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Zimbabwe inflation at 2,200,000 per cent

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0807/080717-inflation.html>

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THE ARTICLE

The official inflation rate in Zimbabwe has escalated to 2.2 million percent. This is 13 times higher than the last official figure, which the government released in February. Unofficial figures put the rate as high as 15 million percent, and rising. To cope with the large numbers of zeros, the central bank recently issued a 500-million Zimbabwe dollar bank note, which was worth US\$2. People living in Zimbabwe now have to be very good at mental arithmetic to do simple things like buy a loaf of bread, that is if they can find any bread on Zimbabwe's empty store shelves. The cost of a loaf of bread is now at one-third of a teacher's monthly salary. Zimbabweans are suffering with 80 per cent unemployment and salaries that cannot keep up with the pace of daily price rises.

Zimbabwe used to be one of the richest countries in Africa. It was called the 'breadbasket' of Africa because it grew enough food for itself and for export to other countries. Today, the country's farming has collapsed and people cannot find enough food in the shops. International economists blame the policies of President Robert Mugabe, that have created internal chaos and poverty in the country. Mugabe says he has had little to do with the wrecked economy. He blames all of Zimbabwe's economic woes on international trade sanctions. There is a serious cash shortage because the government cannot print bank notes fast enough to keep up with spiralling prices. People can only take out 100 million Zimbabwe dollars a day from their banks. That's less than one US dollar.

WARM-UPS

1. INFLATION: Walk around the class and talk to other students about inflation. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

inflation rate / official figure / zeros / central bank / mental arithmetic / bread / salary / breadbasket / exports / farming / chaos / poverty / economic woes / bank notes

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. HYPERINFLATION: How would runaway inflation affect your life? Write down what you would do if you could no longer afford these things. Change partners and share what you wrote.

Things	What I would do if I could no longer afford to buy them
Chocolate	
Soft/Alcoholic drinks	
Mobile calls/texts	
Petrol / transport	
Books	
Entertainment	

4. ECONOMY: Which of these economic features affect you most? Rate them: 10 = "This causes me pain"; 1 = "This doesn't affect me at all". Talk with your partner(s) about this.

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ inflation | _____ purchase / sales tax |
| _____ unemployment | _____ energy costs |
| _____ interest rates | _____ welfare payments |
| _____ income tax | _____ public services |

5. HEADLINE PREDICTION: With your partner(s), use the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and share them. Who was closest to the real story?

6. BREAD: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'bread'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Zimbabwe's inflation has dropped below two-and-a-half million percent. T / F
- b. The rate of inflation has increased 13-fold since February. T / F
- c. The most recently issued Zimbabwe bank note has eight zeros on it. T / F
- d. A Zimbabwe teacher will use up her monthly pay on 3 loaves of bread. T / F
- e. Zimbabwe used to be called the "fruit basket of Africa". T / F
- f. International economists blame trade sanctions for Zimbabwe's woes. T / F
- g. Banks are having trouble printing enough new bank notes. T / F
- h. Zimbabweans can withdraw 99 million dollars a day from their bank. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. escalated | a. handle |
| 2. cope with | b. wealthiest |
| 3. issued | c. mayhem |
| 4. suffering | d. risen |
| 5. pace | e. rocketing |
| 6. richest | f. hurting |
| 7. collapsed | g. speed |
| 8. chaos | h. problems |
| 9. woes | i. circulated |
| 10. spiralling | j. broken down |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. This is 13 times higher than | a. arithmetic |
| 2. cope with the large | b. woes |
| 3. have to be very good at mental | c. richest countries in Africa |
| 4. a loaf of bread is now at one-third of | d. the last official figure |
| 5. salaries that cannot keep up with the pace | e. export to other countries |
| 6. Zimbabwe used to be one of the | f. chaos and poverty |
| 7. it grew enough food for itself and for | g. numbers of zeros |
| 8. internal | h. a teacher's monthly salary |
| 9. Zimbabwe's economic | i. prices |
| 10. keep up with spiralling | j. of daily price rises |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The official inflation rate in Zimbabwe has _____ to 2.2 million percent. This is 13 times _____ than the last official figure, which the government released in February. Unofficial figures put the rate as _____ as 15 million percent, and rising. To cope with the large _____ of zeros, the central bank recently issued a 500-million Zimbabwe dollar bank note, which was _____ US\$2. People living in Zimbabwe now have to be very good at _____ arithmetic to do simple things like buy a loaf of bread, that is if they can find any bread on Zimbabwe's empty store _____. The cost of a loaf of bread is now at one-third of a teacher's monthly salary. Zimbabweans are suffering with 80 per cent unemployment and salaries that cannot keep up with the _____ of daily price rises.

worth
high
pace
escalated
shelves
mental
higher
numbers

Zimbabwe used to be one of the _____ countries in Africa. It was called the 'breadbasket' of Africa because it grew _____ food for itself and for export to other countries. Today, the country's farming has _____ and people cannot find enough food in the shops. International economists _____ the policies of President Robert Mugabe, that have created internal chaos and _____ in the country. Mugabe says he has had little to do with the wrecked economy. He blames all of Zimbabwe's economic _____ on international trade sanctions. There is a serious cash _____ because the government cannot print bank notes fast enough to _____ up with spiralling prices. People can only take out 100 million Zimbabwe dollars a day from their banks. That's less than one US dollar.

blame
keep
enough
shortage
poverty
richest
woes
collapsed

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

The official _____ Zimbabwe has escalated to 2.2 million percent. This is 13 times higher than _____ figure, which the government released in February. Unofficial figures put the rate _____ million percent, and rising. To cope with the large _____, the central bank recently issued a 500-million Zimbabwe dollar bank note, which was _____. People living in Zimbabwe now have to be very _____ arithmetic to do simple things like buy a loaf of bread, _____ can find any bread on Zimbabwe's empty store shelves. The cost of a loaf of bread is now _____ a teacher's monthly salary. Zimbabweans are suffering with 80 per cent unemployment and salaries that cannot keep up _____ of daily price rises.

Zimbabwe _____ of the richest countries in Africa. It was called the 'breadbasket' of Africa because it grew enough food _____ export to other countries. Today, the country's farming _____ people cannot find enough food in the shops. International economists _____ of President Robert Mugabe, that have created _____ poverty in the country. Mugabe says he _____ do with the wrecked economy. He blames all of Zimbabwe's _____ on international trade sanctions. There is _____ shortage because the government cannot print bank notes fast enough to _____ spiralling prices. People can only take out 100 million Zimbabwe dollars a day from their banks. That's _____ US dollar.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**per**' and '**cent**'.

per	cent

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13• 15• 500-million• 2• one-third• 80	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• called• farming• blame• trade• cash• take out
--	--

STUDENT INFLATION SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about inflation in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

INFLATION DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'inflation'?
- c) Is inflation a problem in your country?
- d) What do you know about inflation?
- e) Can you imagine an inflation rate of 2.2 million per cent?
- f) Are you good at mental arithmetic?
- g) What would you do if there was no food in the shops?
- h) Do you think food could become a problem in your country?
- i) What are the biggest economic problems in your country?
- j) Would you work if your monthly salary could only stretch to three loaves of bread?

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INFLATION DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) How did Zimbabwe become so poor?
- c) Why can Zimbabwe no longer feed itself?
- d) Is Robert Mugabe to blame for Zimbabwe's economic woes?
- e) How can Zimbabwe once again become the breadbasket of Africa, instead of being a basket case?
- f) Has there ever been chaos and poverty in your country?
- g) Are you worried about rising prices?
- h) Have you ever suffered from a serious cash shortage?
- i) How could you survive on less than a dollar a day?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Robert Mugabe?

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LANGUAGE

The (1) _____ inflation rate in Zimbabwe has escalated to 2.2 million percent. This is 13 times higher than the last official (2) _____, which the government released in February. Unofficial figures put the rate as high as 15 million percent, and (3) _____. To cope with the large numbers of zeros, the central bank recently issued a 500-million Zimbabwe dollar bank note, which was (4) _____ US\$2. People living in Zimbabwe now have to be very good at mental arithmetic to do simple things like buy a loaf of bread, that is if they can find any bread (5) _____ Zimbabwe's empty store shelves. The cost of a loaf of bread is now at one-third of a teacher's monthly salary. Zimbabweans are suffering with 80 per cent unemployment and salaries that cannot keep (6) _____ with the pace of daily price rises.

Zimbabwe used to be one of the richest countries in Africa. It was called the 'breadbasket' of Africa because it (7) _____ enough food for itself and for export to other countries. Today, the country's (8) _____ has collapsed and people cannot find enough food in the shops. International economists (9) _____ the policies of President Robert Mugabe, that have created internal chaos and poverty in the country. Mugabe says he has had little to do with the wrecked economy. He blames all of Zimbabwe's economic (10) _____ on international trade sanctions. There is a serious cash (11) _____ because the government cannot print bank notes fast enough to keep up with spiralling prices. People can only take out 100 million Zimbabwe dollars a day from their banks. That's less than one US dollar.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) officials | (b) officially | (c) officialdom | (d) official |
| 2. | (a) figured | (b) figure | (c) figurine | (d) figuring |
| 3. | (a) rising | (b) raising | (c) arising | (d) risen |
| 4. | (a) valued | (b) value | (c) worth | (d) worthless |
| 5. | (a) at | (b) in | (c) on | (d) to |
| 6. | (a) them | (b) up | (c) going | (d) it |
| 7. | (a) grew | (b) grown | (c) growing | (d) grown-up |
| 8. | (a) farm out | (b) farmers | (c) farm | (d) farming |
| 9. | (a) blaming | (b) blame | (c) blameless | (d) blames |
| 10. | (a) does | (b) goes | (c) foes | (d) woes |
| 11. | (a) shortlist | (b) shorten | (c) shortage | (d) shortwave |
| 12. | (a) fast | (b) fasten | (c) fasting | (d) fastener |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about inflation in Zimbabwe. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. ECONOMIC WOES: Make a poster about the different kinds of economic woes affecting the world. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. HYPERINFLATION: Write a magazine article about the effects of hyperinflation in Zimbabwe. How do people survive and keep up with spiralling prices? Include imaginary interviews with President Robert Mugabe and a teacher.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. DIARY / JOURNAL: You have to live in one dollar a day. Write your diary entry on how you do this. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

6. LETTER: Write a letter to officials in Zimbabwe. Ask them three questions about the runaway inflation in Zimbabwe. Give them three pieces of advice on what they should do to control inflation and once again make Zimbabwe the breadbasket of Africa. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. escalated | a. risen |
| 2. cope with | b. handle |
| 3. issued | c. circulated |
| 4. suffering | d. hurting |
| 5. pace | e. speed |
| 6. richest | f. wealthiest |
| 7. collapsed | g. broken down |
| 8. chaos | h. mayhem |
| 9. woes | i. problems |
| 10. spiralling | j. rocketing |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. This is 13 times higher than | a. the last official figure |
| 2. cope with the large | b. numbers of zeros |
| 3. have to be very good at mental | c. arithmetic |
| 4. a loaf of bread is now at one-third of | d. a teacher's monthly salary |
| 5. salaries that cannot keep up with the pace | e. of daily price rises |
| 6. Zimbabwe used to be one of the | f. richest countries in Africa |
| 7. it grew enough food for itself and for | g. export to other countries |
| 8. internal | h. chaos and poverty |
| 9. Zimbabwe's economic | i. woes |
| 10. keep up with spiralling | j. prices |

GAP FILL:

Zimbabwe inflation at 2,200,000 per cent

The official inflation rate in Zimbabwe has **escalated** to 2.2 million percent. This is 13 times **higher** than the last official figure, which the government released in February. Unofficial figures put the rate as **high** as 15 million percent, and rising. To cope with the large **numbers** of zeros, the central bank recently issued a 500-million Zimbabwe dollar bank note, which was **worth** US\$2. People living in Zimbabwe now have to be very good at **mental** arithmetic to do simple things like buy a loaf of bread, that is if they can find any bread on Zimbabwe's empty store **shelves**. The cost of a loaf of bread is now at one-third of a teacher's monthly salary. Zimbabweans are suffering with 80 per cent unemployment and salaries that cannot keep up with the **pace** of daily price rises.

Zimbabwe used to be one of the **richest** countries in Africa. It was called the 'breadbasket' of Africa because it grew **enough** food for itself and for export to other countries. Today, the country's farming has **collapsed** and people cannot find enough food in the shops. International economists **blame** the policies of President Robert Mugabe, that have created internal chaos and **poverty** in the country. Mugabe says he has had little to do with the wrecked economy. He blames all of Zimbabwe's economic **woes** on international trade sanctions. There is a serious cash **shortage** because the government cannot print bank notes fast enough to **keep** up with spiralling prices. People can only take out 100 million Zimbabwe dollars a day from their banks. That's less than one US dollar.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - b 3 - a 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a 8 - d 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a