

# U4 Helpdesk Answer

---

U4 Helpdesk Answer 2023: 27

## Zimbabwe: Corruption and anti-corruption

### Tracking developments and progress

President Mnangagwa secured a second term in 2023 amid allegations of election irregularities, including vote rigging and concerns about the independence of the Zimbabwe Election Commission. Corruption continues to be deeply ingrained in the public and private sectors.

While Zimbabwe has made efforts to counter corruption, it faces significant challenges. For example, political interference and resource constraints in improving transparency and accountability within state enterprises and parastatals are evident.

Efforts to address corruption in the natural resources sector have been initiated by anti-corruption agencies and the judiciary, although progress has been uneven and slow in investigating and prosecuting politically exposed persons and recovering stolen assets.

Civil society organisations and non-state media play pivotal roles in exposing corruption and advocating for specific anti-corruption measures such as gender-based corruption.

18 September 2023

#### AUTHOR

Vaclav Prusa

[tihelpdesk@transparency.org](mailto:tihelpdesk@transparency.org)

#### REVIEWED BY

Sofie Arjon Schuette (U4)

Caitlin Maslen, Jorum Duri and  
Matthew Jenkins (TI)

#### RELATED U4 MATERIAL

- [Zimbabwe: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption \(2015\)](#)
- [Zimbabwe: Overview of corruption in the health and education sectors and in local government](#)

# Query

Please provide an overview of the prevalence, type and nature of corruption risks in Zimbabwe.

## Contents

1. Overview of corruption in Zimbabwe
  - a. Background and political context
  - b. Extent and types of corruption
  - c. Main sectors and areas affected by corruption
2. Legal and institutional anti-corruption framework
  - a. Legal framework
  - b. Institutional framework
3. Other stakeholders
  - a. Media
  - b. Civil society
  - c. Anti-corruption CSOs active in Zimbabwe
  - d. Private Sector
4. References

## Caveat

The information presented in this brief is derived primarily from publicly available sources. As such, the completeness and accuracy of the data are subject to the extent of information available. Certain anti-corruption activities or initiatives, particularly those not extensively covered online, may not be adequately represented in this research. A comprehensive understanding of corruption in Zimbabwe may require a more in-depth analysis of the dynamic national political context and evolving international corruption networks with links to Zimbabwe.

## MAIN POINTS

- While there were high hopes for reform when Emmerson Mnangagwa took office in 2017 following Robert Mugabe's rule, the country still grapples with enduring issues such as a high incidence of corruption, economic challenges and human rights abuses.
- Multiple types of corruption permeate Zimbabwe's society, affecting the public and private sectors, including vital institutions like the judiciary, law enforcement, media, electoral bodies and the mining industry.
- There is a gendered component to corruption in Zimbabwe, as there is evidence that women's rights are disproportionately affected by the need to offer bribes when accessing essential public services.
- The international dimension of corruption is significant in Zimbabwe as illicit financial flows (IFFs) have drained billions of dollars from the country, particularly in sectors related to natural resources like mining, timber and wildlife. Many of the IFF proceeds are linked to corruption.
- Civic space and independent reporting have come under growing strain in the country. This is exemplified by the introduction of the Patriot Act in 2023, which grants broad powers to the government to suppress dissent and could hinder investigative journalism into alleged corruption.

# Overview of corruption in Zimbabwe

## Background and political context

Zimbabwe held presidential, parliamentary and councillor elections on 23 and 24 August 2023. According to the official results, President Emmerson Mnangagwa won a second term in office with 52.6% of the vote compared with 44% for challenger Nelson Chamisa. The opposition rejected the validity of the official result (Al Jazeera 2023a), amid allegations of vote rigging, a lack of independence by the Zimbabwe Election Commission, biased state media favouring Mnangagwa's ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), voter intimidation and unconstitutional influence from tribal leaders. Additionally, there were reports of voter disenfranchisement, politicisation of food aid, excessive use of force by security services and a lack of transparency in releasing election results (Al Jazeera 2023a; Reuters 2023; EEAS 2023).

The European Union (EU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) observers noted a prevailing "climate of fear" during the electoral process. Irregularities, including delayed ballot arrivals, raids on local accredited observers and voter intimidation by security forces, marred both pre-election and voting-day proceedings and the post-election period (EEAS 2023; CFR 2023).

Mnangagwa, a prominent ZANU-PF official, assumed power following a 2017 military intervention that removed longtime leader Robert Mugabe. This intervention was met with tacit approval within Zimbabwe and garnered international acceptance, despite deviating from international norms on the legitimate transfer of

power (Mpofu 2017). The popularity of the regime change reportedly stemmed from Mugabe's isolation, which legitimised the intervention and shifted power structures towards President Mnangagwa's allies. However, the governance system is still rooted in the ZANU-PF power structure based on cronyism a lack of accountability (Asuelime 2018).

After five years in power, Mnangagwa's rule has lost its reformist character. In the lead-up to the 2023 vote, 72% of Zimbabweans polled by Afrobarometer believed the country was heading in the wrong direction, a 10-point increase from 2018 when Mnangagwa assumed power through military intervention (Afrobarometer 2023).

Subsequent elections and the government's record since Mugabe's ousting suggest that Mnangagwa's regime did not aim to transform Zimbabwe's political system or implement significant governance reforms. Looting of mineral resources, opposition suppression, compromised elections, a lack of economic reforms and ongoing human rights abuses contradict the government's rhetoric on anti-corruption and good governance. Instead, different factions within the ZANU-PF party appear to perpetuate the structures of the same corrupt kleptocracy that has dominated Zimbabwe's politics and economy for the past three decades (Ndhlovu 2021).

According to the Varieties of Democracy index, Zimbabwe's electoral system falls into the "illiberal" category. Interestingly, Zimbabwe's political system showed a slight improvement in democracy during Mugabe's final years in power, with a 20% score increase between 2007 and his ousting in 2017 (Feldstein 2018). This may have been due to increasing public optimism following the participatory process of developing the new constitution that came into force in 2013 (Booyesen 2012) under the Government of National Unity that existed between 2008 and 2013 (Mutisi 2011). The

Index of Public Integrity observed some progress between 2007 and 2020 in budget transparency, administrative burden, judicial independence, press freedom and e-citizenship (ERCAS 2023).

Structural economic problems and fiscal imbalances persist. Despite significant natural resource endowments, fertile land for agriculture and geographic proximity to South Africa's economic powerhouse, Zimbabwe's economic and development indicators underperform the economic and human capital potential. Periods of hyperinflation, high unemployment, a large informal economy, disruption of agricultural output and food shortages, resulting from land reform policies and political uncertainty, have contributed to economic decline and high poverty rates (World Bank 2023).

Since 2011, poverty rates have stagnated at around 6 million people living on US\$2.15 per day. Real GDP per capita in 2022 stood at only US\$1,306, categorising Zimbabwe as a low-middle-income country (IBRD-IDA 2023). In 2021, domestic revenues (tax and non-tax) reached US\$4.9 billion, which meant an increase in 2020 to US\$3.1 billion. Development partners remain a key source of development financing, given the government's limited capacity to raise external debt due to mismanagement, corruption and hyperinflation.

As a consequence, with external debt totalling US\$12.8 billion, Zimbabwe's credit rating has plummeted, restricting its access to global capital markets (UNICEF 2021; World Bank 2023). External development assistance continues to bypass the government system due to concerns about corruption, mismanagement, and politicised distribution.

Corruption remains endemic and continues to permeate Zimbabwe's economy and society, even after the change in leadership (The Zimbabwean 2021). Impunity is a systemic problem, with the

Mnangagwa government taking few steps to identify or investigate officials involved in human rights abuses or corruption since or prior to Mugabe's ousting in 2017 (US State Department 2021a).

Investigative reporting has recently exposed industrial-scale looting of gold (Al Jazeera 2023b), diamonds (Manayiti 2018) and other natural resources. State capture of key economic sectors by politically connected cartels linked to ZANU-PF remains a defining feature of the overarching political and economic context (The Zimbabwean 2021). Consequently, incremental progress in governance and economic areas since 2017 appears hindered by the inability or unwillingness to investigate and prosecute high-profile cases of endemic corruption (US State Department 2021b).

## Extent and types of corruption

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Zimbabwe 157 out of 180 countries in 2022, with a score of 23 out of 100 points, indicating a high level of perceived public sector corruption (Transparency International 2023).

The Mo Ibrahim Index Report (2022) highlights Zimbabwe's improved economic outlook with the progress in categories of economic opportunity and human development. There has been stagnation in governance categories such as participation, rights & inclusion, and security and rule of law, which includes anti-corruption indicators. In these two categories, Zimbabwe performs at the bottom of the African ranking in 2021.

The BTI Transformation Index (2023) likewise confirms stagnation or a mild deterioration of political and governance indicators, including the control of corruption since 2018.

Public and private sector corruption is endemic and systemic. The data shows that corruption severely

---

## U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

undermines public service delivery and hamstring all state functions. The IMF (2022, p.20) concluded in the country's periodic assessment that “Zimbabwe’s institutional weaknesses have jeopardised growth and social outcomes and contributed to fragility”.

Public service incapacitation due to corruption is acknowledged by the Zimbabwean government’s own assessment. The 2021-25 National Development Strategy (NDS) identifies high levels of corruption as well as low citizen participation in democratic and governance processes as major factors behind the poor-quality delivery of public services (Republic of Zimbabwe 2020, p.21).

According to the World Bank, Zimbabwe underperforms its regional and African country peers on measures of regulatory quality, the rule of law, control of corruption, voice and accountability, and political stability. Since 2018, the control of corruption indicator has been decreasing or stagnant. Indicators related to the rule of law, voice and accountability, and political stability show a similar trend (World Bank 2023).

The frequency and prevalence of petty corruption is very high. In the Bribe Payers Index (BPI) compiled by Transparency International Zimbabwe in 2021, 54.4 % indicated that they have been asked to pay a bribe within the last 12 months (TI Zimbabwe 2021, p.11).

The 2021 survey also revealed that half of the respondents do not trust the government's sincerity in curbing corruption, and citizens have low trust in the key institutions responsible for countering corruption; 43.1% also expressed a lack of confidence in the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) (TI Zimbabwe 2021, p.12).

Survey data indicates that the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) is perceived by citizens as the most corrupt institution in Zimbabwe. 39% of respondents to a TI Zimbabwe (2021) survey

expressed the view that ZRP is the most corrupt public sector institution, with the Vehicle Inspection Department (19%) and the Registrar’s Office (15%) being perceived as the second and third most corrupt institutions. The least corrupt is the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education (TI Zimbabwe 2021, p. 24). Worryingly, 77% of respondents claimed in 2021 that bribery as a form of corruption within the public sector has increased in the last three years (TI Zimbabwe 2021, p.15).

One participant of a focus group discussion in Harare observed that (TI Zimbabwe 2021):

“You cannot expect to get a (driving) licence without paying. In Marondera they are currently charging anything from US\$100-US\$150 for a class four (light motor vehicle) licence and as much as US\$300 or more for class 2 or class 1. The same applies for those seeking re-test as well. The situation is bad.”

The gender dimension of corruption in Zimbabwe is significant. In a TI Zimbabwe study, Gender and Corruption in Zimbabwe (2019), 70% of respondents claimed that there is a link between gender and corruption in Zimbabwe because the rights of women are disproportionately undermined by the increasing need to bribe when accessing public goods. Women have been exposed to different forms of corruption, such as sextortion, due to structural factors such as land dispossession and land corruption. The research underlines that Zimbabwe’s patriarchal and unequal society tends to reinforce the negative impact of corruption for women compared to men due to multiple challenges such as the lack of agency to access accountability mechanisms, the lack of acceptance by public authorities and the lack of availability of complaint mechanisms due to social exclusion.

Despite the unfavourable political environment and capture of key state functions by corrupt cartels,

anti-corruption and oversight institutions do expose to some extent the prevalence of corruption and corruption risks. For example, the special audited reports (SARs) compiled by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) regularly expose poorly managed accounting records, diversion of public funds for unintended purposes, payments for undelivered goods and failure to follow procurement procedures in parastatals, ministries and departments, and local governments. The SARs note specific instances of state institutions failing to comply with the government's own laws and regulations, such as the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (see OfAG 2022).

### **Illicit financial flows and money laundering**

A key characteristic of Zimbabwe's grand corruption is the regional and global dimension due to the involvement and extent of natural resource looting. Illicit financial flows (IFFs) are a major challenge to Zimbabwe's fiscal balance and have a detrimental impact on the country's ability to raise, retain and mobilise its own financial resources for sustainable economic development. The nexus between IFFs and corruption in Zimbabwe is significant and complex as witnessed, for example, in the country's gold smuggling operations (Al Jazeera 2023b; GFI 2017).

Corrupt officials and individuals in Zimbabwe often embezzle public funds, accepting bribes, kickbacks, or other illicit payments. These ill-gotten gains are then transferred abroad through various means, contributing to IFFs. The proceeds of corruption, often linked to Zimbabwe's natural resources, are exported abroad through opaque financial structures. Laundered funds are to some extent channelled back to Zimbabwe to covertly finance political activities. A study published in 2021 titled *Cartel Power Dynamics in Zimbabwe*, exposes the details of the corrupt roots, networks, and cost of

IFFs including their role in power preservation of the political and business cartels (Gavin 2021).

It is estimated that in the period from 2000 to 2020, Zimbabwe lost approximately US\$32 billion through IFFs (Kurebwa 2021). Illegal external outflows are linked to tax evasion, money laundering and other financial crimes including corruption. The assets originate in industries associated with mining, timber, fisheries and wildlife. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) estimates that US\$684 million was transferred outside Zimbabwe under dubious and unwarranted circumstances in 2015 (Kurebwa 2021). Data from Global Financial Integrity (GFI) show that Zimbabwe lost an estimated US\$70 million through trade mis-invoicing alone in 2015 (GFI 2017).

A high volume of IFFs is enabled through the lax or non-existent money laundering and cash control legislation and enforcement. Zimbabwe is assessed as being a high-risk country for money laundering and terrorist financing (ML/TF). The AML Index collected by the Basel Institute of Governance links Zimbabwe's ML/TF vulnerability with high environmental crime (BIOG 2022).

A recent report by the Sentry (2023) illustrates the role played by transit and destination countries in moving suspect funds out of Zimbabwe. The Sentry (2023) states that a businessman with political connections in Zimbabwe was to move funds "from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) to the City of London using fronts, false invoices, and offshore financial façades" that involved intermediaries and enablers in South Africa and Mauritius to disguise the origin of the money.

Another common transit jurisdiction for illicit gold flows from Zimbabwe appears to be the United Arab Emirates (Al Jazeera 2023c), and Dubai in particular (Al Jazeera 2023d).

---

## **U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk**

## Main sectors and areas affected by corruption

### The mining sector

Zimbabwe's mining sector offers a rich variety of products, from base metals to high-value minerals, such as diamonds, gold, platinum, chrome, iron ore, coal, and lithium (TJN 2020). In 2020, the mining sector export earnings accounted for about 14% of GDP. Gold, platinum, and diamonds contributed approximately 74% of total exports (IMF 2022). The government hopes to increase mining revenues from US\$2.7 billion in 2017 to US\$12 billion in 2023 as part of its economic strategy through greater exploration and extraction, though TI Zimbabwe (2020) argues that a series of governance reforms need to be implemented to reach this goal.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2023, an investigation by Al Jazeera published extensive investigations into Southern Africa's large gold smuggling operations, exposing how international gangs launder billions of dollars linked to Zimbabwe's gold proceeds while aiding the Zimbabwean government to circumvent targeted sanctions (Al Jazeera 2023b).<sup>2</sup>

According to Home Affairs Minister Kazembe, the country was losing US\$100 million a month to gold smuggling. Politically exposed persons (PEPs) have been reportedly implicated in the smuggling of gold (Maverick Citizen 2021).

The Al Jazeera allegations reportedly implicate a range of Zimbabwean officials and institutions

including the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, customs officials, airport security officials and many others (Al Jazeera 2023b).

State media in Zimbabwe have shown lukewarm interest in the Al Jazeera findings. Zimbabwe's state-controlled daily newspaper, The Herald, accused Al Jazeera of seeking to "undermine the good work which is being done by President Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF" (Matsengarwodzi, D. 2023). The governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) likewise issued a press statement denying that RBZ acts as "Southern Africa's laundromat" and claiming that the institution "is concerned and disturbed by sensationally wild, false and malicious media reports" (RBZ 2023).

The extent and manifestations of corruption in the mining sector are widespread. At an operational level, kickbacks and bribery are exchanged for low or non-existing payments of taxes, royalties and other legally mandated charges by mining companies. Politicians in Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF party and top government officials are reported to be direct or indirect stakeholders in the mining companies that extract a range of solid minerals. For instance, Muchadenyika (2015) describes mafia-like political and authorities' involvement in the diamond industry. According to Maverick Citizen (2021) these groups demand bribes and kickbacks in exchange for tax evasion and minimal payments for mining licences below set rates.

Improper and fraudulent allocation of mining licences and concessions is another form of corruption. At the national level, the Ministry of

---

<sup>1</sup> The governance reforms promoted by TI Zimbabwe (2020) for the mining sector include legislative initiatives to anchor transparency and accountability in the mineral value chain, the decriminalisation of artisanal mining, the promotion of open contracting in the extractives sector, the removal harmful tax incentives, and the obligation of extractives

companies to publish information on their beneficial owners.

<sup>2</sup> Some Zimbabwean individuals and companies have faced sanctions imposed by Western countries, primarily related to an arms embargo and transit restrictions concerning military and dual-use goods trade with Zimbabwe (GOVUK 2023).

Mines officials have been periodically accused of deliberate double issuance of registration certificates for mining in gold mines and other extractives (Zim Morning Post 2020). Mining certificates granted to entities that are not politically connected can be arbitrarily cancelled (Dumisani 2020). At the district level, provincial mining directors are suspected of deliberately re-allocating mine certificates to loyal syndicates (AllAfrica 2022). There is little transparency in mining licenses (Bhasera 2023), further exacerbating these problems. An electronic cadastre has recently been launched to record land records to help resolve this (Bhasera 2023).

Artisanal mining, known locally as *amakorokoza*, is widespread but generally informal and, as such, vulnerable to violence and extortion by security agencies. Such abuses are enabled by the lack of proper definition of mining blocs, policy inconsistency and limited action by the government to formalise the sector (TI Zimbabwe 2020).

Artisanal miners are the main producers of gold in the country. Artisanal miners have no collective rights, are subject to gang violence and lack any form of protection in disputes with mining companies and authorities (ICG 2020). Security services extort bribes from artisanal miners to allow them to dig. The judicial system, including police, magistrates and prosecutors, demand bribes in return for not arresting or prosecuting artisanal miners. Violence and gang wars around artisanal mining sites cost hundreds of lives per year (ICG 2020).

In the formal economy, multinational and domestic entities attempt to secure concessions to limit their tax liability when negotiating mining exploitation contracts. Some companies secure stabilisation clauses that exempt them from paying taxes for long periods. Complete secrecy and confidentiality prevent even rough estimates of the extent of revenue and tax leakages in Zimbabwe's mining

sector, and this opacity creates a permissive environment for corruption (TJN 2020).

The mining sector is exposed to considerable conflicts of interest on the part of PEPs, oversight bodies and the ruling political party. In theory, the government has specified laws that require managers and directors to declare their financial interests in the public sector. These are not followed in practice (US State Department 2021b). Zimbabwe does not have laws that guard against conflict of interest with respect to the conduct of private companies, but existing rules on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange compel listed companies to disclose managers and directors to declare their financial interests in the public sector through annual reports (US State Department 2021b).

The lack of transparency in Zimbabwe's mining makes it difficult for civil society, development partners and government to monitor mining contracts and ensure that revenues flow into the state budget. Licensing and mining contracts are negotiated behind closed doors, negotiations are not open, and so the bids are rarely competitive (Mining Zimbabwe 2020).

Corruption in mining also thrives thanks to weak regulatory oversight and enforcement. The mining regulatory framework is partly outdated, heavily centralised and opaque. Corruption is enabled through numerous legal and policy loopholes and the lack of enforcement. Mineral rights are vested in the president, who primarily delegates management and enforcement through the structures and institutions under the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development (Alliot Global Alliance 2021). Furthermore, the allocation of licencing and other key decisions is not subject to judicial review (Mining Vision 2022). Instances where private sector entities exert undue influence over regulatory bodies, potentially compromising the integrity of regulatory processes through



regulatory capture have been associated with the mining, energy and telecommunication sectors (Zinyama et al. 2015; GOVUK 2023).

Multinational and foreign entities have also been embroiled in corruption controversies in the mining sector. For example, allegations of corruption and human rights abuses were levelled against Chinese firms involved in diamond mining operations (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2020). Reports by investigative journalists have alleged that private entities with connections to the Emirate of Dubai, South Africa and various other jurisdictions are heavily involved in gold smuggling (Ndlovu 2023; Al Jazeera 2023b). The paramilitary and semi-private Russian group Wagner has recently shown interest in Zimbabwe's mining assets and operations (WP 2023).

Regional financial hubs like Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa have become significant in facilitating the laundering of ill-gotten gains and evading international sanctions by domestic and international private companies and individuals operating in Zimbabwe. For instance, a prominent Zimbabwean businessman, who allegedly enjoys close ties with the country's leadership, reportedly shifted his business network offshore to Mauritius (OCCRP 2021). From there, he has reportedly continued extensive mining and fuel operations in Zimbabwe, which allows him to evade sanctions from the US and UK (OCCRP 2021).

### Judicial sector

Transparency International Zimbabwe (2022) describes the judicial system as endemically corrupt and systematically undermined. Of the respondents in the study, 69% claimed not to be satisfied with the court system (TI Zimbabwe 2022, p.26).

CSOs report that bribery is widespread and is a common to speed up legal proceedings. The

Zimbabwean judicial system faces an enormous backlog of cases, which is exploited by court officials to demand bribes (Mutowekuziva 2020).

The US Department of State (2021a) has reported that senior government officials bribe judicial senior staff including judges with properties, including homes, farms and agricultural machinery, against quid pro quo favourable rulings for the government. Before the 2023 election, some judges received “housing loans” up to US\$400,000, seen by some observers as bribes and inducements to do the bidding of the ruling ZANU-PF party and President Mnangagwa (ZimLive 2023 a).

Political interference and judicial capture undermine judicial independence and enables corruption in the justice system. Magaisa (2020) asserts that the judiciary in Zimbabwe is controlled by the executive in three main ways:

- 1) the appointment of judges, as the executive branch enjoys wide discretion over how judges are appointed
- 2) bribery and “compensations”, as judges’ wages are stagnant while inflation is rising, judicial staff are susceptible to “gifts” and other forms of bribery
- 3) removal of judges, as judicial oversight authorities are accused of being “trigger-happy” in removing judges who do not tow the party line

Reports from within the judiciary indicate the extent of the problem; in a letter from October 2020, judges in Zimbabwe directly addressed the president and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, stating that “judicial capture is the major challenge affecting the judiciary” (Chifamba 2020).

The judges cited fear of a backlash if they rule against the government. A former prosecutor

claimed in 2020 interview that “(t)he conduct of the magistrates especially at the anti-corruption courts reveal that the judges and magistrates are following a script of orders” (Chifamba 2020). In addition, the chief justice was accused of overseeing court judgements including interfering with high-profile anti-corruption cases (Chifamba 2020). For his part, Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi has strongly denied that the courts are captured (Chibamu 2022).

Nonetheless, the judicial system appears to be characterised by high levels of the abuse of power and frequent legal overreach. Prosecutors have the power to veto judicial bail decisions and keep accused persons in custody for up to seven days, despite a prior constitutional court ruling declaring this power unconstitutional. Prosecutors regularly extend the detention of opposition leaders, civil society activists and labour leaders (US State Department 2020). For example, in December 2020, pro-democracy activist Allan Moyo was arrested and spent 72 days in detention. He was denied bail three times before a court finally ruled to release him (CIVICUS 2021).

### State enterprises and parastatals

In Zimbabwe, state enterprises and parastatals play a major role in the provision of infrastructure and services like water, electricity, telecommunications, transportation, health, and education. Herbert Moyo (2014), an independent investigative journalist, has argued that:

“sustained and systematic militarisation of parastatals and public enterprises as well as local authorities has contributed a great deal in breeding a culture of patronage,

corruption and looting as these institutions are staffed mainly by people who neither possess the requisite qualifications, experience or competence to run them efficiently and profitably.”

More recent assessments made since Moyo’s analysis indicate that little progress has been made in improving the country’s state-owned enterprises (US State Department 2023). Parastatals and ministries and departments do not maintain written documentation to justify their decisions for choosing suppliers for most direct purchases of goods and services. According to the US State Department (2023), few of them publish financial data on their operations. Interestingly, the OAG’s 2019 annual report did not name specific companies suspected of corrupt intent or wrongdoing (US State Department 2021a). The Auditor General alluded to the omission of names being a result of threats of lawsuits that the office had received in the past (NewsDay 2021a).

The following section considers corruption in four parastatals: the Zimbabwe National Road Administration (ZINARA),<sup>3</sup> Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA)<sup>4</sup>, Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA)<sup>5</sup> and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA).<sup>6</sup> Given that these represent a small subset of all parastatals, the section is intended to be illustrative rather comprehensive.

### ZINARA

ZINARA was established in 2001 by the Roads Act to administer the maintenance of roads, as well as the collection, management and disbursement of road funds. ZINARA is administered by a board

---

<sup>3</sup> TSCZ – Safety First, There Is No Second Chance ([trafficsafety.co.zw](http://trafficsafety.co.zw))

<sup>4</sup> Zimbabwe Revenue Authority ([zimra.co.zw](http://zimra.co.zw))

<sup>5</sup> Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority ([zesa.co.zw](http://zesa.co.zw))

<sup>6</sup> Environmental Management Authority ([ema.co.zw](http://ema.co.zw))

appointed by the minister responsible for roads and transport. The funds are disbursed to local authorities, department of roads and district development funds for road construction, maintenance and rehabilitation (OfAG 2020).

ZINARA has been embroiled in several corruption scandals. In a forensic audit conducted for the Zimbabwe parliament in 2020 by the parliamentary public accounts committee, there were serious accusations against ZINARA's management structures and against specific individuals managing the institution (TI Zimbabwe 2020, p.56). The audit concluded in exceptionally critical terms that "ZINARA was totally and absolutely misrun and totally mismanaged. As a result, there was gross abuse of resources, no corporate governance culture and no corporate compliance" (TI Zimbabwe 2020, p.6).

The audit documented the loss of funds equating to hundreds of millions of US dollars due to mismanagement and corruption through overpricing, suspected corrupt contracts and procurement processes conducted without any documentation (Africa Press 2023). This led the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) to claim in 2021 that ZINARA is one of "the most corrupt state department[s]" (The Zimbabwean 2021).

Ultimately, seven employees were arrested by ZACC in 2021, while 16 employees were brought before a disciplinary hearing. In 2023, Saston Muzenda, a former CEO of ZINARA was convicted of corruption by the Harare regional magistrate (Africa Press 2023). Furthermore, a former chief executive and his wife lost through asset forfeiture numerous movable and immovable assets including upmarket houses and a fleet of cars (The Herald 2023).

The board of directors were requested to reimburse allowances paid to them outside of the terms of

reference. Moreover, the management was requested to develop and implement human resources policies and manuals, accounting policies, systems and manuals, recruitment policies and manuals, and administration policies and manuals (OfAG 2020).

A new ZINARA board of directors set up a risk and loss control department to work with law enforcement agencies to track all reported cases of corruption. In addition, a new ICT system was commissioned to reduce manual transactions, which have been identified as prone to manipulation and corruption. A whistleblowing system has been also set up since 2020 (The Standard 2022).

According to a subsequent audit for the financial year ending in December 2021, there was some progress in reducing corruption risks in ZINARA. The new management addressed all five audit findings from the previous year, three of them fully and two of them partially. Discrepancies and gaps in the system of approval of payments, procurement procedures, pre-payments and unrecorded tax liabilities were stated as areas of concern and outstanding action (OfAG 2022).

Nonetheless, problems remain. In February 2022, the ZACC arrested several more ZINARA employees who were allegedly involved in the theft of US\$6.8 million (ZimEye 2023). In July 2023, transport and infrastructural development minister Felix Mhona said corruption continues to undermine the credibility of ZINARA (Pindula 2023).

## **ZIMRA**

Another prominent and problematic parastatal is the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), which is responsible for collecting taxes and customs duties in Zimbabwe. A forensic audit of ZIMRA's operations in 2016 revealed endemic corruption,

violation of government laws and poor corporate governance. The audit implicated the suspended commissioner general Gershem Pasi and five other executives in various irregularities, such as abuse of office, tax evasion, fraud, bribery and nepotism (Chronicle 2016). ZIMRA officials were also implicated in a large-scale corruption at the border posts (The NewsDay 2022).

Allegedly, a ZIMRA whistleblower fund to reward informants who expose tax evasion and smuggling was looted by ZIMRA officials in collusion with a network of informants acting on insider information. The fund was reportedly used to pay inflated rewards, settle personal debts and finance lavish lifestyles (The Zimbabwe Mail 2021). The whistleblower system was ultimately abandoned in 2022 (Newswire 2021).

That is not the only instance in which wrongdoing by ZIMRA officials has compromised the effectiveness of organisational anti-corruption mechanisms. In 2020, ZIMRA introduced automated systems at some of the country's entry points to curb corruption and improve efficiency. However, some ZIMRA officials were accused of tampering with the systems to facilitate smuggling and the under-declaration of goods. The ZACC arrested several ZIMRA officials for allegedly collaborating with smugglers (Zimbabwe Situation 2022).

In 2020, ZIMRA was criticised by the Parliamentary Budget Office (2020) for repeatedly failing to address successive audit recommendations. In response, ZIMRA developed a strategic plan for the period 2021-2025 to improve service delivery and reduce systemic corruption. Relevant institutional objectives include (ZIMRA 2020):

- 1) enhancing stakeholder engagement and communication to promote transparency and accountability

- 2) strengthening tax compliance and enforcement measures to reduce tax evasion and fraud
- 3) modernising tax administration systems and processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- 4) developing human capital and organisational capacity to enhance skills, knowledge and motivation of ZIMRA staff
- 5) promoting integrity, ethics, and professionalism in ZIMRA's operations and culture

The effectiveness of the organisation's efforts to reform remains to be seen.

## **ZESA**

Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) is a state-owned company whose task is to generate, transmit and distribute electricity in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has been facing power shortages, which are blamed partly on ZESA's corruption and poor corporate governance. In 2020, Zimbabwe produced only 1,100 megawatts of electricity against a national demand of 1,500 megawatts. Only 40% of Zimbabweans are estimated to have a reliable electricity supply (Roser 2020).

ZESA has delegated duties to several subsidiaries, including the Zimbabwe Power Company (ZPC), the Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company (ZETDC), the investment branch ZESA Enterprises (ZENT) and the internet provider PowerTel Communications (Private) Limited (ZESA 2023). Collectively, their combined annual revenue is estimated at US\$46 million (ZESA 2023).

Nehandaradio (2020) reports that the abuse of public funds and mismanagement are frequently associated with the conglomerate. One example of corruption relates to the manipulation of the IT billing system by ZESA employees to generate

fraudulent electricity tokens and reduce or increase bills for customers (The Zimbabwe Mail 2021). Significant funds also have reportedly been lost through the looting of resources earmarked for the development and maintenance of power stations by senior ZESA officials and political elites (NewsDay 2018).

The executive chairman of ZESA, Sydney Gata, is believed to be a close relative of the former President Mugabe. Gata has been accused of corruption, nepotism and mismanagement, including the appointment of relatives to top management positions. Gata refutes these allegations and, after an investigation in 2020, he was cleared of all charges and reinstated by the president in 2020 as chairman (New Zimbabwe 2020; NR 2021).

## EMA

Finally, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) is responsible for regulating, monitoring, and promoting sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environmental (EMA no date). The EMA promotes mandatory companies' environmental, social and governance (ESGs) disclosures, particularly regarding mining projects to ensure sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection (US State no date). The EMA has a zero-tolerance corruption policy and [whistleblowing portal](#) (EMA no date).

In 2019, the EMA suspended two of its Mashonaland Central province officials for allegedly soliciting bribes from a mine manager in Bindura and Shamva districts (Sithole 2019). They asked the mine manager for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which he failed to produce, after which they allegedly solicited a bribe in return for not issuing a penalty for operating without an EIA certificate (Sithole 2019).

Reports have been made that although Zimbabwe has clear environmental laws, the EMA lacks the capacity to discharge its duties, which has allowed corruption and the degradation of the environment to flourish (Chigundu 2019). Indeed, BTI (2020) states that the EMA's lack of regulatory power has enabled to some artisanal miners to inflict damage on the environment. The US State Department's review also notes that while the EMA claims that its processes, outputs and impact are publicly available on its website, in practice, ESG disclosures are not always thoroughly completed for mining sector projects (US State Department no date).

## Legal and institutional anti-corruption framework

### Legal framework

#### International conventions and initiatives

Zimbabwe became a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) on 20 February 2004 and ratified it on 8 March 2007 (COSP 2020). However, the enforcement of its provisions has been inconsistent, particularly in the areas of asset recovery and anti-money laundering measures (UNODC 2020).

In addition to the UNCAC, Zimbabwe ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) in 2003. Furthermore, Zimbabwe is a party to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol against Corruption since 2001. Zimbabwe is also party to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance since 2022 (AU 2023).

---

## U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

Zimbabwe has been subject to reviews conducted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), overseen by the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), of which it is a regional member. According to the most recent progress report available in 2021, 14 recommendations were upgraded to "largely compliant" or "partly compliant". It is worth noting that several recommendations, including the requirement for financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions (DNFBPs) to apply enhanced measures for high-risk customers, products, services or situations, have not been fully met and are therefore risks to money laundering including laundering of proceeds of corruption (ESAAMLG 2021).

### Domestic legal framework

The legal framework in Zimbabwe includes provisions for addressing corruption, but effective and impartial enforcement remains a challenge (US State Department 2021; UNODC 2020). The main legal instrument is the Prevention of Corruption Act 1985 (Chapter 9:16), which criminalises various forms of corruption such as bribery, abuse of power and extortion, prescribing penalties for individuals found guilty of these offences.

The Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004 (Chapter 9:22) establishes the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and outlines its functions and powers. ZACC is responsible for investigating and preventing corruption cases, whether involving public officials or private individuals.

The Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Act 2016 (Chapter 9:24) addresses the issue of money laundering, including measures to detect, prevent and counter money laundering and the financing of terrorism. While the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) does

not exclusively focus on corruption, it aims to ensure transparency, fairness and accountability in public procurement processes. The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23) covers various criminal offences, including those related to corruption, serving as the legal foundation for prosecuting individuals engaged in corrupt practices (Maguchu 2019).

The proposed Whistleblower Protection Bill (Chapter 22:19) aims to safeguard individuals who report corruption and other wrongful conduct by providing legal protections against retaliation. However, TI Zimbabwe (2022) assessed that the legal provision does not offer adequate protection to whistleblowers and reporting persons in Zimbabwe.

Some recently adopted legal provisions have raised concerns about the undermining of the state of democracy and governance. The president signed the Patriotic Bill in 2023, which stipulates jail terms for anyone found "wilfully damaging the sovereignty and national interests of Zimbabwe". According to the opposition, CSOs, international organisations and other stakeholders this bill grants sweeping powers to suppress dissent or activism (The Economist 2023), including investigation of alleged corruption on the part of government officials (Reuters 2023).

Laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the proposed Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill (PVO Bill) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) retain vague provisions that are used to stifle freedom of expression and assembly. In the relation to the PVO Bill, in early 2023 UN officials advised Zimbabwe's president to reject the bill as it would severely restrict civic space and the right to freedom of association in the country (OHCHR 2023). The president has since sent the bill back to parliament and it is unclear whether it will be signed (ZimLive 2023 b).

---

## U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

Zimbabwe has taken modest steps to curb corruption within the private sector. The Public Entities Corporate Governance Act of 2015 paved the way for the National Code on Corporate Governance in 2018. This code applies to all business entities in the public and private sectors, aiming to enhance transparency and reduce corruption in state enterprises and parastatals (UNODC 2020; ZIMREF 2019). Other legislative frameworks that hold private sector entities accountable include the Companies Act and the Companies and Other Business Entities Bill. Notably, Zimbabwe's tax legislation does not explicitly prohibit the deduction of bribe payments from taxable income.

## Institutional framework

Zimbabwe has made efforts to curb corruption through various institutions and strategies, but the established agencies continue to grapple with challenges such as political interference, limited resources and low capacity.

In the national development strategy (NACS 2021-2025), Zimbabwe has committed to a range of institutional and policy anti-corruption measures to enhance transparency and accountability. These include implementing anti-corruption mechanisms and improving the capacity of oversight bodies. The strategy aims to bolster the oversight role of parliament and the auditor general's office as a means of reducing public resource waste, although observers have noted that recommendations by the auditor general are sometimes disregarded in practice (ACT-SA 2020).

The strategy also aims to reduce corruption by enhancing sanctions mechanisms and improving prevention, reporting and prosecution mechanisms across the board. Accelerating the implementation of an integrated e-government system is intended to strengthen fiscal transparency. The strategy also

seeks to promote compliance with good corporate governance principles in local authorities and state enterprises and strengthen financial oversight of these entities (Republic of Zimbabwe 2020).

The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) is constitutionally mandated to conduct corruption investigations. In 2019, President Mnangagwa appointed nine new commissioners to ZACC and granted them the power to make arrests. However, ZACC lacks the authority to prosecute cases, which falls under the mandate of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). A significant concern is ZACC's inadequate funding as there is no provision for an independent budget allocation within the ZACC act and the constitution of Zimbabwe.

Moreover, ZACC has been criticised for engaging in politically motivated anti-corruption operations, targeting high-profile officials who have fallen out of favour with the president or being used by PEPs as a tool to target adversaries (ACT-SA 2020; US State Department 2021b). For example, ACT-SA (2020, p.17) reports that Vice President Constantino Guvheya Chiwenga attempted to use ZACC to settle a matrimonial dispute from his estranged wife Mary Chiwenga by instigating charges related to fraud, money laundering and the misuse of foreign currency. While the cases against Mary Chiwenga appear to be ongoing, following a mutual legal assistance request from ZACC, South African authorities seized assets belonging to her in 2022 (TimesLIVE 2022).

In 2018, the Special Anti-Corruption Unit (SACU) was established within the Office of the President and Cabinet. SACU lacks a basis in law or statute, which has led to a perception that it may in practice operate to target political opponents (ACT-SA 2020, p.19). SACU's remit vis-à-vis ZACC and the National Prosecuting Authority is unclear, and the body has been criticised for duplicating the mandate to investigate and prosecute corruption

---

## U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

cases (Mundopa 2021, p.1). In the first two years of operation, it had only completed one corruption case (NewsDay 2021b).

The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) plays a role in detecting, investigating and preventing corruption. However, its effectiveness may be compromised by its limited presence outside Harare and Bulawayo. At the same time, citizens ranked the ZRP among the most corrupt institutions in Zimbabwe (TI Zimbabwe 2021). High-ranking officials within the police force have faced allegations of corruption usually associated with petty bribery, abuse of power and embezzlement of ZRP budget.

One significant step was the establishment of specialised anti-corruption courts in 2018, as a division of the High Court in Harare and Bulawayo, which are since December 2020 operational in all ten provinces at the magistrate level. These courts are supposed to expedite the trial process for corruption cases and provide expertise in handling complex financial matters. The anti-corruption courts do not have any special procedures in handling anti-corruption cases, nor do they have special appointment processes for their judicial officers. However, their clearance levels are higher vis-à-vis conventional courts. In 2020, the High Court had a clearance rate of 79%, while this figure was 89% for Magistrates Courts (Mundopa, 2021).

Concerns have arisen about these courts displaying political bias when handling cases involving activists, journalists, or opposition leaders, even when there is no evidence linking the cases to corruption (US State Department 2021a; Mundopa 2021). For example, in 2020, the journalist Hopewell Chin'ono was arrested after posting messages on Twitter about corruption associated with PEPs in the Zimbabwe Miners Federation (The NewsDay 2020). While the charges against him were eventually dropped (Al Jazeera 2021), Chin'ono's lawyers challenged the decision to try

him in the Anti-Corruption Court, given that the allegations against him did not relate to corruption (NewsDay 2021c; American Bar Association 2021).

Despite some advantages in the specialisation on anti-corruption cases, the wider challenges within the judiciary also apply to the anti-corruption courts. These concern perceptions of political interference, delays in concluding cases involving prominent persons and the quality of investigations. Observers argue that better coordination between state anti-corruption agencies and the anti-corruption courts is required to improve the efficiency and competency of the courts (Mundopa 2021).

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has faced allegations of political interference, which could compromise its independence and impartiality, particularly in cases not handled by the anti-corruption courts (Mundopa 2021). These concerns are especially pertinent in cases involving high-ranking officials or individuals with political connections. Additionally, the NPA has grappled with funding, staffing and resource challenges, as well as a lack of coordination with ZACC.

The Zimbabwean Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) was established in 2004 under Section 3 of the Bank Use Promotion and Suppression of Money Laundering Act. While it exists as an administrative establishment of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), the FIU has its own corporate governance structure. However, concerns have been raised regarding its legal autonomy and operational independence from the RBZ. Other challenges relate to resource allocation, capacity, outreach and international cooperation. Reportedly, INTERPOL and other international partners have at times refused to cooperate with the Zimbabwean FIU due to fears of sensitive information leakage to PEPs and other subjects under investigation (ACT-SA 2020).

---

#### U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk



The opaque and inconsistent responses to high-profile corruption cases involving PEPs can be illustrated by Zimbabwe's management of resources to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. Zimbabwe's anti-corruption institutions and courts have been criticised for releasing senior officials implicated in corruption cases shortly after arresting them.

In order to trace and recover at least some of the stolen Zimbabwean assets abroad, the government has shown some signs of willingness to build capacity and commit political and technical resources to asset recovery initiatives. The Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Prosecuting Authority especially have been receiving capacity building measures by international partners such as the Basel Institute of Governance. Other agencies involved in asset recovery efforts include the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, the central bank's FIU, the Office of the Auditor General, the registrar of companies, deeds and intellectual property, the central vehicle registry and the Department of immigration. The Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Act legally defines Zimbabwe's asset recovery process. The act provides for the establishment of the asset management unit (AMU) within the RBZ that is responsible for all confiscated or forfeited assets. Zimbabwe's CSOs have also shown a key interest in the asset recovery value chain in terms of raising public awareness, advocacy, legal analysis and return of stolen resources domestically and from abroad (TI Zimbabwe 2022; BIoG 2020).

## Other stakeholders

### Media

In the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, Zimbabwe score 48.17 out of 100 and is ranked 126

out of 180 countries. Overall, however, the country's score in the index has been on a downward trajectory since 2018, when it scored 59.47 (RSF 2023).

Zimbabwe has a history of limited press freedom and government control over media outlets. Journalists, activists and citizens have faced challenges and restrictions when it comes to expressing their opinions or criticising the government.

Under former president Robert Mugabe's rule, there were instances of censorship, harassment and violence against journalists, opposition figures and activists who spoke out against the government. The government controlled most media outlets and used repressive laws to suppress dissenting voices (RSF 2023).

This practice continues under the new regime. The media landscape has become more diverse but remains dominated by state-controlled media. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) functions as an oversight body. The most important media channels include the media conglomerate Zimpapers with six radio stations, a TV channel and 10 newspapers (RSF 2023).

In 2020, ZBC issued six new television broadcast licences, all of which were connected to the government, and one was owned directly by the defence ministry (Freedom House 2022). State media are strongly pro-government and are not impartial. In 2021, the head of Zimpapers asked staff to publicly support the president and ZANU-PF ahead of the election (RSF 2023).

Social media and online outlets abroad are increasingly important in the critical media coverage including anti-corruption reporting (US State Department 2021a; Mandlenkosi et al. 2023).

Anti-corruption institutions including the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC)

---

## U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

have made some attempts to use pro-active social media messaging, as well as traditional media, for anti-corruption.

Attacks on journalists, whistleblowers and activists by the country's security forces and ZANU-PF members continue unabated. In October 2022, a few months before the general election, five journalists were assaulted, briefly detained and prevented by police, ZANU-PF activists and the Central Intelligence Organisation from covering events. Voice of America correspondent Godwin Mangudya, NewsDay reporter Moreblessings Nyoni, Dunmore Mundai and Gadaffi Wells, journalists from Alpha Media Holdings' HStv are only some names of more prominent journalists who have been harassed by the authorities, prevented from reporting or detained by the security agencies or ZANU-PF members in the run-up to the 2023 elections (CPJ 2022).

In another case, Hopewell Chin'ono, a renowned journalist, was arrested in 2020 after exposing alleged corruption in the Ministry of Health when purchasing personal protective equipment to fight COVID-19. The suspicious procurement, worth US\$60 million, led to the sacking of the minister of health, Obadiah Moyo. Chin'ono had primarily used Twitter and Facebook to alert the public to wasteful and suspicious governmental expeditious (Nieman Reports 2020).

In another example of the continued repression of the media, in August 2022, two journalists were arrested based on the controversial criminal law act despite strong opposition from press freedom lobby groups and civil society organisations. The Media Institute of Southern Africa noted that the arrests of journalists were significant as the detention was not orchestrated by the ruling ZANU-PF but rather by politically connected individuals linked to a private company, which the journalists had investigated on vague charges of transmitting "false information" (Pressenza 2022).

## Civil society

Zimbabwe boasts a vibrant and diverse civil society sector comprising various groups such as human rights advocates, labour unions, environmental activists, women's rights advocates, youth organisations and more. These organisations work on a wide spectrum of themes, including democracy, governance, social justice and human rights.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a pivotal role as advocates for marginalised communities and champions of democratic reforms and human rights. Their contributions extend to civic education, electoral monitoring and the promotion of transparent and equitable electoral processes. Additionally, CSOs actively engage in measures to counter corruption in Zimbabwe at the national and local levels.

CSOs in Zimbabwe have encountered significant challenges and government repression. Restrictive laws and regulations, including the 2002 Public Order and Security Act (POSA), especially those critical of government policies (CIVICUS 2023).

The transition from the Mugabe era to the Mnangagwa government has not led to a substantial improvement in the operating environment for CSOs. In some cases, legal and policy frameworks have introduced even more restrictive measures.

In January 2023, the Zimbabwean government introduced the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act, also known as the Patriotic Act, which imposes severe penalties on individuals deemed to be "damaging the sovereignty and national interest" of Zimbabwe. Notably, foreign funding for voter education is prohibited (ICNL 2023).

District administrators and the police sometimes restrict meetings between local communities and foreign-funded CSOs. Government organised or government sponsored civil society groups, known

---

### U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

as GONGOs, have emerged in Zimbabwe since 2000. These organisations have been criticised for their sometimes muted, mixed or complicit stance on government policies (ICNL 2023). As an example, a CSO called Forever Associates Zimbabwe (FAZ) was accused of intimidating voters and interfering in electoral processes (Cotterill 2023). It was claimed that FAZ members were giving out “misleading information” ahead of the August 2023 election stating that FAZ would have a presence at polling stations where voters must register before they vote (Cotterill 2023). FAZ was also accused of pushing the lawsuit that came close to deregistering a dozen candidates in the Southern city of Bulawayo (Cotterill 2023).

Human rights defenders and anti-corruption activists in Zimbabwe are particularly susceptible to harassment, threats, violence, arrests and intimidation. Such actions have occasionally hindered their effectiveness. The government's interference with CSOs, especially during electoral cycles, often takes the form of information requests or threats of suspension. For instance, President Mnangagwa accused CSOs of interfering in the country's internal affairs in July 2021 and threatened to silence them before the 2023 elections (ICNL 2023).

To confront shared challenges, CSOs in Zimbabwe have frequently formed coalitions and networks. These alliances have proven instrumental in addressing common issues and amplifying their collective voices. CSOs in Zimbabwe benefit from partnerships and support from international donors and organisations. This international support provides critical resources to sustain their activities but can make CSOs reliant on external funding and expose them to accusations of spreading a foreign agenda (CIVICUS 2023).

## Anti-corruption CSOs active in Zimbabwe

Anti-corruption civil society organisations play a crucial role in Zimbabwe. Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Zimbabwe) is the Zimbabwean chapter of the global anti-corruption organisation Transparency International.

The Centre for Investigative Journalism Zimbabwe (CIJZ) is a media house, which focuses on investigative reporting to uncover corruption and promote transparency. It conducts in-depth investigations into corruption cases and collaborates with local and international media outlets to publish findings.

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) primarily focuses on economic justice and debt-related issues, it also engages in anti-corruption advocacy. The organisation raises awareness about the impact of corruption on public finances and advocates for transparency in government spending.

The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) is a legal organisation that works to protect human rights and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. While their primary focus is on legal and human rights issues, they often take on cases related to corruption, especially those involving human rights violations.

The Zimbabwe Women against Corruption Trust (ZWACT) is a CSO campaigning against corruption affecting mainly women and girls. The organisation focuses on sextortion and whistleblower protection for women (UNCAC Coalition 2023). Similarly, Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) focuses on gender responsive public services (GRPS) in Zimbabwe, gender corruption in the public services and gender responsive budgeting in local authorities and key line ministries including sextortion and gender-based corruption (ZWRCN 2023).

---

### U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

Lastly, the Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa (ACT-SA) (registered as a non-government organisation in South African and a trust in Zimbabwe) led the latest UNCAC review in Zimbabwe. The organisation specialises in monitoring on the status of signature, ratification and domestication of the UNCAC and other instruments such as the SADC Protocol against Corruption and the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (ACT-SA, UNCAC 2020).

# References

ACT-SA, UNCAC. 2020. Civil society report on the implementation of chapter II (prevention) & chapter V (asset recovery) of the chapter II (prevention) & chapter V (asset recovery) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Zimbabwe. Harare.

Africa Press. 2023. Former Zinara CEO convicted of corruption.

Afrobarometer. 2023. Zimbabwe round 9 data.

Al Jazeera. 2021. Zimbabwe court drops case against investigative journalist.

Al Jazeera. 2023a. Zimbabwe's President Mnangagwa wins second term, opposition rejects result.

Al Jazeera. 2023b. How a 'Gold Mafia' is looting Southern Africa, washing dirty cash.

Al Jazeera. 2023c. Six secrets uncovered by Al Jazeera's Gold Mafia investigation.

Al Jazeera. 2023d. What draws the gold mafia to Dubai?

ALCL. 2019. Companies and other business entities act, 2019.

AllAfrica. 2021. Zimbabwe: Private sector packed with corrupt executives - Zacc.

AllAfrica. 2022. Zimbabwe: Chinese granite miner corruptly obtained license, court hears.

Alliot Global Alliance. 2021. Important changes to Zimbabwe's mining regulatory framework.

American Bar Association. 2021. Zimbabwe: The Persecution and Prosecutions of Hopewell Chin'ono.

Asuelime, L. E. 2018. A Coup or not a coup. Journal of African Foreign Affairs, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 5-24 (20 pages).

AU. 2023. African charter on democracy, elections and governance.

Bhasera, J. 2023. Zim launches e-cadastre for efficient land management. Chronicle.

BIOG. 2020. Scoping Zimbabwe's capacity to investigate corruption and recover stolen assets.

BIOG. 2022. Basel AML Index 2022: 11th public edition ranking money laundering and terrorist financing risks around the world. Basel.

Booyesen, S. 2012. Change and "new politics in Zimbabwe: Interim report of a nationwide survey of public opinion in Zimbabwe: June-July 2012.

BTI. 2020. Zimbabwe. Country Report.

BTI. 2023. BTI Transformation Index.

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. 2020. Zimbabwe: Workers and lawyers association accuse Chinese mining firms of gross human rights violations and exploitation.

CFR. 2023. Zimbabwe's flawed election results meet with regional skepticism.

Chibamu, A. 2022. Zimbabwe: Stop politicking over 'notorious' Sikhala and follow court rules - justice minister tells opposition MPs demanding jailed colleague's freedom.

Chigundu, D. 2019. Corruption fuelling environmental degradation. Tourism Focus.

Chifamba, M. 2020. Zimbabwe: Mnangagwa's capture of judiciary a red flag for state failure.

Chronicle. 2016. Forensic audit unearths massive corruption in ZIMRA.

- CIVICUS. 2021. [Pro-democracy activist Makomborero Haruzivishe released on bail after months in detention.](#)
- CIVICUS. 2023. [2023 State of civil society report.](#)
- COSP. 2020. [State of implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.](#) New York.
- Cotterill, J. 2023. [The shadowy NGO accused of manipulating Zimbabwe election process.](#) Financial Times.
- CPJ. 2022. [Zimbabwean journalists assaulted, harassed, and blocked from covering events.](#)
- Derick Matsengarwodzi. 2023. [Why won't Zimbabwe's media report truthfully on the Gold Mafia?](#)
- Dumisani, N. 2020. [Corruption: The hurdle in the path of Zim mining development.](#)
- EEAS. 2023. [Zimbabwe: Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the elections.](#)
- ERCAS. 2023. [Index of public integrity, Zimbabwe forecast.](#)
- ESAAMLG. 2021. [7 enhanced follow-up report & technical compliance re-rating. Follow-Up Report to Zimbabwe's assessment of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures \(fatf-gafi.org\)](#)
- Feldstein, S. 2018. [Zimbabwe's coup did not create democracy from dictatorship - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)
- Freedom House. 2022. [Freedom in the World 2022.](#) Washington D.C.  
[FIW\\_2022\\_PDF\\_Booklet\\_Digital\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](#) (freedomhouse.org)
- Gavin, M. 2021. [Cartel power dynamics in Zimbabwe. New report shines spotlight on corruption in Zimbabwe \(cfr.org\)](#)
- GFI. 2017. [Illicit financial flows to and from developing countries: 2005-2014.](#) Washington D.C.
- GI-OC. 2019. [Digging for the truth about diamond mining.](#)
- GOVUK. 2023. [Overseas business risk: Zimbabwe.](#)
- HRW. 2019. [Zimbabwe Events 2019.](#) Harare.  
[World Report 2020: Zimbabwe | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)
- IBRD-IDA. 2023. [GDP per capita \(constant 2015 US\\$\) - Zimbabwe.](#)
- ICG. 2020. [All that glitters is not gold: Turmoil in Zimbabwe's mining sector.](#)
- ICNL. 2023. [ICNL Zimbabwe.](#)
- IMF. 2022. [Zimbabwe: 2022 article iv consultation-press release; staff report; and statement by the executive director for Zimbabwe \(imf.org\)](#)
- Kurebwa, J. 2021. [Implications of illicit financial flows on Zimbabwe's development.](#) Department of Peace and Governance, Bindura University of Science Education, P. Bag 1020, Bindura, Zimbabwe. [https://www.arpgweb.com/pdf-files/ijwpds7\(2\)27-34.pdf](https://www.arpgweb.com/pdf-files/ijwpds7(2)27-34.pdf)
- Magaisa, A. 2020. [Understanding judicial capture in Zimbabwe.](#)
- Maguchu, P. 2019. [The phenomenon of corruption and socio-economic rights in Zimbabwe.](#) SpringerLink. [Transitional Justice and Socio-Economic Rights in Zimbabwe | SpringerLink](#)
- Manayiti, O. 2018. [The Chiadzwa underworld: How gems smuggling is thriving in Zim.](#)

- Mandlenkosi Mpfu, L. A. 2023. Digital newspapers as watchdogs of corruption in ‘2nd Republic’ Zimbabwe: A critical analysis of *ZimLive.com* and *Zim Morning Post’s* ‘Covidgate’ Reports. *Palgrave Studies in Journalism and the Global South. New Journalism Ecologies in East and Southern Africa: Innovations, Participatory and Newsmaking Cultures | SpringerLink*
- Maverick Citizen. 2021. *Cartel power dynamics in Zimbabwe.*
- Migrants-Refugees. 2021. Migration profile: Zimbabwe. Vatican.
- Mining Vision. 2022. *Policy and legal gaps in Zimbabwe’s mining sector.*
- Mining Zimbabwe. 2020. *Corruption: The hurdle in the path of Zim mining development.*
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation. 2023. *Mo Ibrahim Index.*
- Moyo, H. 2014. *Militarisation, mismanagement, corruption destroy parastatals.*
- Mpfu, B. 2017. *Under military siege for seven days – Zimbabwe situation*
- Muchadenyika, D. 2015. *Women struggles and large-scale diamond mining in Marange.* The Extractive Industries Society, pp. 714-721.
- Mundopa, M. 2021. *Zimbabwe’s anti-corruption courts.*
- Mundopa, M. 2021. *Zimbabwe’s anti-corruption courts: Progress and challenges.*
- Mutisi, M. 2011. *Beyond the signature: Appraisal of the Zimbabwe Global Political Agreement (GPA) and Implications for Intervention.* ACCORD Issue 004.
- Mutowekuziva, T. 2020. *Delivering justice in Zimbabwe’s courts.*
- Ndhlovu M.P., S. P. 2021. *Political corruption in Zimbabwe: News media, audiences and deliberative democracy - Mthokozisi Phathisani Ndhlovu, Phillip Santos, 2022 (sagepub.com)*
- Ndlovu, R. 2023. *Zimbabwe government breaks silence on gold-smuggling allegations.*
- Ndoro, T. 2019. *Justice at last as Augustine Chihuri, Senior police officers face arrest for abuse of office during.*
- Nehanda Radio (2020) *Zesa executive chairman Gata in corruption storm*
- New Zimbabwe. 2020. *Mnangagwa reinstates Sydney Gata as ZESA boss.*
- NewsDay. 2018. *Mnangagwa named in Zesa scam.*
- NewsDay. 2020. *Drama as Chin’ono is brought to court late -Newsday Zimbabwe*
- NewsDay. 2021a. *Chiri’s 2019 audit report doctored to protect powerful elites.*
- NewsDay. 2021b. *Sacu completes 1 case in 3 years.*
- NewsDay. 2021c. *Drama as Chin’ono is brought to court late.*
- NewsDay. 2022. *ZACC goes after ZIMRA.*
- Newswire. 2021. *Zimbabwe is ditching its anti-corruption whistleblower reward system, because it has become corrupt. e-corrupt.*
- Nieman Reports. 2020. *What Hopewell Chin’ono’s arrest says about the free press in Zimbabwe.*
- NR. 2020. *Zesa executive chairman Gata in corruption storm.*
- NR. 2021. *Gata allegedly appoints chain of nephews to top ZESA executive posts.*

---

#### U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk

- OCCRP. 2021. [How a Zimbabwe tycoon made a fortune from a Trafigura partnership and spiralling national debt.](#)
- OfAG. 2020. [Zinara's audited accounts for the years ending December 2017 and 2019.](#)
- OfAG. 2022. [Report of the auditor general for the financial year ended 31st of December 2021 on state-owned enterprises and parastatals.](#)
- OHCHR. 2023. [UN experts urge president of Zimbabwe to reject bill restricting civic space | OHCHR](#)
- Parliamentary Budget Office. 2020. [Analysis of the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority \(ZIMRA\) audit report financial year ended December 31, 2019.](#)
- Pindula. 2023. [Corruption undermining ZINARA's credibility - Minister Mhona.](#)
- Pressenza. 2022. [Arrests of journalists begin in Zimbabwe under cybersecurity law.](#)
- RBZ. 2023. [Press statement: Scurrilous and malicious allegations carried in snippets from unscreened Al Jazeera documentary.](#)
- Republic of Zimbabwe. 2020. [National development strategy 2021-2025.](#) Harare.
- Reuters. 2023. [Zimbabwe ruling party's vote lead grows as observers decry 'climate of fear'.](#)
- Reuters. 2023. [Zimbabwe's 'Patriotic Bill' outlaws criticism of government before election.](#)
- Roser, H. R. 2020. [Zimbabwe: Energy country profile.](#)
- RSF. 2023. [Zimbabwe country profile.](#)
- Sibanda, M. 2021. [Holding a mirror for artisanal and small-scale mining taxation challenges in Zimbabwe.](#)
- Sithole, S. 2019. [EMA suspends corrupt officials.](#) News Day.
- The Economist. 2023. [Concerns of corruption mar Zimbabwe's chaotic election.](#)
- The Economist. 2023. [Concerns of corruption mar Zimbabwe's chaotic election.](#)
- The Herald. 2023. [Corruption: Ex-Zinara boss loses houses, cars.](#) The Herald - Breaking news.
- The Standard. 2022. [Catch and release, Zimbabwe style.](#)
- The Standard. 2022. [Heads roll at Zinara after tollgates scandal.](#)
- The Sentry. 2023. [Fronts, Fakes, and Façades: How South African and Mauritian Enablers Helped Move Millions from Zimbabwe to Britain.](#)
- The Zimbabwe Mail. 2021. [Fresh corruption irregularities rock Zesa.](#)
- The Zimbabwe Mail. 2021. [Multi-million dollar whistleblowing corruption scandal rocks Zimra.](#)
- The Zimbabwean. 2021. [State capture and cartels: The major impediment to economic growth in Zimbabwe.](#)
- The Zimbabwean. 2021. [ZINARA, ZRP And VID most corrupt state departments – ZACC.](#)
- Transparency International. 2023. [Corruption Perceptions Index 2022.](#)
- TI Zimbabwe. 2015. [Annual state of corruption report: Focus on state-owned enterprises.](#)
- TI Zimbabwe. 2019. [Gender and corruption in Zimbabwe.](#) Harare.
- TI Zimbabwe. 2020. [USD 12 billion mining economy by 2023: What are the key enablers?](#)

---

## U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk



- TI Zimbabwe. 2021. [Zimbabwe Bribe Payers Index](#).
- TI Zimbabwe. 2022. [The quest for whistleblower protection in Zimbabwe: Issues for consideration](#).
- TI Zimbabwe. 2022. [TI Z calls for civil society participation in asset recovery](#).
- TI Zimbabwe. 2022. [Judicial corruption in Zimbabwe](#).
- TI Zimbabwe. 2023. [Al Jazeera "gold mafia" documentary demonstrates urgent need to combat corruption in Zimbabwe](#).
- TimesLIVE. 2022. [SA authorities seize property of Zimbabwean vice-president's estranged wife Marry Mubaiwa](#)
- TJN. 2020. [Mining sector and illicit financial flows \(IFFs\) in Zimbabwe](#).
- United Nations. 2020. [UNCAC Implementation Review Group: Zimbabwe](#).
- UNCAC Coalition. 2023. [Zimbabwe Women against Corruption Trust](#).
- UNICEF. 2021. [UNICEF budget brief 2021](#).
- UNODC. 2020. [Conference of the states parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption](#).
- US State Department. 2023. [2023 Investment Climate Statements: Zimbabwe](#).
- US State Department. 2020. [US Embassy in Zimbabwe](#).
- US State Department. 2021a. [Zimbabwe: 2021 country reports on human rights practices](#).
- US State Department. 2021b. [2021 Investment climate statements: Zimbabwe](#).
- VOA. 2022. [Zimbabwe government suspends striking teachers](#).
- World Bank. 2022. [Achieving Zimbabwe's vision 2030 will require significant acceleration of productivity growth](#).
- World Bank. 2023. [Poverty and inequality platform](#).
- World Bank. 2023. [World Governance Indicators](#).
- WP. 2023. [Why Russia's Wagner Group has been involved in Ukraine, Africa, Mideast](#).
- ZESA. 2023. [Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority](#).
- Zinyama et al. 2015. [Public-private partnerships: Critical review and lessons for Zimbabwe. \(2015\). Public Policy and Administration Research, IISTE, Vol.5, No.6, 2015](#).
- Zim Morning Post. 2020. [Gold graft: Mines ministry officials fingered in the men-made disputes](#).
- Zimbabwe Situation. 2022. [Zimra introduces automated systems to curb corruption](#).
- ZimEye. 2023. [Corruption haunts ZINARA](#).
- ZimLive. 2023 a. [Judges get US\\$400k loans, lawyers say payments are bribes](#).
- ZimLive. 2023 b. [Mnangagwa refuses to sign PVO bill, sends it back to parliament](#).
- ZIMRA. 2020. [ZIMRA Strategic plan 2021-2025](#).
- ZIMREF. 2019. [Public entities corporate governance act officially launched](#).
- ZWRCN. 2023. [Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network](#).

## **DISCLAIMER**

All views in this text are the author(s)' and may differ from the U4 partner agencies' policies.

## **PARTNER AGENCIES**

GIZ/BMZ (Germany), Global Affairs Canada, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Danida (Denmark), Sida (Sweden), SDC (Switzerland), Norad (Norway), UK Aid/FCDO.

## **ABOUT U4**

The U4 anti-corruption helpdesk is a free research service exclusively for staff from U4 partner agencies. This service is a collaboration between U4 and Transparency International (TI) in Berlin, Germany. Researchers at TI run the helpdesk.

The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre shares research and evidence to help international development actors get sustainable results. The centre is part of Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Bergen, Norway – a research institute on global development and human rights.

[www.U4.no](http://www.U4.no)

[U4@cmi.no](mailto:U4@cmi.no)

## **KEYWORDS**

Zimbabwe – state-owned enterprises

## **OPEN ACCESS**

We apply a Creative Commons licence to our publications: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

