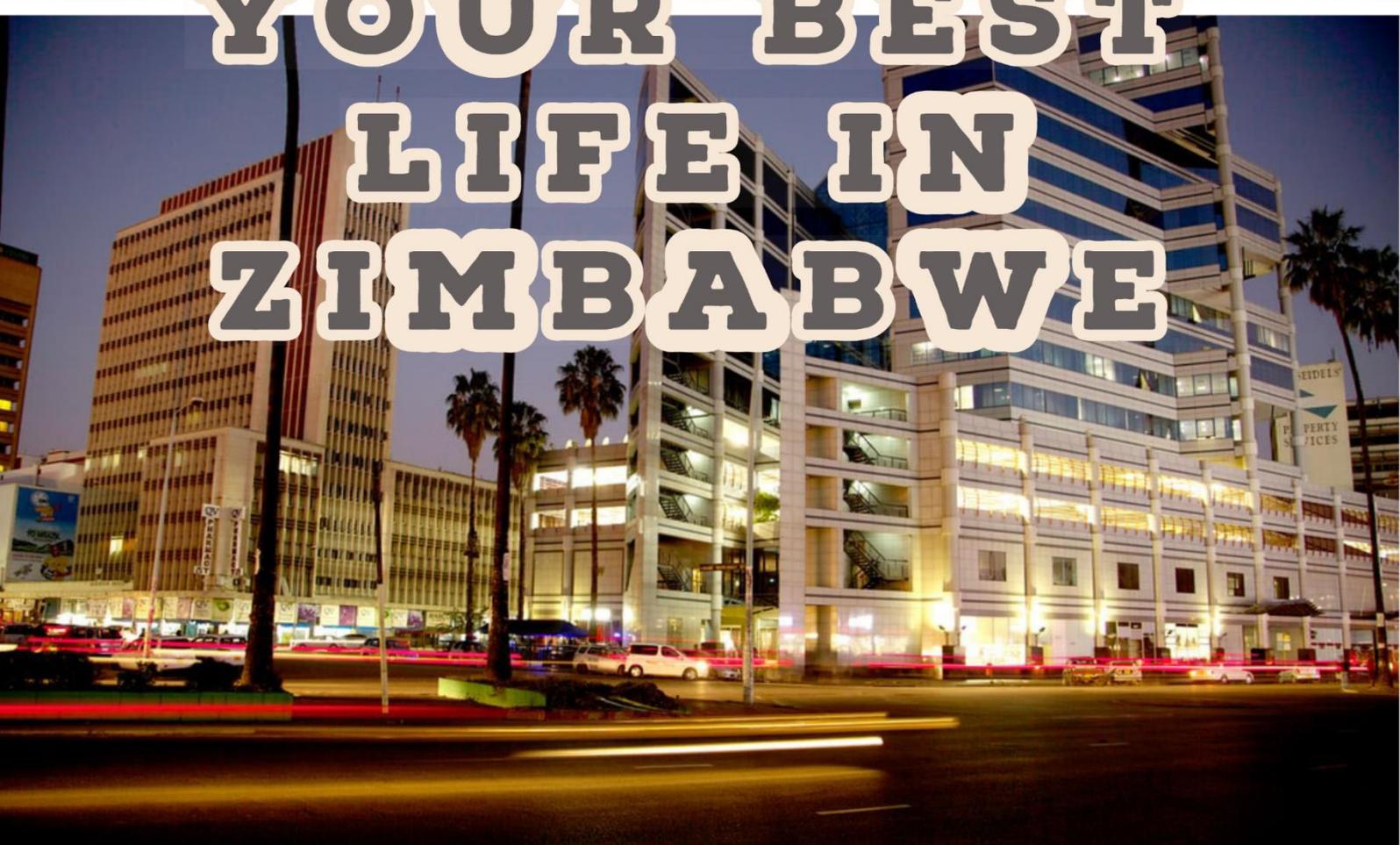




# HOW TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE IN ZIMBABWE



**BY MAPUTIATOTA**

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# The Map of Zimbabwe



## The Zimbabwe Road Distance Calculation Table

Beitbridge

670	Bindura																						
461	478	Birchenough Bridge																					
322	527	454	Bulawayo																				
567	504	106	560	Chimanimani																			
301	583	203	484	225	Chiredzi																		
698	204	506	555	532	611	Chinhoyi																	
472	236	355	164	461	385	391	Gweru																
582	88	390	439	416	495	116	275	Harare															
658	865	789	337	896	771	769	501	776	Hwange														
606	229	489	298	557	519	257	134	141	635	Kadoma													
947	453	755	804	781	860	249	640	365	557	506	Kariba												
786	292	594	643	620	699	88	479	204	518	345	161	Karoi											
534	301	417	226	523	447	299	62	213	563	72	578	417	Kwekwe										
656	162	507	513	342	523	190	349	74	850	215	439	278	287	Marondera									
289	381	172	282	278	203	409	183	293	617	317	658	497	345	488	Masvingo								
586	353	125	597	151	325	381	480	265	906	406	630	469	478	191	297	Mutare							
693	360	232	686	258	432	388	547	272	949	413	637	476	485	198	404	107	Nyanga						
424	629	556	102	662	586	657	266	541	437	400	906	745	328	615	384	681	813	Plumtree					
681	258	220	609	246	420	286	445	180	855	311	535	374	383	96	392	95	102	711	Rusape				
759	964	891	437	997	921	992	601	876	102	735	1241	1080	663	950	719	1016	1123	539	1046	Vic Falls			

## Introduction

Hello and welcome to my first book. I'm Maputiatota\*, and I live in this amazing country, Zimbabwe. Very little content is available about how everyday life is like, and I am on a mission to shed a light on how everyday life is like in my beautiful country, Zimbabwe. Excited? Well so am I! I hope you will enjoy this read!

### *Let's start with a little history*

The name "Zimbabwe" stems from a Shona term for Great Zimbabwe, an ancient city in the country's south-east whose remains are now a protected site.

Zimbabwe officially the Republic of Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, is a landlocked country located in Southern Africa, between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers, bordered by South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. The capital and largest city is Harare. The second largest is Bulawayo. A country of roughly 14 million people, Zimbabwe has 16 official languages, with English, Shona, and Ndebele being the most common.

Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in 1980, when his ZANU-PF party won the elections following the end of white minority rule; he was the President of Zimbabwe from 1987 until his resignation in 2017. The current President of Zimbabwe is Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa.

\*Maputiatota is my pen name. My real name is Chiratidzo Charakupa

## Chapter 1 – Food

They say food is the gateway to a man's soul. In this short chapter, I will explain what food we eat here, where we buy our food, and give you a few tips on what to buy when you visit your Zimbabwean friends.

*So what type of food do we eat here in Zimbabwe?*

Well, like any other normal human beings, we have a diet consisting of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and vitamins.

The most popular carbohydrates we have here are: Rice, and Sadza (This is a local dish that is made from maize meal).

The most popular proteins we have here are:

Meat (Pork, Chicken, Fish, Beef) and Soya (which other people call Soy).

We get our fats from Margerine, as well as from animal fat. And as for vitamins, we get them from vegetables (Rape, Covo, Carrots, being the main sources).

So before we go any further, here are a few words you need to know:

*Shona* – The most widely used local language in Zimbabwe.

*Maputi* – Popcorn.

*Chimodho* – A maize meal cake.

*Sadza* – This is a dish made from maize meal.

*Kapenta* – This is usually dried fish roughly the length of a matchstick. A packet is filled with these fish and sold as 100g... up to 20Kg packets.

*So where does a typical Zimbabwean buy their goods?*

Well there is a wide variety of options. There are the common

supermarkets (such as OK, TM – Pick & Pay, Choppies, Bon Marche, Spar, etc). Then there are wholesale outlets (such as N Richards, etc). And then there are tuck-shops. One chooses the most convenient place for them to shop. There is this handy Zimbabwean site – [www.zimpricecheck.com](http://www.zimpricecheck.com) which allows you to compare prices of common groceries from OK, TM and Choppies. You could give it a try and see if you are interested in what it has for you.

### *Recipes*

To get recipes, one can access the internet – but that’s a rather expensive option nowadays. From what I’ve seen most people get their recipes from: Whatsapp Cooking groups in which members share recipes, from their colleagues & workmates, from television, from their family (moms and Grandmas usually do a good job teaching their younger brethren), and from books.

### *What is the typical meal for a Zimbabwean like?*

#### *Breakfast*

Cereals (Cornflakes, Oats, or a very fine porridge-like cereal – which most Zimbabweans refer to as “Cerevita”). If cereals aren’t served, then it is probably porridge that comes first. Bread – This is white, brown or whole-wheat. A common substitute for this is having a “Chimodho” instead. Spread – This is usually Jam/Peanut Butter/Marmalade/Left over soup. Eggs. Sausage/Mince.

#### *Lunch*

This is usually a light meal. This can be:

Bread and drink.

Cupcakes and drink.

Sweet potatoes and tea.

Cassava and tea.

Noodles and a bit of soup.

Rice/Sadza/Pasta and meat (Usually Chicken, Beef, Fish, Kapenta, Mince, or Pork).

### *Supper*

This is a heavy meal, usually: Rice/Sadza/Pasta and meat (Usually Chicken, Beef, Mince, or Pork).

### *Dessert*

This can be:

Jelly.

Cake.

Ice-cream.

Custard.

Yoghurt.

Or a combination of the above : )

### *Family*

A typical family has two parents and a minimum of two kids (i.e. 2 adults and a minimum of two dependents). The meals are mainly made to serve 4, and emphasis is on making sure the kids/dependents have enough food to eat and carry to school.

### *Students*

Students are generally on a tight-budget so the food they look for is usually the cheapest and most-filling. This means if an average student, is given the choice to choose between two meals, say, Rice & Beans and a packet of chips, with both being equally priced, they would choose to have the former because they will be able to spend the greater part of the day feeling rather full.

Popular meals are: Rice & Beans, Rice & Chicken, French Fries & T-bone steak or Chicken + a cool beverage, Buns & a beverage, Bread & a beverage, "Chimodho" & a beverage, Sweet-potatoes & a beverage.

Popular snacks are: Maputi & Peanuts, Plain Maputi, Burgers & French Fries + a cool beverage, Hotdogs + a cool beverage, Freezits and Chips, Pies, Biscuits, Peanuts, Fruits – Bananas, Avocados.

### *Workers*

These have more money than students (obviously). I have noticed that workers appear to be divided into two groups. The first is the group of workers with a family, and the second is the single workers. Single workers tend to buy fast food, and food that is more expensive than that bought by workers who have families. From my experience those with families buy food which is more expensive than that bought by students but cheaper than that bought by single workers. At work those with families usually bring packed food for lunch, whilst single workers rush to the fast food outlets.

#### Popular meals for group 1

– Worker + Family: Rice & Beans, Rice & Chicken, Buns & a beverage, Bread & a beverage, Chimodho & a beverage, Sweet-potatoes & a beverage.

#### Popular meals for group 2

– Worker + Single: Rice & Beans, Rice & Chicken + a cool beverage, French Fries & T-bone steak or Chicken + a cool beverage.

It is rather important to note that the meals that people have vary, with the main factors being: what type of food the family can afford to buy, the other being the religion of the family, and finally, the diet prescribed to the person by his/her doctor (assuming that the person has some condition).

*So which groceries are bought by a typical Zimbabwean family in a month?*

#### Absolute Basics:

10 Kg Mealie Meal – for cooking Sadza, and for making a maize

meal cake that we call a “Chimodho”

10 Kg Rice – for lunch/supper.

6 Kg Sugar (Usually brown sugar) – for tea, baking cakes, baking a Chimodho, and anything else a normal person would use sugar for.

50 Tea bags – for having tea.

Milk (powdered/fresh) – for baking, adding to your cereal and having tea.

Milk (sour) – for eating with Sadza.

250g Margarine – spread for bread or for baking.

2 Kg Pasta – for lunch/supper.

2 Lt Cooking Oil – for cooking.

~ Salt – a 1Kg packet can last anything from six months to slightly more than a year – depending on how many members of the family....and neighbours you have).

3 x 50g packets of Soup – for making soup.

4 Lt Drink – for pleasuring your taste buds.

5 Kg Flour – for baking.

100g Baking Powder – for baking. I found a rather strange use for it – removing dandruff. I definitely wouldn't recommend it to anyone but hey – it works pretty well for me!

At least 4 x 500g boxes Cerivita / Cornflakes (But this is not really affordably for most families. Porridge rules!).

Which food gifts to bring to your relative's homes in Zimbabwe?

Have a look at the list above. It must give a rough idea of what to get for them. Just try to get a rough idea of what they like and buy what you can. Other things you can bring as gifts are: a box of chocolates, a bottle of wine, a few loaves of bread + a few Kgs of meat that they like.

## Chapter 2: Travelling in Zimbabwe

Since time immemorial, humans have been travelling from place to place. In this chapter, let's talk about how it is like to travel in Zimbabwe.

The main modes of transportation used around the world are the following:

- Road
- Rail (On land & Underground trains)
- Air travel
- Water transport – Ships, ferries and boats And;
- Walking

So before we move on, here are a few words you need to know:

*Kombi* – A commuter Omnibus

*Toyota Hiace High Highroof* – A commuter Omnibus with more headspace than ordinary Kombis

*Mushika shika* – A shared taxi. It usually has at least 4 people in it.

*Gonyeti* – A haulage truck

*Rori* – A lorry

### Water transport

Well my country is a land-locked country so you aren't going to use water transport too often. (I have never been in a boat, ship or ferry all my life so that should explain how rarely this mode of transportation is used).

This mode of transport could be used if you are in a dam, lake or river. Not much to write about this so let us move on to the next mode of transportation.

## Road transport

We have the usual tarmac roads, gravel roads and dirt roads. Tarmac roads are the ones that are used in towns and cities. In addition, these roads connect towns and cities together.

For the lesser used routes, gravel and dirt roads are quite common. If you are a frequent visitor to places such as the rural areas, you will need a mode of transport that can travel over these roads without giving you problems.

Public transportation used:

Buses and Kombis.

Buses are mainly used for long distance travel. These are usually comfortable, and you are generally better off boarding a bus when travelling a long distance journey (200Km+) than using alternative public transport.

Now, like everything in life, not all Buses are not equal. Some buses that are available are chicken Buses which provide generally low comfort and have a pertinent risk of the bus breaking down before you get to the destination, and then there are luxury buses that are generally more comfortable and have better customer service than their cheaper competitors. These luxury buses are a good choice when you are travelling very long distance journeys (500Km+).

*So are there buses for short distance journeys?*

Of course! The most popular buses are ZUPCO buses. These are buses that travel along pre-determined routes, with a pre-determined schedule. To get an idea of what they are like, think of the Zimbabwean version of the Metro Bus that people use to get to work. These buses are generally cheaper than their competitors (other buses, Kombis, and private transportation), and are the choice of transportation for people who commute quite often.

### *Kombis*

These are quite popular for short-distance transport (anything from 1Km to 100Km). They usually load people quite quickly and also travel a lot quicker than alternative forms of transportation. These do not usually have a fixed time-table, although most (if not all) Kombis have a fixed route. The quality of customer service is much lower than all other forms of road transportation and they are also usually charge more than both public and private transportation. This form of transportation is cheaper than using a taxi.

### *Mushika shika*

These are usually Toyota Vitz, Honda Fit, or Toyota Wish vehicles. These, just like Kombis are quite popular for short-distance transport (anything from 1Km to 100Km). They are also quicker than alternative forms of transportation. They usually do not have a fixed time table. The customer service is slightly better than that offered by Kombis. They charge more than both public and private transportation – their fares are usually similar to what is charged by a Kombi.

WARNING! Just because someone owns a Toyota Vitz, Honda Fit, or a Toyota Wish does not mean that his/her car is a Mushika shika.

It is very insulting for a person who owns one of those cars mentioned above for personal use to have it called a Mushika shika. If you are inside such a Car and you get a call and you say you are in a Mushika shika you risk *getting kicked out of the vehicle*, so don't assume!

*Private transportation used:*

### *Cars & Pickup trucks*

Like any other place, we do have Cars and Pickup-trucks. These are used for short, long, and very long distance travel. Popular Car brands here are: Toyota (For 4x4s the Toyota Hilux, reign supreme, For Kombis the Toyota Quantum and Hiace High-roof , and for the smaller cars the Toyota Wish, Toyota Vitz, Toyota Corolla, Toyota Runnex appear to be popular), Mercedes Benz (For Kombis the Mercedes Benz Sprinter, for smaller saloon cars anything from the C,E, and S class), Honda (The Honda Fit, and Honda CRVs are quite popular here), BMW, Mazda, Nissan.

Of course there are many more cars available here, but those are the most popular in my opinion. Private transportation is a very convenient mode of transportation for workers who commute everyday because there are usually reasonable fares (almost always cheaper than those charged by Kombis), fair customer service and one is able to negotiate on a drop off point (which is closest to where the person commuting wants to get to).

Note: Try to be courteous and avoid eating food in a person's car. It does take a lot of effort to keep a car clean

### *Taxis*

We have taxis here! International taxi services such as Uber and lift don't seem to have made a noticeable penetration in the Zimbabwean market. I'm not even sure if they even operate here. There are local taxi services available which allow the user to hail the taxi using an app. The most advertised ones are [Vaya](#), and [Hwindi](#). There are also traditional taxis here. It is important to note though, that most taxis here have the "taxi" sign on the doors of the taxi. I am yet to see one with the yellow "taxi" sign on top of it. This is the most expensive mode of road transportation.

### *Other vehicles & modes of road transportation*

Lorries, vans and Haulage trucks (which are popularly referred to as a "Goneyti"). These are mainly used for transporting goods such as [food](#), construction materials, retail goods. These are the cheapest form of personal transportation. They are also the slowest form of personal transportation, so if you are not in a hurry use either a Rori or a Gonyeti!

Bicycles are also used to move people from one place to another. These are used for travelling between short distances (1-5Km). Unlike in countries such as China, bicycles are not a popular choice of transportation to use to and from work.

### *So which mode of road transportation should I use?*

Well it all depends on how much you have, how long the journey is and how often you will travel at the destination you are travelling to.

As a general rule of the thumb, it is a good idea to use either a private car or a luxury bus for long distance journeys and a private car for all other journeys.

*What else do I need to know about road transportation?*

Well if you are using private transportation, then you will need to have money for tollgates (assuming that you are travelling between two separate cities). For more information about tollgates and their associated fees,

visit <https://www.zinara.co.zw/includes/tollgate-info.php>

In addition, you will need to keep your driver's license and National Identity Card (or passport for foreigners) just in case you are stopped by the police. It is a good idea to carry these because they don't exactly like drivers who drive without licenses (mainly because the drivers do not have a drivers licence at all!).

Some routes are rather dangerous to use in the rainy season when water overflows from dams and rivers and leaves roads and bridges submerged. This is a rather important point to consider when planning a journey.

*So what are the payment modes for road transportation in Zimbabwe?*

For private transport: [Bond notes & coins](#), [EcoCash](#) (you have to negotiate first).

For public transport: Bond notes & coins, and for ZUPCO buses you can also use a Near Field Communication (NFC) ZUPCO Tap Card to pay.

Do vehicles in Zimbabwe use Petrol, Diesel or are they Electric Vehicles (EVs)?

The majority of vehicles are either Petrol or Diesel vehicles. A few Electric Vehicles are there, but I am yet to see one. I have never seen a charging station for Electric Vehicles yet. Maybe they will be set-up soon.

Econet (a popular network mobile operator which offers other services apart from mobile communications) wants to disrupt the transport sector and introduce Electric Vehicles. This is quite an interesting development!

Rail transport

This is a popular mode of transport for transporting goods. I don't know of anyone who uses them as a means of travelling. We have on-land trains (most owned by the National Railways of Zimbabwe – NRZ). We do not have any underground trains.

Air Travel

Oh yes. Glamorous travel. It is a *big deal* to the average Zimbabwean to board an Aeroplane. The whole family + cousins come to the airport dressed in their best clothes and they take many selfies to upload on Facebook at the airport (so if you see a tiny crowd of people who seem to know each other at an airport, then it is probably just one person who is travelling). The person who is travelling will usually take very many selfies (as it is usually his or her first time or so) and will post the pictures on his/her Facebook timeline for the next week.

Air travel is the best option for really long distance travel (e.g. travelling from Harare, Zimbabwe to Johannesburg, South Africa). It could also be a suitable option for travelling long distances as it is the fastest mode of transportation.

*So which airline should I use?*

Well this could depend on: how comfortable you want your journey to be (and customer service), the baggage limits of the airline (you don't want to end up leaving some of your packed items at the airport!) and your budget. For more information, feel free to research about the airlines available in Zimbabwe.

Walking

This is of course the most popular form of transport in virtually any place in the world. We do walk here, and here are a few tips:

- If you are in a busy town/city, be sure to check both sides of the road. Yes. There are bad drivers.
- When walking on a pavement, be aware of your environment. Just like in school, there are always naughty people – in this case drivers.
- When in a busy town/city, try not to walk with things that can easily be snatched because like any other town/city in the world, pickpockets and thieves are present.

## Chapter 3: Zimbabwe Mobile Communication

Information about Zimbabwean Mobile operators, and mobile phones will be the topic today. (I couldn't think of an exciting introduction that's why the intro is super-brief).

Before we get started, let's learn a few new Shona words:

*Yakadhakwa* – It is not working properly

*Bango* – a really good phone e.g. an Iphone (Android guys...just accept it. IOs is just better.)

*Mbudzi* – a phone with limited features. Some call them “dumb” phones. A very good example is the Nokia 3310.

*So which mobile operators (networks) do we have in Zimbabwe?*

We have 3 main mobile operators in Zimbabwe, and these are: [Telecel](#), [Econet](#), and [NetOne](#). These use the GSM specification (I am yet to meet anyone who uses a CDMA smart phone in this country). All the three networks have 2G, 3G and 4G.

*Zimbabwe Number Format for mobile networks*

The mobile operators/networks use the 07 prefix. Econet uses 077/078, NetOne uses 071, and Telecel uses 073 Let me give a few examples

Typical Econet Number: (+263) 777 124 233; (+263) 787 344 233

Typical NetOne Number: (+263) 717 124 233; (+263) 716 344 233

Typical Telecel Number: (+263) 733 124 233; (+263) 734 344 233

*Which mobile operator is the most reliable?*

Well this depends on where you live. In some areas, one network provider will have the best signal and others will have weaker signals, and in some areas, none of the network providers will have a good signal. I have a bias towards NetOne (because it is just awesome), but you first need to find out where you are going to spend most of your time before coming to a conclusion.

I usually advise people to use NetOne for data, Econet for voice calls, and to avoid using Telecel.

In town either NetOne or Econet is usually a good choice (for voice calls and data).

In sparsely populated areas (such as in the rural areas), NetOne is your best bet (for voice calls and data).

I am neither discouraging nor am I encouraging anyone to follow this advice. This is my humble opinion, which might be wrong, but that is the formula that I have been using ever since I got my phones.

*How do I get a line, and where?*

Well, getting a line is pretty easy. Here's how a typical local gets a line:

- Visit your nearest shop (e.g. if you want to get an Econet line, visit the branch closest to where you currently are)
- Tell the friendly guard that you would love to purchase a line. He will usher you to the queue for new lines, and give you papers to fill your details in. These are usually your National Identity Card Number (ID Number), and your Residential address.
- Produce a copy of your ID (black and white photocopy of your ID). Some shops even scan the ID for you.
- Pay the amount required for you to get a new line (this usually cost less than the equivalent of 1 US dollar).

The customer service representative will activate the line, write down the number (so that you can share it with others), and give you a SIM starter pack. This contains a SIM Card, the Pin numbers, and the PUK numbers. The SIM cards being given nowadays are cut in such a way that they can be used as: ordinary SIM cards (used in Nokia 3310s), micro SIM cards (used in older smartphones), and nano SIM cards (used in the more recent smart phones).

This process can take up to 10 minutes.

TIP – If you want to get your line quickly, go to a shop that is a bit outside the CBD. The probability of joining a long queue will be greatly reduced, and the customer service is usually a bit better.

*What do I do after getting a new line?*

You need to recharge it so that you start communicating with your friends. Also, set up your apn so that you access the internet. If you are using an Econet line, Econet will automatically set up your device so no worries.

If you are using NetOne, visit [this link](#) . If you are using telecel, use [this link](#).

After this, you need to disable Out of Bundle Browsing. Use the following links to find out how to do it for the various networks: [Netone](#) , [Econet](#) , Can't seem to find any links for Telecel 😞

After that you need to know the codes for recharging, and buying bundles. Use [this link](#) which has a comprehensive list of available USSD codes.

When you're done with all this, all that is left is to tell your new friends that you have a new line.

If you are using WhatsApp (the most popular instant messaging application in Zimbabwe), you do not need to change your number on WhatsApp. If you are in Zimbabwe for a few weeks, then you can simply add the new local SIM card to your phone, use it on WhatsApp and revert to your old line when you go back to your country – no need to change any numbers at all! Simple isn't it?

*What is the payment arrangement like?*

For all mobile networks, the lines come as pre-paid lines. This means you first have to buy either an electronic or a physical scratch card (which contains the recharge number. We usually call these Juice cards so don't get confused when someone calls a scratch card a juice card). One can apply for a contract line at the Mobile Network's branches if the person is interested in purchasing post-paid lines.

In addition, we have what are called bundles. There are data bundles that are used for anything that uses data, then there are Facebook bundles which can only visit the Facebook website, or can only use the Facebook Messenger application to work, then there are WhatsApp bundles that allow the user to use the bundle to send and receive messages using the WhatsApp application (including pictures, audio, and even sometimes allows for WhatsApp calls), Instagram bundles , and SMS bundles (yes some people still use texts) and some mobile networks offer On-Net & Cross net voice bundles.

It is quite unfortunate that we don't have Telegram bundles because Telegram is such a great application that could would be used a lot more if it had bundles made specifically for it.

*Which phone do I need to use in Zimbabwe?*

Well, you will actually need two. One has to be a Mbudzi, and the other one a smartphone (Yes you need a Mbudzi EVEN if your smartphone is a dual SIM smartphone).

*Must have Mbudzi features:*

Lightweight, Excellent Battery, Torch

*Must have Smartphone features:*

Good battery, Torch, WhatsApp Capable, Good Camera, Dual Sim (not really important anymore because the person will have a Mbudzi)

The Mbudzi is for making EcoCash payments (we'll talk about what EcoCash in another week), and for backup e.g when you are travelling and your Smartphone runs out of juice.

The Smartphone is for prestige, taking good pictures and using WhatsApp (nobody really cares about reverse charging, NFC, 30 Megapixel Cameras, Bluetooth 5.0). Make sure the smartphone that you buy has parts that are locally available (especially the screen and the battery). Never ever buy a smartphone without an accompanying mbudzi, otherwise if your smartphone eventually fails or gets stolen, you won't have a phone at all!

As a general rule of the thumb, a good Iphone is a good phone to have in this country (because a good Iphone is a status symbol + IOs is just better than android).

*Where can I get my phone fixed?*

Say you run into trouble, and your phone needs to be fixed. Where do you go?

Get into Harare's CBD. There will be loads of shops to go to.

Harare's 1<sup>st</sup> street is a good place to start.

If your phone is an Iphone, then head over to Solutions Centre.

Note: Be willing to fork out a fortune. Getting any electronic gadget fixed usually costs a great deal of money. We locals usually first try watching YouTube videos with quick fixes to the problem, and only give our phones to get fixed when we have failed to fix them on our own.

## Chapter 4: Career Advice

In this chapter, I'm going to give you a few gentle suggestions, which I cannot be held accountable for in the event that my ideas don't work out too well for you (yes I had to say that so that some crazy person wouldn't end up suing me).

Before we start this chapter, let's learn a few Shona words:

*Ine bhegi* – it is lucrative

*Chibaba* – somebody who is really good at something

*Ndakastikka paden* – I'm at home doing nothing at all

*So let's start by giving a brief overview of the education system in Zimbabwe*

In Zimbabwe, we've got ECD, primary school, secondary school and tertiary education. Primary school is from Grade 1-7. Examinations are written at Grade 7, and if one passes, they proceed to secondary school. Secondary school is divided into two sections – 'O' level which runs for four years (Form 1 – Form 4), and 'A' level that runs from Form 5 – Form 6 (we usually refer to these as lower and upper six respectively). 'O' level exams are written at the end of Form 4, and if one passes with at least five passes (5 C grades or more, with a pass in English + Maths + a science subject) they are eligible to proceed to 'A' level, where they write exams at the end of upper six and are eligible to apply to any local university (they can also apply to international universities).

The Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) is responsible for the primary, and secondary school examinations. Those who prefer to use the Cambridge syllabus write Cambridge exams, though these are much more expensive than the ZIMSEC exams. I will explain more about the Zimbabwean education

system in another blog post.

Now that we are acquainted with the basics, let's move on to the next topic

### *Begin with the end in mind*

1. I have passed my O level exams. What should I do?

Well that is quite a question! Let's talk about that

The point of going to school, and writing very many exams is for you to actually make use of those certificates in the future.

Don't go to school to:

- fulfill your parents unfulfilled desires and dreams
- Show off your certificates to your neighbors
- Get into a profession that everyone else in your family did for the sake of doing it
- Do a program that's perceived to be cool
- Do a program that your brother classified as a program in a bag.

So what should you do?

- First ask yourself – what exactly do I want these many papers to do for me?
- Do I want guaranteed employment?
- Do I want recognition?
- Do I even want these papers at all or do I want to do something non academic?

After asking yourself these questions, then proceed to the next questions. These follow up questions serve to ensure that the decision you've made is solid.

2. Do I need to go for A level?

Well this depends on very many factors. Let's make a simple decision making process:

If you've written your O levels twice and have less than 3 O level passes, then chances are high that you may find A level challenging. Try considering other options such as: repeating O

level until you have 5 passes and look for a job, venture into a trade that doesn't need O level at all, get well acquainted with the basics of self employment and start making money for yourself.

If you've written your O levels once and have 5 O level passes, then you're eligible. You can go for A level.

If you've written your O levels once and have 5 good O level passes or more, then you're eligible. You can go for a level.

### 3. What if I don't want to go for A level?

Think deeply about it. If I really can't convince you then here's what you can do:

You can go to some international universities. Make sure to read the universities section that's below.

- You can get a job
- You can become self employed
- You can become an apprentice / enroll at teaching institutions / study nursing

### 4. What course should I do at A level?

I see many people getting lost at this stage. First ask yourself what do I intend to use these academic papers for in the future. The answer to that will guide your decision.

A level in Zimbabwe is basically divided into 3:

- o Arts
- o Sciences
- o Commercials

So which category must I choose?

Well I have a simple, fun activity for this. You will need to photocopy your O level certificate. Get 3 different crayons. Colour all arts subjects using one crayon. Choose another crayon for sciences, and do it again for commercials. Have a look at the

grades in each colour.

The colour with the best grades is usually a good indicator of the category that is best for you. If you are weak in commercials, don't do commercials. If you are weak in sciences, you will only get worse and if you are weak in arts **STAY AWAY FROM THEM**.

When choosing a combination, make sure that you will be able to enrol for at least two degree programmes from a local university. If you can't, then it means your combination is rather bad and you ought to choose a different one.

Tip: To those doing science subjects, just do 3. I have never seen anywhere where more than 15 points are needed. Rather focus on the three subjects and get 3 straight As. There is no point in trying to become a Chibaba when there's absolutely no need for that.

Ps. A person with 15 points can get the same scholarship that you with 25 points are applying for.

5. Which combination should I choose at A level?

To do this, get a prospectus from at least 3 local universities. Have a look at the various degrees you can pursue with your combination. If you like the results then your combination is good, and even if you decide to learn out of the country, chances are high that you will get a good degree programme.

6. I'm done with A level, what's next?

Well it's time to ask yourself what you want to do with your papers. Do you want to get into academics or not?... The list goes on.

Select whether you want to go to university. Remember, you don't really need a degree to achieve your goals, depending on what they are.

7. I want to go to university. Which university must I go to?

Well if you're really sure that you want to go to university then ask yourself what you want to do with your degree.

Remember your degree is an investment. The whole point of investing is getting your money back. Choose a field in which there is a very high probability of getting a return on investment. This could be in the form of a job, or a business that requires experience obtained from the degree programme.

That must help answer your question.

8. Are there some universities that are better than others

Actually, yes. This depends on what you want to do with the degree. Lecturers are different, the culture in departments and universities differs, opportunities available at the universities are different.

At times some smaller universities beat larger universities, and at times some large universities outperform the smaller ones. It all depends with the degree programme you want to pursue.

9. Any other Nuggets?

Always keep the end goal in mind. Don't get a certificate if you don't know what you will do with it in the future.

Choose good friends. They either make you succeed or they lead to your demise

When looking for a project partner, make sure you choose the best of the available options.

Getting a job is like gambling. Instead of wishing you'll get a job and praying it will be super lucrative, rather focus on what to do with your degree in the highly likely event that you don't get a job. If you don't do this then if you fail to get a job after 4 or 5 years in university chances are high that you'll say ndakastikka paden when your colleagues ask you what you are upto.

The world is going digital. This means that more and more things are getting automated. This means there will be a very huge pool of jobs in the electronics & electrical fields. In electronics- there

will be a huge demand of hardware and software designers. As a result of the increase in smart devices and sensors there will also be a huge increase in data. This creates a huge demand of people who interpret the data and make meaningful use of it – Data scientists. This will also increase a demand in people who can use the data to make smart decisions and make relatively accurate predictions. This will result in the need for those proficient in the Artificial Intelligence field.

As a result of all of this hardware, smart devices and so forth, there will be a need to provide power for all these applications, which therefore makes the power generation (especially renewable energy) field very attractive.

So that's about it. I hope this chapter will help someone.

## Conclusion

This brings us to the end of the book. I hope you enjoyed it. For more material, feel free to head over to my personal blog <https://maputionline.com>

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