

Even the music has stopped

Zimbabwe's economic crisis has claimed a new and unlikely victim - music.

By [Torby Chimhashu](#) 26 Jun 2007

Harare - The country's most successful singer and guitarist Oliver Mtukudzi can't release his new album in the country because his record company cannot raise foreign currency to meet production costs, *New Zimbabwe.com* can reveal.

While *Tsimba Itsoka*, the new album from Mtukudzi, is already available in neighbouring South Africa and the United States where the artist has independent marketing deals, Zimbabweans will have to wait longer.

Mtukudzi's music in Zimbabwe is marketed by the Zimbabwe Music Corporation (ZMC). ZMC, through their parent company Gramma Records, are battling to source foreign currency to import production material, officials said.

Mtukudzi's album has been ready for release since April this year, he told *New Zimbabwe.com*. Such is the uncertainty of the situation that the artist fears the album could be available on the UK market when he tours in September before it is available on the Zimbabwe market.

A spokesman for Gramma said: "There are a number of musicians who have had their albums delayed. Gramma, like any other company, is facing problems of foreign currency.

"Quality packaging and CDs require huge sums of foreign currency. At the moment things are tight, and we cannot compromise the quality of our production."

Mtukudzi said he could not speak on behalf of other musicians, but admitted that having recorded over 50 albums in a career spanning over four decades, he had yet to face a situation as dire as present.

Hard to accept

"*Tsimba Itsoka* is yet to be released here in Zimbabwe, which is hard to accept," said Mtukudzi. "We are doing all we can with Tuku Music to make sure our fans in Zimbabwe get the album.

"We have already released in South Africa and the United States. It will be available in the UK in September when I perform there."

Last year, Mtukudzi's manager Debbie Metcalfe said inflation was eroding the artists' income from CD sales. Musicians, she said, get their royalties from record companies after seven months of the CD being released.

"When the money is finally paid, it would be all worthless because of inflation," she said.

Zimbabwean artists are now having to rely on income generated from performing at live shows.

Zimbabwe is battling inflation of over 4500%, the highest in the world. The country's currency is still officially pegged at Z\$250 to one US dollar. Early last week, the informal market price was about Z\$100,000 to US\$1, but by Monday June 25 had crashed to Z\$400,000 against the US dollar. In January this year US\$1 was being traded for Z\$3,000.

The Zimbabwe government blames economic sanctions, which it claims were imposed by Western countries, for the country's dramatic economic decline. President Mugabe's local and international critics accuse him of mismanaging the economy and allowing public sector corruption to take root. They also deny they imposed economic sanctions on the country as a whole; what they have imposed are targeted sanctions aimed specifically at Mugabe and others in government and business.

Article courtesy of [New Zimbabwe](#)

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