14TH NGO DIRECTORS SUMMER RETREAT

Consolidated Report

23-25 October 2024

Troutbeck Resort, Nyanga

NANGO
PVO 221/68
National Association
Of Non-Governmental
Organisations

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Table of Acronyms

APECS   APECS: Action to Enhance and Protect Civic Space in Zimbabwe
AML/CFT   AML/CFT: Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism
BPIA   BPIA: Best Practices and Innovation Award
CBOs   CBOs – Community-Based Organisations
CSOs   CSOs – Civil Society Organisations
NANGO   NANGO – National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
NGOs   NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations
PVO   PVO – Private Voluntary Organisations

We Are NANGO

NANGO is the official voluntary coordinating body of registered NGOs in their diversity operating in Zimbabwe. NANGO is registered as a Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) under the PVO Act Chapter [17:05]. It is a non-partisan, non-profit making and non-denominational organisation mandated to strengthen the voice of NGOs for the betterment of the people in Zimbabwe. NANGO's operations are guided by its constitution which is the supreme operational document that governs the conduct of the NANGO secretariat, board, and members. The board holds the oversight role over the functions and activities of NANGO. The board members are elected every three years during an elective Annual General Meeting. Administratively, NANGO is decentralised into five regional offices that coordinate the activities of the CSOs in all ten provinces of Zimbabwe. Cognisant of the diversity of membership, members are clustered into 10 thematic clusters in line with their programmatic focus and these are; Media, Arts and Culture, Children, Disability, Economic, Health, Human Rights, Humanitarian, Land and Environment, Women, AND Youth. Concomitantly NANGO bears the responsibility of unifying these various sectors by creating spaces for collaboration, networking, knowledge exchange, mutual support, and the development of common best practices.

Our Objectives

01 Objective To promote, coordinate and organise the participation and contribution of Non-Governmental Organisations in Zimbabwe in the development discourse of Zimbabwe.

02 Objective To promote and facilitate the collective agenda-setting, interaction, consultation, and exchange of information and experience with and among NGOs operating in Zimbabwe.

03 Objective To create an enabling and conducive operating environment for NGOs necessary in ensuring sector independence, improved accountability, and fulfilment of institutional mandates.

04 Objective To create and identify opportunities for NGOs to pursue their visions and missions while at the same time building members' capacities, resources, and synergies.

Our Vision and Mission Statement

Vision	Mission
A proactive community of NGOs responsive and committed to the sustainable development needs of all people in Zimbabwe and the full realisation of human rights, democracy, good governance, and poverty alleviation.	A proactive community of NGOs responsive and committed to the sustainable development needs of all people in Zimbabwe and the full realisation of human rights, democracy, good governance, and poverty alleviation.

Our Core Values

Leadership

We practive what we preach. We model our work to empower NGOs in Zimbabwe by setting exemplary leadership and standards of organisational management and governance

Integrity

We are firm believers in integrity by abiding by the highest ethical standards of transparency, accountability, and mutual respect.

Collaboration & Co-Creation

Our strategic partnership approach is one of our key assets. We value and foster partnerships, networks, and strategic mutual relationships with relevant development stakeholders, member organisations, and grassroots communities.

Diversity

Our wide membership reflects our sustained belief in a development sector that embraces and converges the country's rich socio-cultural diversity.

Membership-driven

Without the members, there is no NANGO, hence we value every member organisation we have and their participation as the backbone of all our programming, believing that it is through them that development reaches the communities in Zimbabwe.

Non-discrimination

We believe in and respect the principles of equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination. We are committed to working with all persons without discrimination, to promote an open, democratic, and developed Zimbabwean society.

Engagement

We believe engagement is a critical enabler of critical conversations, policy influencing, building common ground, and finding consensus as we seek to co-create the developed Zimbabwean society we all aspire for.

Innovation

We constantly explore creative ways to strengthen NGOs operating in Zimbabwe. We are agile and responsive to the changing needs of our stakeholders.

Managing bulk NGO disbursements shouldn't be complicated...

...and with Unayo, it's not!

Your NGO can easily distribute funds to registered beneficiaries, manage wages, and track every payment—securely and efficiently.

Trust Unayo to take care of your NGO's needs.

Letter From the NANGO Executive Director

Editorial Letter to the Participants

On behalf of the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO), I am delighted to express our sincere gratitude for your invaluable support, contribution and participation in the recently concluded 14th edition of the Annual NGO Directors Summer Retreat. Held under the theme, "Empowering Civil Society to Navigate Evolving Landscape for Collective Impact," this retreat marked a pivotal moment for reshaping the operating landscape within Zimbabwe's civil society sector.

This year's retreat represented a significant shift from previous editions, embracing a dynamic and inclusive approach. We actively engaged our members, stakeholders, and partners throughout the planning stages—from co-creating the program and defining session content to participating as speakers and panellists in meaningful dialogues. This shared involvement infused the event with a collaborative energy that elevated the depth of our discussions and facilitated rich learning experiences over the three days. Together, we explored both challenges and opportunities within the sector, identifying strategies to drive impactful transformation amid a rapidly evolving operating landscape.
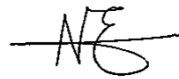
This consolidated report reflects the diverse perspectives and valuable insights exchanged during the retreat. It stands as a testament to the power of open dialogue, highlighting the strengthened relationships amongst CSOs, stakeholders and partners in the NGO ecosystem in Zimbabwe.

Sharing our experiences and lessons not only broadened our understanding of the civil society landscape but also became a catalyst for collective growth and progress.

The 14th NGO Directors Summer Retreat provided an inspiring platform for strengthening resilience, collaboration, sustainability, and innovation while celebrating the diversity within Zimbabwe's CSO community and beyond. We are confident that the ideas generated, and relationships formed, during the retreat will continue to shape and drive our collaborative efforts in the coming year. As we move forward toward a more impactful 2025, we are grateful for your commitment and look forward to your continued participation and support. Together, we can build a resilient and vibrant civil society that upholds democracy, and champions good governance, as well as advance social justice for all.

With appreciation,

Ernest Nyimai (Mr.)
Executive Director, NANGO

Executive Summary

Hosted annually by [NANGO](#), the NGO Directors Summer Retreat is a hallmark event for fostering experience-sharing, collective reflection, and co-creation of innovative solutions to address the challenges faced by Civil Society, broader non-state actors, and the general public in Zimbabwe. The retreat is convened collaboratively and in partnership with CSOs, development partners, and private sector representatives, and state actors. The 14th edition of the retreat brought together a diverse group of 128 delegates, including local and international CSO leaders, government line ministries and agencies, development partners, private sector representatives, and other key stakeholders from across the country and beyond.

This year's retreat commenced with a **conference foresight session** aimed at setting the tone for the event's discussions and establish a shared understanding of engagement rules. This session laid a strong foundation for the subsequent two-and-a-half days of dynamic dialogue. The first day spotlighted two critical sub-themes: **"Reflection on the State of CSOs Operating Environment in 2024"** and **"Shifting Spaces for Strengthening Civic Voice and Participation."** These sessions examined the challenges and opportunities within the civic space and explored innovative approaches to amplify civil society's voice.

The second day focussed much on practical strategies for enhancing organizational efficiency and impact. Discussions revolved around four transformative sub-themes: **Rethinking Funding Strategies Beyond Traditional Grants, Update on the Zimbabwe Social Impact Investment Exchange (ZIMSIIX) Platform, Bridging the Gap: Strengthening CSO-Regulator Engagement for Compliance and Civic Space Protection, and Visionary Leadership: Navigating Organizational Changes and Shifts.** These sessions equipped participants with actionable insights and tools to navigate evolving operational landscapes.

The final day focused on strengthening advocacy and celebrating innovation within the sector. Sub-themes included **Navigating Zimbabwe's Law-Making Process: Institutional Roles, Legal Reforms, and Opportunities for CSO Advocacy and Promoting and Recognizing Best Practice and Innovation within CSOs.** The retreat concluded on a high note with the **2024 Annual NANGO NGO Awards Presentation Ceremony,** which honoured excellence in 10 award categories, celebrating the transformative contributions of organisations and individuals.

A significant outcome of the retreat was the presentation of the **[Troutbeck Resort Action Agenda and Resolutions Outcome Document.](#)** This outcome document will guide NANGO and CSO leaders in addressing pressing issues and advancing their collective impact over the

coming year and beyond. The 14th edition of the retreat not only marked a resounding success but also reinforced NANGO's role as a catalyst for creation of a vibrant, resilient and impactful civil society in Zimbabwe. The full program of the event is accessible online.

Specific Objectives

1. To empower CSOs with tools and knowledge to strategically adapt to socio-political and economic challenges, ensuring their resilience and sustainability in a rapidly changing operating environment.
2. To enhance CSOs' capacity to strengthen civic voice and participation, leverage digital transformation, and utilize data-driven approaches for effective advocacy and policy influence.
3. To foster inclusive and visionary leadership within CSOs, promote best practices, and integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles to enhance organisational effectiveness and continuous improvement in the sector.
4. To provide and facilitate a space for NGO leaders' renewal, reconnection, networking, and celebration of the individual, organisational, and collective victories.

Expected Outputs

1. A comprehensive report on the key discussions, strategies, and action points from the retreat.
2. The Action Agenda Outcome Summary Document.
3. Digital resources and toolkits for CSOs on fundraising, data-driven advocacy, and digital transformation.

Expected Outcomes

1. CSOs are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to adapt strategically, leading to increased resilience and sustainability in a rapidly changing operating environment.
2. Enhanced capacity of CSOs to effectively strengthen civic voice and participation, leverage digital transformation, and utilize data-driven approaches for impactful advocacy and policy influence.
3. Improved organizational effectiveness and continuous improvement within CSOs through the promotion of inclusive and visionary leadership, best practices, and the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.
4. CSO leaders experience renewal and reconnection, fostering stronger networks and celebrating individual, organizational, and collective achievements.

Top Headline Messages from the Summer Retreat

Enhancing Collaboration and Building Trust with Regulators

Advancing the Localisation Agenda with Actionable Frameworks

Visionary Leadership Development for a Sustainable Sector

Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09

Strengthening Civic Space through Adaptation and Innovation

Reimagining Resource Mobilisation for CSO Resilience

Fostering Coordination and Enhancing CSO Capacity

Ensuring Safety and Well-being for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

Driving Legislative Reforms through Strategic Partnerships

- **Strengthening Civic Space through Adaptation and Innovation:** CSOs must adopt adaptive strategies to navigate the shrinking civic space by leveraging digital tools, strategic partnerships, and harmonized sector-wide systems. NANGO reaffirms its commitment in providing resources that enable members to thrive in an evolving landscape.

- **Enhancing Collaboration and Building Trust with Regulators:** The "Talk to Your Regulator Initiative" underscores the importance of structured engagement between CSOs and regulatory bodies. NANGO will lead in facilitating regular dialogues to streamline compliance processes, foster trust, and create an enabling environment for civic operations.

- **Reimagining Resource Mobilisation for CSO Resilience:** With funding challenges mounting, NANGO commits to equipping CSOs with innovative resource mobilisation strategies, including social investments and flexible funding models. A generic resource mobilisation framework will be developed to assist members in crafting tailored fundraising strategies.

- **Advancing the Localisation Agenda with Actionable Frameworks:** Local CSOs will spearhead efforts to develop a Zimbabwe-specific framework for the localisation Agenda, emphasizing sustainability, equity, and genuine collaboration. Establishing a Zimbabwe Charter for Change chapter will amplify local voices and secure meaningful participation in decision-making.

- **Fostering Coordination and Enhancing CSO Capacity:** To address the gaps in coordination and knowledge sharing, NANGO, in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Analytics (CHA), commits to fast-tracking the operationalization of the Zimbabwe Social Investment Impact Exchange (ZIMSIIX) as a central platform for CSO impact measurement and collaboration.

- V**isionary Leadership Development for a Sustainable Sector:** Recognizing the critical role of leadership, CSOs are encouraged to invest in leadership development initiatives. NANGO will launch targeted leadership seminars and collaborate with development partners to enhance leadership skills across the sector.

- **Ensuring Safety and Well-being for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs):** Continuous risk assessments and localized early warning systems will protect HRDs operating in restrictive environments. Dedicated funding for wellness and security training will empower HRDs to sustain their advocacy while safeguarding their mental and physical well-being.

- **Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI):** Local CSOs are urged to adopt proactive measures, such as male allyship programs and robust PSEA policies, to foster an inclusive and equitable sector. Mandatory training and responsive mechanisms will ensure safe and respectful workplaces for all.

- **Driving Legislative Reforms through Strategic Partnerships:** Local CSOs must strengthen collaboration with government and legislative bodies to influence law-making processes. Investing in capacity-building programs on legal drafting, advocacy, and policy analysis will enhance their impact on Zimbabwe's legislative framework.

Introduction and Background

The Annual NGO Directors' Summer Retreat is a key platform led by CSOs to discuss issues pertaining to the state of CSOs operating environment in Zimbabwe. This retreat serves as a vital platform to amplify the voice and impact of NGOs in addressing pressing development challenges in the country. Over the years, it has evolved into a dynamic space for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative action among CSOs, development partners, government stakeholders, non-state actors, and the private sector. Each year, the retreat brings together more than 120 participants, fostering an environment for collective reflection, solution-driven conversations, and innovative approaches to governance and development outcomes in Zimbabwe.

The retreat plays a transformative role by encouraging development actors to engage in actionable, solution-oriented discussions that build resilience amidst the ever-changing and unpredictable ecosystem. It emphasizes the importance of creating synergies that respond to the emerging demands of the sector, enabling non-state actors to thrive. This platform is particularly valuable for fostering partnerships and collaborations that ensure the continued relevance and effectiveness of CSOs in a rapidly evolving landscape.

As part of its mandate, NANGO remains committed to enabling collaborative efforts that drive inclusive and sustainable development. The retreat exemplifies this commitment by providing a unique opportunity for CSOs to identify gaps, explore opportunities, and formulate strategic interventions. Through this gathering, participants benefit from extensive networking with peers across diverse sectors, access to knowledge-sharing sessions, expert-led roundtables, and experience-based learning from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. These interactions have consistently strengthened the sector's ability to adapt, innovate, and remain impactful in the face of emerging challenges.

Rationale

The theme for the 14th edition, **"Empowering Civil Society to Navigate Evolving Landscape for Collective Impact,"** highlights the critical need for CSOs to adapt to shifting dynamics and leverage partnerships to achieve sustainable development. The current operating environment in Zimbabwe is characterized by policy inconsistence's, socio-economic challenges, political volatility, and thereby demands that CSOs adopt strategies that enhance their resilience, relevance, and collective impact.

Empowering Civil Society is essential in fostering a vibrant CSO sector, particularly in volatile and uncertain environments. CSOs play a crucial role in championing human rights, promoting democratic governance, and driving sustainable development. They often act as the voice of marginalized populations, addressing inequalities and advocating for social justice. In challenging political and economic contexts, CSOs provide critical services, promote accountability, and catalyse social change, ensuring that the needs of vulnerable communities are not overlooked.

Strengthening the capacities of CSOs enhances their ability to navigate rapidly the ever-changing circumstances and address emerging challenges effectively. A robust and vibrant CSO sector contributes to diverse perspectives, innovative solutions, and inclusive development, fostering social cohesion and resilience. Moreover, empowered CSOs serve as watchdogs, holding governments and other power structures accountable, thereby promoting transparency and good governance.

Globally, CSOs are recognized as key drivers in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They mobilize communities, advocate for policy reforms, and implement impactful programs that address local and global development priorities. In this context, creating an enabling environment for CSOs and investing in their institutional capacity is essential for building resilient, equitable, and inclusive societies capable of responding to complex and unpredictable challenges. The 14th NGO Directors' Summer Retreat serves as a cornerstone for advancing these objectives, ensuring that CSOs in Zimbabwe remain effective agents of change in the face of adversity.

Reach Analysis and Demographic Profiling of Participants

Participants Disaggregated by Sector

- Government 9%
- Development Partners 13%
- Private Sector 12%
- CSOs 66%

Legend: CSOs ■ Private Sector ■ Development Partners ■ Government
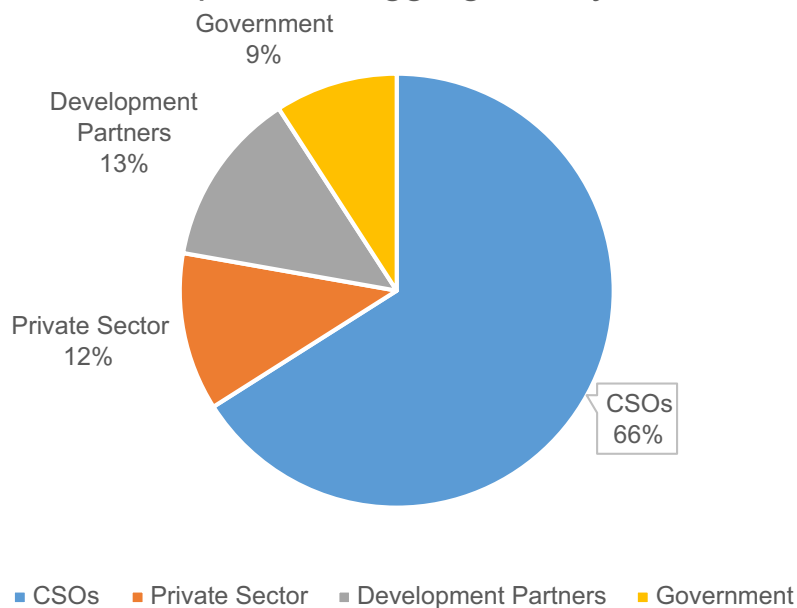
SECTOR PARTICIPANTS DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER

Legend: ■ Males ■ Females ■ Total

	Males	Females	Total
NUMBER OF CSO REPRESENTATIVES	53	48	101
NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES	11	3	14
NUMBER OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNER REPRESENTATIVES	13	7	10
NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES	10	8	18
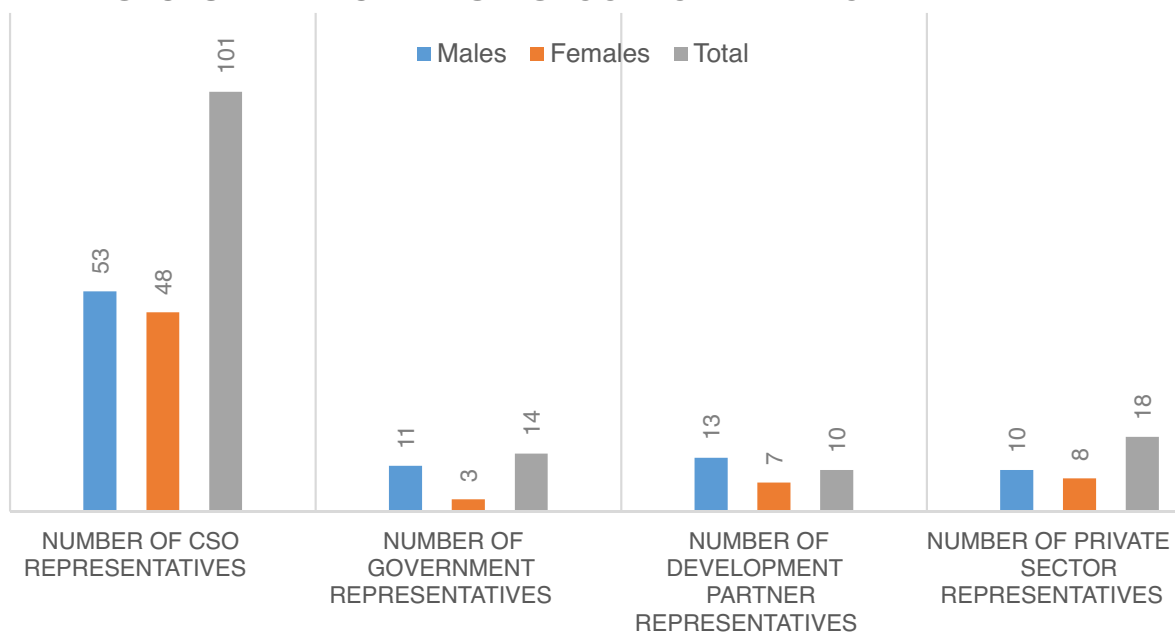
Conference Sessions Overview

Session One: Kickstarting the Program

The 14th edition of the NGO Directors Summer Retreat started with an opening session aimed at welcoming all participants and establishing a shared vision for the retreat. This session provided an opportunity to outline the program objectives and expected outcomes, setting a purposeful tone for the discussions and sessions to follow. The session was officially inaugurated by esteemed leaders: Bishop Charles Masunungure, Mr. Charles Mazorodze, the NANGO National Board Vice Chairperson alongside, Mr. Ernest Nyimai, NANGO Executive Director, and His Worship, the Mayor of Nyanga town Council Adv. Fungai Chimwamurombe represented by the Deputy Mayor of Nyanga Town Council Ms. Talent Kadzima. The atmosphere was vibrant, filled with the energy of leaders eager to explore new strategies, strengthen partnerships, and address pressing issues facing NGOs in Zimbabwe today. This set the stage for what promised to be a dynamic and insightful retreat.

Theological Reflection and Prayer

The conference began with a moment of reflection, offering participants a chance to centre their thoughts and focus their intentions on the gathering. It set the tone, providing spiritual grounding through prayer and fostering unity and purpose for the days that followed. This session emphasized gratitude and guidance, preparing the participants to engage meaningfully throughout the event.

Bishop Charles Masunungure opened the first session with a theological reflection from the book of First Corinthians 12; 12-27. The reflection emphasized the analogy of the human body,

different parts working together as one, suggesting that, likewise, NGOs, though diverse, are unified by a shared commitment to freedom, justice, and equality. This reflection set an intentional tone for the retreat, offering spiritual grounding through prayer and fostering a collective sense of purpose for the days ahead. The session underscored gratitude and guidance, setting the participants up for meaningful engagement throughout the event.

The lead facilitator, Mr. Andy Hodges, opened the conference by providing a clear overview of its goals, structure, and anticipated outcomes, setting a focused and purposeful tone for the sessions ahead. He gave participants a detailed understanding of the agenda, logistics, and central themes that would be discussed throughout the retreat. Hodges introduced the gathering as a vital collaborative space for NGOs and other key stakeholders to foster connections, engage deeply, and jointly explore strategies to adapt to the shifting development landscape for maximum collective impact.

Guest Welcome Address

A distinguished guest delivered a special address to formally welcome participants to the conference. The speech highlighted the significance of the event, reaffirmed the relevance of the chosen theme, and recognized the valuable contributions of participants, partners, and stakeholders. It set the stage for an engaging, collaborative, and productive conference.

On behalf of the NANGO National Board Chairperson, Mr. Charles Mazorodze, the NANGO National Vice Chairperson gave a special address to welcome distinguished guests to the conference. His speech highlighted the significance of the retreat, reaffirming the relevance of the chosen theme "Empowering Civil Society to Navigate Evolving Landscape for Collective Impact". He highlighted that the retreat's theme reflects NANGO's commitment to creating an enabling environment for CSOs by advocating for policies and laws that support their operations and by providing platforms for capacity development. The theme also highlights the importance of strengthening institutional capacities within CSOs to ensure they can effectively respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. By focusing on empowerment and collective impact, the retreat aimed to foster a collaborative and supportive network that enables CSOs to contribute to Zimbabwe's development agenda. He acknowledged and expressed gratitude to the funders, sponsors, and partners who made the retreat possible.

His speech set the stage for an engaging, collaborative, and productive conference. He highlighted that NANGO will remain steadfast in its commitment to strengthening the coordination and movement building of CSOs across the country. NANGO will continue to facilitate capacity strengthening for member organizations, helping them not only to survive but to thrive in often challenging and complex environments. He concluded by encouraging participants to engage fully and share insights and experiences that will forge a stronger, more resilient sector, united in the mission to serve and uplift the people of Zimbabwe.

Revisiting the Victoria Falls Resolutions and Action Agenda: Where Are We?

This session provided a reflective assessment of the progress made since the resolutions of the previous conference, held at Victoria Falls. It involved a review of commitments, achievements, and challenges encountered, offering a candid evaluation of the extent to which the resolutions had been implemented. Participants engaged in discussions on the status of key action points, lessons learnt, and areas requiring renewed focus. The session also outlined the vision for the 14th edition of the conference, presenting strategic goals and setting the agenda for action, with an emphasis on emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in the sector.

NANGO Executive Director, Mr. Ernest Nyimai, presented a comprehensive review of the progress made since the resolutions established at the 13th NGO Directors Summer Retreat. His presentation, titled "Revisiting the Victoria Falls Resolutions and Action Agenda: Where Are We?" offered an in-depth analysis of the commitments, achievements, and ongoing challenges faced by the civil society sector. Mr. Nyimai's assessment provided an evaluation of the implementation of these resolutions and set the foresight for the 14th NGO Directors Summer Retreat.

One of the critical points raised in his address was the growing trust deficit and mutual suspicion between CSOs and the Government. Mr. Nyimai attributed this widening gap to a lack of systematic, continuous engagement, observing that most interactions between the CSO sector and the ministry remain sporadic and issue-focused. He stressed the importance of establishing regular dialogue channels to facilitate updates, share insights, and offer feedback, particularly in response to newly introduced legislation and policies that impact the sector such as the PVO Amendment Bill and circulars by DDCs.

Mr. Nyimai also emphasized the need for developing standardized best practices to regulate and strengthen the sector's operations, accountability, and quality assurance. He highlighted NANGO's commitment to enhancing governance by studying regulatory models and practices in other countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, where civil society frameworks have evolved to incorporate high standards of accountability and transparency.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Nyimai urged the sector to focus on shifting public and government perceptions of CSOs and to proactively address the barriers hindering their work. He called for collective efforts to promote understanding, collaboration, and effective solutions to the challenges within the civil society space, positioning NANGO as a key facilitator in this mission to ensure sustainable development and impactful, community-focused advocacy.

Official Welcome Address: The Mayor of Nyanga Town Council.

The Mayor, represented by Deputy Mayor Ms. Talent Kadzima, delivered the official welcome address under the sub-theme, "Fortifying Greater Collaboration Amongst Development Actors for Pro-people Community Development." She emphasized the critical role of collaboration in achieving inclusive and sustainable development, underscoring that collective efforts are essential to advancing education, empowering women and girls, promoting food security, and addressing the diverse challenges facing young people in our communities. Deputy Mayor Ms. Kadzima also raised awareness of the emerging gap in community support for the boy child, who, in some areas, appears to be left behind. She reiterated the need for development initiatives to embrace the principles of "Leave No One and No Place Behind," ensuring that all members of society benefit equitably from progress and that our communities advance together without leaving any vulnerable group unnoticed.

Official Opening Remarks: Permanent Secretary, MoPSLSW

The Guest of Honour delivered the formal opening speech, marking the official commencement of the conference. The speech acknowledged the work accomplished thus far and emphasized the importance of the current gathering, setting the stage for impactful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and action-oriented deliberations. The opening energized participants for the work ahead while also reinforcing the key messages and objectives of the conference.

Ms. Patience Chiputura, on behalf of the Permanent Secretary (PS) of MoPSLSW, officially opened the 14th NGO Directors' Summer Retreat with remarks emphasizing the essential role that CSOs play in uplifting communities and advocating for the rights of marginalized populations in Zimbabwe. She highlighted the need for consensus and common understanding on the PVO Amendment Bill, noting that its passage would result in significant changes in the

manner in which CSOs are regulated and operate in Zimbabwe.

In her address, Ms. Chiputura recognized the need for collaboration between CSOs and the government as a powerful tool to drive meaningful impact. She encouraged NGOs to adhere to their purpose of existence, ensuring their work remains transparent and non-partisan in pursuit of good working relationships and an enabling environment. Additionally, Ms. Chiputura underscored the need to address the existing trust deficit and knowledge gaps within the sector, calling for efforts to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation. She affirmed the government's commitment to work alongside NGOs to foster inclusive and sustainable development and, governance in Zimbabwe.

This session set the stage for an engaging, collaborative, and productive conference that energized participants for the work ahead, while also reinforcing the key messages and objectives of the conference. The session also emphasized the importance of collaboration between the Government and Civil Society in addressing pressing social and economic challenges while reinforcing the need for compliance and accountability within the sector.

Session Two: Reflection on the State of CSOs Operating Environment in 2024

Understanding the current operating environment is crucial for CSOs to adapt and strategize effectively. This session provided an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and opportunities faced by CSOs in 2024. Given the rapid changes in the socio-political and economic landscape of Zimbabwe, it was vital for CSOs to continuously assess their environment. The session facilitated discussions on the current state of civic space, funding landscapes, operational issues, and regulatory frameworks, enabling CSOs to plan and respond proactively.

This session provided participants an opportunity to reflect on the current operational landscape for CSOs in Zimbabwe, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities presented by the country's evolving socio-political and economic environment. Chaired by Ms. Lucia Masuka from Amnesty International Zimbabwe, the session discussants were Mr. Yona Wanjala from Civic Advisory Hub, Mr. Dzimbabwe Chimbga, and Dr. MacDonald Lewanika from Accountability Lab. Discussions focused on civic space, funding challenges, operational constraints, and regulatory frameworks, intending to help CSOs proactively navigate the current landscape.

Mr. Chimbga presented an in-depth analysis of Zimbabwe's shifting civil society regulatory framework under the title "Evolving Civil Society Regulatory Framework in Zimbabwe: Impacts, Lessons, and Future Outlook". He highlighted critical developments, including the PVO Amendment Bill and local authority directives, that have significantly influenced CSO operations. Mr. Chimbga noted that civic space continues to shrink under policies aimed at protecting national security, as concerns about money laundering and terrorism financing serve

as the rationale for restrictive laws. With the passage of the PVO Bill, CSOs face threats to their operations, requiring them to navigate a restrictive legal framework. Mr. Chimbga traced this issue back to historical challenges, noting that NANGO and legal organisations had previously advocated for an open civic space, countering the government's attempts to limit CSO operations.

Mr. Chimbga compared current advocacy strategies with the successful push back of the NGO Bill of 2004/5, providing insights into how similar strategies might be adapted to address today's challenges. He urged CSOs to work within the law while diplomatically engaging the government to find balanced solutions. Mr. Chimbga also highlighted the need for an evidence-based approach to advocacy, suggesting that the CSO sector should prioritize compliance while advocating for improvements to restrictive laws.

Presentations by Dr. Lewanika and Mr. Wanjala emphasized regional experiences with shrinking civic space in East and Southern Africa, as well as adaptive mechanisms CSOs are using to address these issues. Mr. Wanjala described the trend of "securitization," where NGOs are labelled as security risks, and shared strategies for managing restrictive anti-money laundering laws. Dr. Lewanika highlighted the deliberate closure of civic space across Zimbabwe and the wider SADC region, advocating for regional solidarity and leadership. He encouraged CSOs to adopt modern strategies to address evolving challenges and foster resilience, drawing on lessons from other jurisdictions and thriving clusters of the broader NGO sector.

Ms. Rebecca Musimwa from the Law Society of Zimbabwe shared insights on the potential for CSO self-regulation, comparing it to regulatory models in professional associations. Ms. Musimwa emphasized the importance of establishing a code of conduct and peer review mechanisms to enhance self-governance within the sector. She urged NANGO to consider the readiness of its members for self-regulation, calling for consultations to gauge support and feasibility.
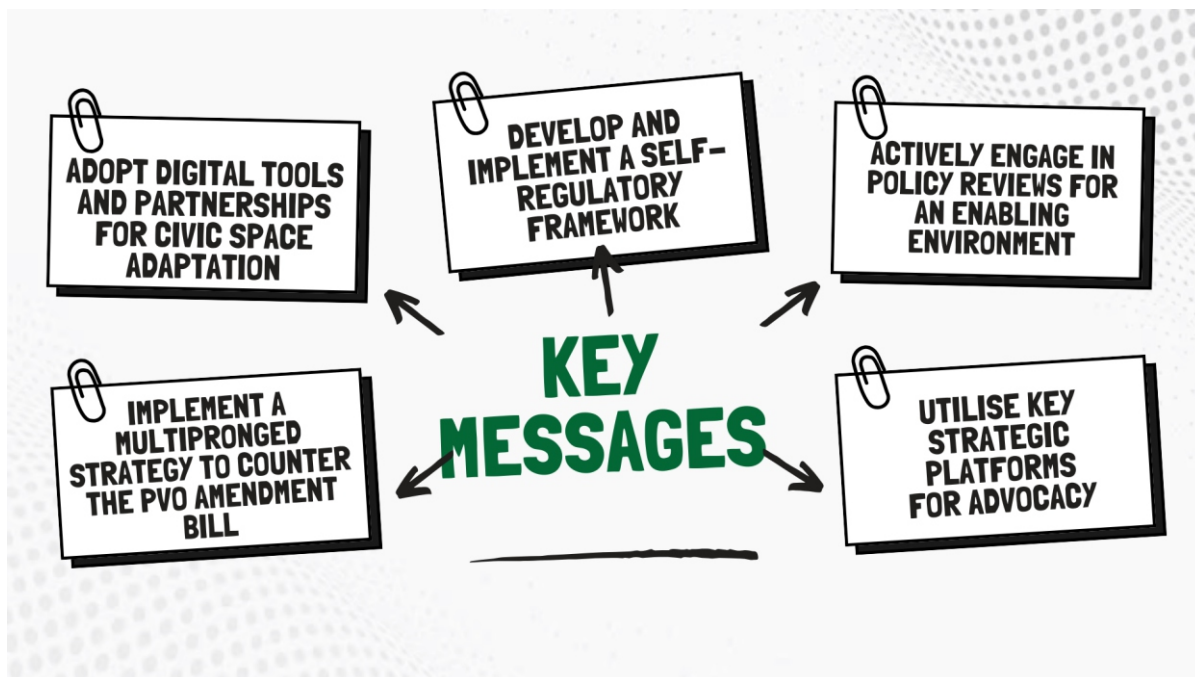
Key Messages from the Session

1. **Adopt Digital Tools and Partnerships for Civic Space Adaptation:** CSOs should leverage digital tools, build strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations, and enhance legal advocacy efforts to sustain their operations and influence amidst restrictive laws and policies.

2. **Implement a Multipronged Strategy to Counter the PVO Amendment Bill:** CSOs should engage in proactive dialogue with government authorities, conduct and disseminate evidence-based research on the Bill's implications, and establish clear internal and external accountability mechanisms to demonstrate transparency and compliance.

3. **Develop and Implement a Self-Regulatory Framework:** CSOs should collaboratively design a self-regulatory framework, including a Code of Ethics and Standards, ensuring alignment with international best practices to enhance credibility and operational efficiency within the sector. Responsible stakeholders:

4. **Actively Engage in Policy Reviews for an Enabling Environment:** CSOs must participate in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare's review of the 2003 Policy for NGOs by preparing evidence-based submissions and engaging in consultations to advocate for an enabling regulatory framework.

5. **Utilize Key Strategic Platforms for Advocacy:** CSOs should actively participate in global and national platforms, including the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) 4th round of monitoring and the debt resolution and arrears clearance dialogue, to advocate for a conducive operating environment.

Session Three: Shifting Spaces for Strengthening Civic Voice and Participation.

Civic space in Zimbabwe has been shrinking due to restrictive regulations and operational requirements. This session aimed to identify and create new spaces for civic engagement and participation, ensuring that the voices of marginalized and vulnerable groups were heard. It provided strategies for CSOs to reclaim and expand civic space, fostering inclusive democratic governance and accountability.

Breakaway Session I: Strengthening Anti-Corruption Efforts in the Education Sector: Entry Points for CSOs

The first breakaway session, sponsored by Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Z), focused on exploring effective entry points for CSOs to promote transparency and accountability within Zimbabwe's education sector. TI Z emphasized the detrimental effects of corruption on the quality and accessibility of public services in education, highlighting how such practices exacerbate inequalities and disproportionately impact women, girls, and marginalized groups. Corruption deprives millions of opportunities for equitable education and hinders Zimbabwe's progress toward upholding fundamental rights, achieving global targets, and addressing basic needs. This session aimed to galvanize collective CSO action in tackling malpractices within the education sector.

The session opened with an engaging presentation by TI Z's representative, Nqobani Tshabangu, who shared key findings from the organisation's Corruption Risk Assessment (CRA) in Zimbabwe's primary and secondary education sectors. Nqobani's analysis identified

several corruption-prone areas, including examinations, staff recruitment, procurement processes, and extra lessons. He highlighted specific forms of corruption such as bribery, sextortion, favoritism, nepotism, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, embezzlement, and property misuse. The CRA revealed that students unable to afford extra lessons were disadvantaged, as their education quality was significantly compromised compared to their peers who could participate.

Following the presentation, a dynamic panel discussion was facilitated by Andy Hodges. The panel comprised CSO leaders representing various thematic clusters, including Wadzanayi Vere (Gender), McDonald Munyoro (Youth), and Dr. Miriam Farai Siwela (Education). A significant point raised during the discussions was the need to trace the root causes of corruption in education back to the colonial era, where systemic discrimination laid the groundwork for inequalities still evident in Zimbabwe's post-independence education system. The panel stressed the importance of understanding corruption's perpetrators and dynamics to design targeted and effective interventions. Tackling corruption, it was argued, must begin with individual self-reflection before extending efforts to community and governmental levels.

One of the key challenges identified was the lack of a Whistleblower Protection Act, which has left those willing to report corruption vulnerable to retaliation. CSOs were urged to strengthen advocacy for the adoption of such legislation, which would provide a robust framework for reporting and addressing corruption. Meanwhile, participants were encouraged to leverage existing tools, such as the Freedom to Information Act, and utilize digital platforms to mobilize movements against corruption. Urban areas, with their relatively advanced digital infrastructure, were highlighted as fertile ground for campaigns like NAYO's #FollowTheMoney, which empowers youth to track and report financial irregularities.

Capacity building for local structures, such as School Development Committees (SDCs), was another critical entry point identified. Equipping communities with knowledge about corruption and methods to combat it would strengthen grassroots responses. Furthermore, the panel emphasized the need to address the cultural normalization of corruption through innovative approaches such as edutainment targeting primary and tertiary education levels. CSOs were also encouraged to advocate for the inclusion of a corruption module within the national curriculum to foster ethical values from an early age.

Key Messages from the Breakaway Session:
- CSOs must unite to build movements and share solidarity in addressing corruption in Zimbabwe's education sector.
- Tackling corruption requires addressing underlying causes, such as poor education quality, societal attitudes, and inadequate legislative frameworks.

- Advocacy for the inclusion of corruption-focused modules in the education curriculum is vital to instill transparency and accountability values in future generations.

Breakaway Session II: Engaging Men for Gender Equity and Equality in Civil Society.

This session, supported by the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), focused on engaging both men and women in discussions around gender equity and equality at the national level. The dialogue centred on how men can be viewed and embraced as allies, rather than competitors, in the promotion of gender equality and equity, in alignment with the goals of SDG 5. The presenters were Bishop Charles Masunungure and Mr. Chris Mweembe.

The side event attracted 11 male and 29 female participants from various NGO leadership positions and private sector representatives. It was noted that, globally, relatively few men express active interest in gender issues. To address this, the delegates agreed on the need to engage diverse sectors, including churches, civil society, families, government, and the private sector, to foster interest and understanding of gender issues.

Submissions made by various NGO leaders sparked the discussions. Bishop Masunungure spoke on promoting gender equity by encouraging young women to take up leadership roles within his church; and other social and professional setups. The second presenter, Mr. Mweembe, stressed the importance of understanding key terms like gender, gender equality, and gender equity to address these issues effectively. CSOs were encouraged to raise awareness on gender issues, recognizing the cross-cutting nature of gender within their respective fields. Participants agreed that men should be seen as allies rather than adversaries of gender equality. Women, on the other hand, were encouraged to support one another to achieve gender equity.

Key Messages from the Breakaway Session

- **Involve Men in Gender Equality Advocacy:** CSOs and gender equality advocates must actively involve men as partners and champions in gender equality efforts by engaging them in educational programs, awareness campaigns, and advocacy initiatives. This will ensure men are not only allies but also active participants in promoting gender equity.
- **Engage Informed Cultural Influencers for Gender Equality Promotion:** When collaborating with artists and cultural influencers to promote gender equality, organizations must ensure these individuals undergo training or capacity-building sessions to gain a deep understanding of gender issues. This will enable them to serve as informed and credible messengers, effectively conveying the importance of gender equality.
- **Empower Women for Leadership in Political, Social, and Economic Sectors:** There is a need for targeted empowerment programs that encourage and support women to step

- into higher-level leadership roles, including political, executive, and economic positions, beyond traditionally 'soft leadership' roles in community settings. This includes mentorship, leadership training, and creating platforms for women to take on high-impact positions.

Breakaway Session III: Localisation Discourse in Zimbabwe — Capacity and Integrity Questions on Local Actors as Drivers of Citizen Participation.

The session, chaired by John Maketo, Acting Director of ZIMCODD, featured insights from Ms. Ennie Chipembere, Director – Locally Led Development at Humentum and Mr. Wonder Mufunda. Chief Executive Officer for the Centre for Humanitarian Analytics (CHA). The discussion focused on assessing the readiness of Zimbabwean CSOs to champion development at the local level, emphasizing that movement-building and fostering a culture of integrity are essential to achieving genuine social accountability and citizen engagement. A mini survey conducted by CHA and NANGO on the progress of the localization agenda in Zimbabwe revealed that there remains a significant gap in awareness among NGOs regarding localization, with many organizations still unfamiliar with the Grand Bargain Framework itself.

Under the 2016 Grand Bargain framework, a commitment was made to ensure that at least 25% of humanitarian funding flows directly to local entities, aiming to improve outcomes for affected communities and reduce transactional costs. The framework envisions local actors increasingly participating in agenda-setting, with a greater portion of funding reaching national and local entities, thereby benefiting end recipients more directly. Achieving true localization, however, necessitates structural transformation, ecosystem adjustments, and a shift in how CSOs perceive and approach development. This evolution underscores the need for a movement that transforms localization from concept into practice.

Challenges Facing CSOs in Effective Local Engagement

Challenge	Description
Resources	Limited access to financial resources, human capital, and technical capacity.
Mandate, Credibility, and Legitimacy	Concerns over the sources of CSO mandates and the credibility needed to manage resources responsibly.
Integrity	Maintaining transparency, accountability, and trust in environments where resources may be limited, and external pressures may be high.
Misconception of Localisation	Varied interpretations of localization necessitate alignment to foster a unified approach among international partners.
Regulatory Environment	Legal constraints, such as the PVO Amendment bill, and other operational requirements like clearance letters and MOUs, present major obstacles.
Complex Funding Requirements	Pre-funding conditions, detailed reporting requirements, and technical skill demands present challenges, compounded by "big brother" posturing from international entities.

To make localization a practical reality, there is a need to redefine structures, adjust power imbalances, and review funding conditionalities to foster locally led development. Decision-making authority should shift from donors to local NGOs. Beyond discourse, there must be a movement advocating for necessary resources—capacity, autonomy, decision-making power, and funding—to strengthen local organizations. In her closing remarks, Ms. Chipembere emphasized, "Constructive deconstruction paves the way for building strong, resilient movements in the localization agenda. By dismantling traditional power dynamics and fostering genuine partnerships, we create an environment where local actors can lead with accountability and integrity, setting the stage for lasting impact."

Key Messages from the Breakaway Session

- **Fully Localize Aid and Development Initiatives:** Development agencies, international donors, and CSOs should prioritize localizing aid and development initiatives by empowering local actors, reducing dependency on international intermediaries, and addressing structural barriers to foster sustainable, people-centered approaches. The Grand Bargain and Charter4Change frameworks should be leveraged, but more commitment is needed from all stakeholders to achieve full localization.

- **Treat Localization as a Change Initiative:** CSOs should treat localization as a transformational change initiative, focusing on building transparent and accountable systems within their organizations. This includes adopting clear policies, implementing robust monitoring systems, and ensuring that all stakeholders are held accountable to the local communities they serve.

- **Assess and Meet the Capacity Needs of Local Actors:** Donors and CSOs should conduct comprehensive capacity assessments to identify and address the needs of local actors. This includes evaluating the infrastructure, skills, and resources required for effective local implementation. Additionally, donors should commit to providing the necessary support to meet these standards.

- **Ensure Local Actors Understand Community Needs and Contexts:** Local actors must be equipped with a deep understanding of their community's specific development needs and local contexts. CSOs and development agencies should provide training, research support, and data on local dynamics to ensure that interventions are relevant and context-driven.

- **Raise Awareness of Grand Bargain Principles Among Local NGOs:** CSOs and umbrella organizations should organize awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars to educate local NGOs about the Grand Bargain principles. This will ensure local actors are informed and equipped to integrate these principles into their practices and collaborations with international partners.

- **Include INGOs in Discussions on Localization:** CSOs should invite International NGOs (INGOs) that have recently localized their operations to share their experiences and perspectives on the localization process during panel discussions and workshops. This exchange of knowledge will promote learning and best practices among both local and international actors.
- **Foster Trust and Genuine Collaboration in Localization Efforts:** CSOs and donors should focus on building trust among all stakeholders and fostering genuine collaboration. This means moving away from power-centric approaches and actively recognizing, valuing, and involving local actors in decision-making processes to ensure their voices are heard and respected.

Session Four: Leveraging the 4th Round of Monitoring under the GPEDC Framework as a Key Space of Influence.

This session focused on the strategic use of the 4th Round of Monitoring under the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) framework as a critical tool for influencing the creation of an enabling environment for CSOs. Participants explored how the GPEDC's monitoring process could be harnessed to assess government-CSO collaboration, promote accountability, and advance policies that protect civic space. By leveraging the GPEDC's data and multi-stakeholder approach, the session identified pathways for CSOs to strengthen their advocacy efforts, ensure inclusive development, and enhance their operational space in national and international contexts.

The session was led by Mr. McDonald Munyoro, the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Manager for the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO). He focused on the strategic importance of CSOs utilizing the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) framework to influence the creation of a supportive and enabling environment for CSOs. It was highlighted that the GPEDC is a country-led initiative designed to promote collective accountability regarding the effectiveness of development. In Zimbabwe, the GPEDC was officially launched in May 2024 under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance and Investment Promotion, as part of the fourth round of its implementation.

Mr. Munyoro emphasized that CSOs were invited to the forum as key stakeholders in the development process, tasked with contributing insights and perspectives on development. He also outlined the five key phases of the GPEDC process. Between January and May 2024, inception meetings with government entities took place to identify key players in the process. The second phase, which is currently underway (June to November 2024), focuses on data collection. The collected data will undergo further review between December 2024 and February 2025, followed by the dissemination of results and translation into actionable steps from March to June 2025.

Importantly, Mr. Munyoro noted that the process aims to bring together government, CSOs, and development partners within a framework of mutual collaboration, where all stakeholders complement each other's efforts. This collaborative approach is reinforced by various international conventions and declarations that governments have committed to. During the monitoring round, particular attention was paid to the CSO Enabling Environment Indicator 2, which collects data across four key areas:

Key Area	Description
CSO Enabling Environment and Development Effective ness	This assesses whether there is space for CSOs to engage in dialogue, access information, and how their recommendations translate into meaningful change for citizens.
CSOs Development Effectiveness	This focuses on the transparency mechanisms within CSOs and their effectiveness in delivering development outcomes.
Development Cooperation of CSOs	This looks at the nature of partnerships between funding partners and CSOs, among other considerations.
Legal and Regulatory Environment	This examines issues related to CSO financing and freedoms, ensuring that CSOs can fully exercise their rights.

In his presentation, Mr. Munyoro explained that the GPEDC monitoring framework promotes collective accountability for the effectiveness of development cooperation. It is guided by four internationally agreed principles for effective development cooperation, and the monitoring process tracks the progress of partner countries, development partners, and other actors in fulfilling their commitments. This exercise aims to drive behavioural change by focusing on how

stakeholders partner at the country level to achieve better development results.

Through the GPEDC's data insights and multi-stakeholder approach, the session aimed to identify ways in which CSOs can enhance their advocacy efforts, promote inclusive development, and expand their operational space both nationally and internationally. The GPEDC was emphasized as a crucial platform that brings together governments, development partners, and CSOs to complement one another's efforts in the development process. Key areas measured by the GPEDC framework include:

Whole of Society Approach: This emphasizes the inclusion of all pillars of society in the development process.

State and Country Systems: This stresses the need for alignment and a harmonized approach between the state and all development actors to achieve development goals, advocating against working in silos.

Transparency: Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to guarantee transparency in the execution of development mandates, including clear goals and adherence to priorities.

No One Left Behind: The emphasis is on ensuring that all stakeholders are consulted and targeted in the development co-operation cycle, with disaggregated data available to monitor progress at every stage.

Drawing lessons for the Zimbabwean context, Mr. Munyoro emphasized the critical role of CSOs in this process. CSOs provide essential data and evidence that inform decision-making, shape the priorities and strategies of development partners, and drive the behavioural changes needed for more impactful development outcomes.

Session Five: Rethinking Fundraising Strategies Beyond Traditional Grants.

As traditional funding sources become more constrained, CSOs need to explore innovative fundraising strategies to sustain their operations and impact. This session focused on diversifying income streams, leveraging social enterprises, and engaging in strategic partnerships. Given the increasing geopolitical tensions, funding repurposing by major donors, and dwindling funding globally, there is an urgent need for CSOs to develop financial sustainability and resilience. The session equipped CSOs with the knowledge and tools to navigate the funding landscape, ensuring their sustainability and ability to continue their vital work.

In response to increasing limitations on traditional funding channels, CSOs were encouraged to consider creative funding approaches to maintain their operations and effectiveness. The session emphasized revenue stream diversification, social enterprise development, and collaborative partnerships. Given current global challenges including geopolitical strains, donor fund reallocation, and diminishing global funding pools, CSOs face pressing needs to build financial durability and adaptability. Participants gained valuable insights into navigating the evolving funding environment to ensure long-term viability of their essential work. Mrs. Pester Siraha from PSZ led the session with insights coming from Dr Tendai Murisa from SIVIO Institute, Ms. Ennie Chipembere from Humentum and Mr. Michael Ndiweni from the BVTA.

Dr. Murisa's opening presentation addressed Contemporary Methods of Resource Mobilization from a Philanthropic Perspective. The discussion explored progressive approaches to resource generation, examining how philanthropic entities are adapting their methodologies to embrace more dynamic and adaptable funding frameworks, such as impact-driven investments, venture-based philanthropy, and social business models. The presentation emphasized how CSOs can broaden their revenue sources by embracing these contemporary trends, stressing the

significance of donor relationship cultivation, technological integration, and establishing mission-aligned partnerships that correspond with philanthropic objectives.

Dr. Murisa emphasized that many organisations remain vulnerable due to grant dependency. He stressed that fundraising represents an ongoing organizational commitment rather than isolated events, requiring comprehensive backend support. Essential components for organizational sustainability were identified as strong governance, stable resource foundation, strategic communications, and demonstrable program impact. The importance of donor retention strategies was highlighted, noting that satisfied donors often become valuable advocates who share organizational success stories within their networks. Organizations were reminded that timely reporting and compliance are crucial, as delays can impact donor obligations and reporting requirements.

CSOs were advised to adopt an asset-centric approach, maximizing existing resources such as membership subscriptions. When approaching potential donors, organizations should demonstrate their own revenue-generating capabilities rather than appearing empty-handed.

For effective resource mobilization, organizations need to employ multifaceted approaches, including relationship building ("friend-raising") and strategic positioning for various funding opportunities. This includes conducting thorough donor research, understanding funding cycles, and aligning organizational focus with donor priorities while recognizing different terminologies used in the sector.

Features of Sustainable Organisations:
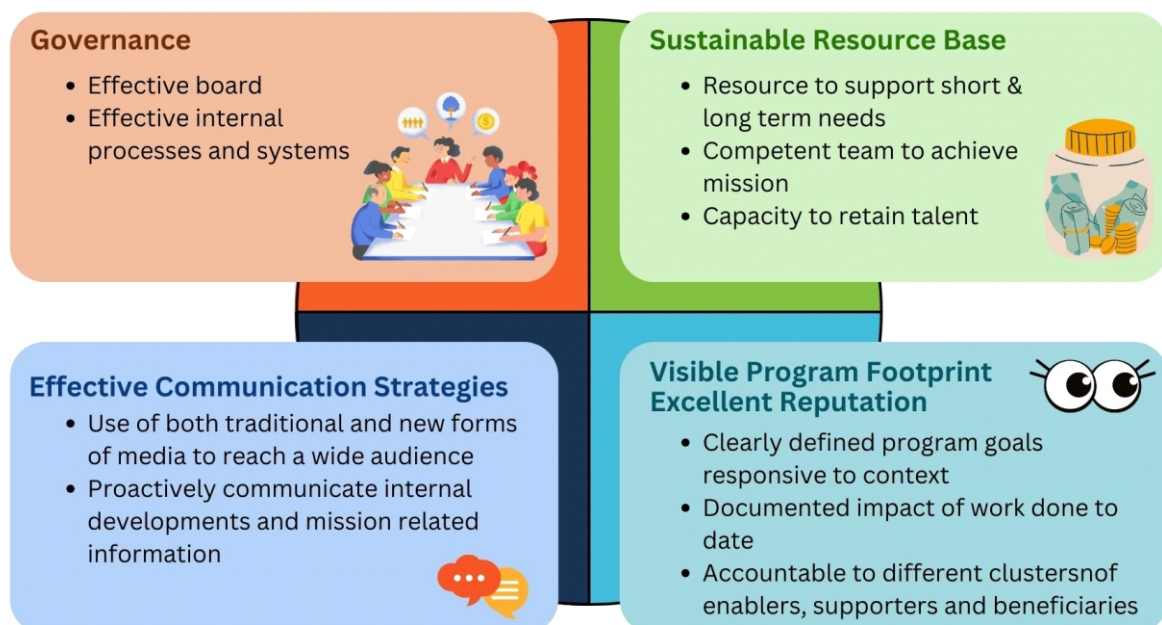
Ms. Chipembere's presentation examined Funding Dynamics in the Context of Local-Led Development. The discussion analyzed evolving funding patterns amid growing emphasis on locally driven development initiatives. As funding bodies increasingly channel resources to local organizations to enhance sustainability and context-appropriate outcomes, new opportunities and challenges emerge. The presentation explored strategies for local organizations to enhance their funding eligibility, meet donor expectations regarding local ownership, and address accountability requirements.

Mr. Ndiweni's presentation addressed CBO Funding Accessibility and Grant Conditions. The discussion highlighted obstacles community-based organizations face in securing funding, particularly regarding grant requirements and donor stipulations. It evaluated whether existing funding frameworks, application procedures, and reporting obligations are realistic for smaller entities with limited organizational capacity. Solutions were proposed for improving funding accessibility, including streamlined application processes, organizational development support, and inclusive funding mechanisms prioritizing community-initiated solutions.

The dialogue acknowledged that while past vulnerability narratives helped secure funding, innovation is now crucial in an increasingly competitive environment. Organizations must understand donor communication preferences, noting that traditional approaches may be necessary for certain donor demographics.

Regarding funding dynamics, discussions emphasized the need for new developmental perspectives focusing on equitable, inclusive, and sustainable local initiatives. The shift toward direct funding to primary organizations, rather than through intermediaries, was noted, along with recognition of challenges facing international NGOs.

Key Messages from the Session
- **Strategic Overhaul for CBOs to Strengthen Effectiveness:** CBOs must undergo a strategic transformation to improve their effectiveness, focusing on localization and forming partnerships with national organizations to amplify their impact. This requires a review of current structures and the development of a comprehensive strategic plans aimed at strengthening local networks.

- **Promote Financial Integrity Among Local CSOs:** Local CSOs must demonstrate financial integrity by ensuring transparency and accountability in financial management. This includes establishing strict financial protocols and regular audits to differentiate themselves from those involved in fund misappropriation.

- **Prioritise Capacity Building for NGO Boards:** NGOs should prioritize capacity building for their Boards by providing targeted training on governance, oversight, and financial integrity. This will empower board members to effectively monitor operations, ensuring compliance and preventing governance issues like misappropriation.

- **Communicate Organisational Changes to Rebuild Trust:** After a leadership change, CSOs must actively communicate their new direction to donors and stakeholders, emphasizing their commitment to transparency and effective use of funds. While rebuilding trust may be challenging, clear communication and due diligence processes are essential for restoring relationships.

- **Foster Collaboration Over Competition Among CBOs and NGOs:** CBOs must shift their mindset towards collaboration rather than competition, especially when applying for funding. By working with larger NGOs during proposal calls, CBOs can leverage collective strengths and maximize their impact.

- **Reassess Collaboration Dynamics Among All Stakeholders:** All stakeholders, including INGOs, funders, and national NGOs, must reassess their collaboration models. CBOs and national organizations should take a more proactive role in defining their development paths and asserting their voice, rather than waiting for external entities to dictate terms.

- **Simplify Funding Requirements and Reflect on Empowerment Practices:** Funders should streamline their application processes to make it easier for local organisations to access resources. INGOs must also reflect on their partnerships with CBOs and national organizations, ensuring that these relationships are designed to empower and build long-term capacity.

- **Enhance Resource Mobilisation for CBOs and CSOs' Autonomy:** CBOs and CSOs must focus on increasing their resource mobilization efforts to gain operational autonomy. This includes diversifying funding sources, exploring new partnerships, and advocating for financial sustainability.

- **Adopt an Asset-Based Approach for Sustainable Funding:** CBOs and CSOs should adopt an asset-based approach by identifying and leveraging their existing resources, skills, and networks. This will help shift the focus from dependency on external funding to collaborative partnerships that redistribute power and promote sustainable development.

- **NANGO's Support to CBOs for Growth and Leadership Development:** NANGO should offer targeted support to CBOs, assisting them in achieving their growth objectives. CBOs, in turn, must demonstrate leadership by actively participating in capacity-building initiatives and taking ownership of their development goals.

- **Lead the Charge for Locally Driven Development:** Local CSOs must lead the charge in driving a locally driven development agenda, prioritising operational autonomy and sustainable, impactful change. This includes creating frameworks that allow CSOs to influence local development processes and take ownership of the outcomes.

Session Six: Update Presentation on the Status of the Zimbabwe Social Impact Investment Exchange (ZIMSIIX) Platform.

Digital transformation offers opportunities for CSOs to enhance their reach, efficiency, accountability, and impact. This session explored how CSOs could adopt and integrate digital tools and technologies into their operations. Globally, there is an acceleration in digital adoption, highlighting the importance of technology in sustaining CSO activities. The session provided insights into leveraging digital tools for communication, advocacy, and service delivery, ensuring CSOs remained relevant and effective. The aggregation of CSOs' impact and contributions was also explored during the session, using the Zimbabwe Social Impact Investment Exchange Platform (ZIMSIIX) as the reference tool.

The session was led by Mr. Wonder Mufunda, the CEO of the Centre for Humanitarian Analytics (CHA). This session provided an update on the Zimbabwe Social Impact Investment Exchange (ZIMSIIX) platform, a pioneering initiative by NANGO in collaboration with CHA under the USAID-supported CEAA program. The ZIMSIIX is a data-driven aggregator and a central database for Zimbabwean NGOs, enhancing coordination and transparency within the sector. This session focused on the potential of the ZIMSIIX to transform social investment management and coordination through an attempt to cleanse the sector by telling CSOs stories in Zimbabwe and collecting the CSOs' work. This will answer the questions on who the players are and where they are operating as every player will be listed on the platform.

The ZIMSIIX will be a platform co-hosted by NANGO and CHA, with CHA being the technical partner on data management, further enhancing the form of coordination by focusing on data management issues. ZIMSIIX is aimed at creating a one-stop shop for NGO coordination in Zimbabwe. The platform can be used for in-country social investment management,

coordination, and decision-making by different stakeholders, including private, and non-private actors and academics. The platform can execute different programs including NGO profiles, Impact Reports, Advisory Reports, Investment Tracking Reports, Analytical Reports, and Compliance Tracking Reports.

The sectoral analysis will begin to tell the stories of what each sector is doing to align CSO work and acknowledge the partners providing resources. This is because one of the missing things is for the sector to celebrate success stories. The ZIMSIIX platform was presented as an information hub for NGOs, facilitating communication and collaboration and an aspect of ensuring that CSOs have a quality assurance and accountability mechanism that will be useful in self-assessments and giving checks and balances. It is also a way of aligning expectations from communities versus planned interventions through needs assessment.

The portal is more than just a database, there are extra features of analytics to generate several reports to enhance decision-making. The current NANGO database is in Excel format which will be incorporated into the portal, therefore ZIMSIIX will be a web-based database and platform. The ZIMSIIX is currently in the development stage under the APECS project but will have to create its revenue streams. For instance, instead of job posting, procurement, product or services adverts, calls for proposals, etc., one can make use of the platform to advertise as this will already reach a specific target group. The private sector will also use this to interface with the sector. Some serious considerations have been made, there will be three dedicated savers that will be hosted at NANGO to ensure that data is not lost. For privacy reasons, there will be access control functions on the platform. Some less sensitive information of a general nature will be accessible by any user, but more sensitive information will be filtered to restricted access only to NANGO-approved and authorized user groups.

The ZIMSIIX platform will be officially launched live on 6 December 2024. The next step will be requisition for data about organisational activities that will be populated on the ZIMSIIX dashboards as live data ahead of the live launch. There is also assurance of data safety, and some Information will only be available for special reports or upon requests.

Key Messages from the Session
* **Active Contribution to the Data Portals:** CSOs are urged to actively contribute by populating the relevant data and information on designated portals. This is critical to ensure that accurate, current information is accessible, which will support informed decision-making and enhance the effectiveness of civil society initiatives. CSOs should assign specific team members to regularly update and maintain their data contributions, ensuring it remains accurate and relevant.

- **Promotion and Utilization of the ZIMSIIX Platform:** CSOs should fully leverage and promote the platform designed to showcase the valuable work being done by organizations across the country. By actively promoting and populating the platform with their achievements and initiatives, CSOs can enhance visibility, strengthen collaboration with the state, and foster greater transparency. To maximize the platform's potential, CSOs should integrate it into their communications strategies and encourage broader engagement from both internal and external stakeholders.

Session Seven: Bridging the Gap: Strengthening CSO-Regulator Engagement for Compliance and Civic Space Protection.

This panel session provided a crucial platform for CSOs and regulators to engage in meaningful dialogue about the drivers of Zimbabwe's shrinking civic space and the trust deficits that exists between regulatory bodies and CSOs. With many organisations unaware of their compliance obligations due to limited outreach from regulators, the session bridged the knowledge gap and addressed the misapplication of the NGO regulatory framework. Participants gained insights into the compliance landscape, discussed sectoral concerns, and explored ways to foster a more transparent and enabling environment for CSOs.

NANGO successfully launched the #T2R initiative during the 14th NGO Directors Summer Retreat during this session. This dialogue and engagement forum connects NGOs with their regulators in Zimbabwe and focuses on three main objectives: enhancing understanding of compliance requirements for NGOs, strengthening relationships and collaboration between NGOs and regulators, and advocating for streamlined regulations to foster an enabling environment for CSOs in Zimbabwe.

Five regulators attended the launch: the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

(MoPSLSW), represented by Patience Chiputura, PVO Compliance Officer; the National Employment Council for Welfare and Education Institutions (NECWEI), represented by General Secretary Rose Mambo; the National Social Security Authority (NSSA), represented by Acting Deputy Director of Contributions and Compliance, Walter Chagadama; the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), represented by Deputy Director Tichafa Chigaba; and the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), represented by the Regional Manager Mkhululi Nkulumo. Frank Mpahlo, Executive Director of Green Governance Trust and NANGO Board Treasurer, represented the CSOs.

The T2R initiative is important because it fosters essential dialogue between NGOs and regulators, bridging gaps in understanding and collaboration. By creating a structured and systemic forum, T2R empowers NGOs to better comprehend compliance requirements, which reduces operational challenges and enhances transparency and accountability. This initiative also strengthens relationships by encouraging open communication, where both NGOs and regulators can share insights and address mutual concerns. T2R plays a crucial advocacy role by pushing for streamlined, updated regulations that reflect modern governance principles, making it easier for NGOs to operate effectively. Ultimately, T2R advances an enabling environment for the civil society in Zimbabwe, allowing them to focus more on their missions and contribute to sustainable development and the development agenda and trajectory of Zimbabwe.

At its launch, the #T2R initiative led to a consensus among NGOs, regulators, and development partners on the need to continue implementing the initiative due to its crucial role in bridging knowledge gaps and building trust among stakeholders. All present stakeholders, including regulators and delegates, demonstrated their commitment by signing a pledge, establishing a solid foundation for open communication that can improve CSO operations and create an enabling operating environment. Additionally, T2R's advocacy efforts raised awareness about the importance of a supportive regulatory environment, driving reforms that allow NGOs to focus on their missions rather than on burdensome operational requirements.

Session Overview

The session focused on bridging the knowledge gap on the available regulations that govern CSOs operations in Zimbabwe, the most common mistakes or compliance gaps that NGOs fall short of, the consequences of not adhering to the regulations, the challenges usually faced by CSOs that lead to noncompliance and steps to be taken to improve compliance. Mr. Yona Wanjala, Team Leader of the Civic Advisory Hub of Uganda led the discussions. The main focus was for CSOs and regulators to have a meaningful and frank discussion on challenges being encountered that lead to non-compliance and the implications of noncompliance as well as to find a way forward as a collective. Yona Wanjala gave an overview of the importance of open

channels of communication between CSOs and regulators that lead to improved compliance. The antagonistic relationship between CSOs and regulators that usually leads to the promulgation of laws and regulations that are perceived as restrictive is usually caused by a trust deficit which has a big bearing on suspicion and at the same time, suspicion kills trust. CSOs and regulators were encouraged to talk to each other and clear misunderstandings that might have arisen. All delegates agreed that there is a need to talk and understand each other.

The MoPSLSW

Some of the mistakes CSOs make on compliance obligations were highlighted by Ms Chiputura from MoPSLSW. The major concern was on CSOs registered as PVOs failing to submit audited financial statements and annual reports according to section 6 part (b). She highlighted that some PVOs were digressing from their mandate, and it was noted as one of the reasons why they were failing to submit the required reports. The PVO Act is prescriptive and all PVOs are required to abide by it. She encouraged CSOs to stick to their mandate and not to digress as this has serious negative consequences. If PVOs wish to change focus and widen their scope, the PVO Act section 9 sub 8 provides that they need to apply to MoPSLSW to align the new focus with their objectives. PVOs focusing on humanitarian issues were encouraged to abide by the policy on Operations of NGOs and Humanitarian Organizations of 2003 and failure to submit statutory reports sections 16 and 19 of the PVO Act is regarded as gross misconduct.

Failure to communicate with the ministry often leads to the ministry regarding the organisations as dormant or dysfunctional and is at times listing for deregistration. She affirmed the need to have sustained regular communication to update each other on new developments in the CSO operating spaces. In the ministry's new strategic documents, they have incorporated a provision to have regular meetings with CSOs for updates and information sharing. The government was applauded for its position to harmonise policies to ensure the flow of benefits particularly the position to amend the policy on Operations of NGOs and Humanitarian Organisations of 2003 which is retrogressive and no longer in line with international standards. As a way of improving engagement with CSOs, the government is planning to train its ministry key staff to enable them to capacitate NGOs on the regulations and compliance. To deal with some administrative and legal perennial challenges that militate against CSO smooth operations like the MoUs, directives from other government departments, and ever-increasing requirements, the ministry has appointed an inter-ministerial committee to look at the issues. The outcome of the discussions will be communicated to CSOs.

The National Employment Council (NEC)

The NEC governing the Humanitarian work derives its mandate from the Labour Act. Ms Mambo informed delegates that NEC deals with dispute resolution between employers and employees in the humanitarian sector. The regulation requires all employees to register with NEC in case of disputes. Organisations were encouraged to stick to minimum set standards of employment to avoid disputes. Taking cognizant of the NGO nature of contracts which is usually fixed term in nature, the regulator has a Statutory Instrument SI22018 that deals with fixed term contracts. The challenge they have noted with NGOs is the non-confinement of CSOs within the SI requirements and in most cases, CSOs are ceased with disputes. There are no clear Disciplinary Committees within CSOs, and this anomaly should be rectified. CSOs have their job titles that do not fit in the category of the SI20018 and most cases, it is difficult to handle and resolve disputes when they arise. She advised CSOs to simplify job titles to avoid heavy fines when cases arise.

The National Social Security Agency (NSSA)

In Zimbabwe, social security is compulsory. NSSA was formed from the NSSA Act 1979, and its mandate is to advise ministers on matters of social security. It is also responsible for the pension scheme. Challenges usually faced by employers is late submission of employee NSSA monthly contributions which

can now be done through the self-service portal. Deductions should be submitted by the 10th of the following month. Employers should always maintain accurate records of decoctions. Organisations were reminded that it is a crime not to remit NSSA contributions on time. It is the duty of employers to keep records of all employees. New organisations are expected to register with NSSA within 30 days of operation and anything further than that is a criminal offense. Employees are expected to keep their social security number, and this is the number they will always use. Lastly, NGOs were encouraged to be abreast with changes taking place in terms of deductible amounts to avoid over and under-payments. At the moment, anything below $700 is not liable to NSSA deductions. A penalty of up to $30 per day is charged on non-compliance and accounts can be garnished to recover the penalties. NSSA is in the process of developing an MOU with NANGO which still needs to be finalized.

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU)

The FIU was established from the Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Act. The institution works with accountable institutions like banks and non-banks including other designated non-bank financial institutions. FIU's duty is to monitor transactions and report suspicious activities on transactions. In Zimbabwe, banks are supervised by RBZ, and insurance is supervised by the Insurance and Pensions of Zimbabwe. NPOs are not designated as accounting institutions. In their assessment, the FATF identified NPOs as vulnerable institutions that may be used by criminals for terrorism financing. There is limited knowledge amongst NPOs on their vulnerability and some NPOs have weak financial control policies to monitor transactions. NGOs were encouraged to conduct due diligence on donors and new employees, and maintain records and documentation of funds for transparency and accountability. CSOs were encouraged to implement the UN Security Council resolution on terrorism financing even though NPOs are not accountable persons in terms of Zimbabwe law. The FIU has developed a link to check if people we engage with are listed. NGOs were encouraged to transact through regulatory channels for transparency and more emphasis was on CSOs to develop their own sector best practices. The FATF carry a risk assessment after every two years by the national task force. NPOs were encouraged to participate in this round of assessment to be done for 2026-2027.

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA)

It is one of the regulators that NGOs need to comply with. All NGOs should register with ZIMRA, and the regulator made it clear that no one should start operating without registering with ZIMRA. For ease of doing business, ZIMRA has launched an online self-service portal where institutions can register in the comfort of their offices. Employers were encouraged to file and declare returns for tax every tenth day of every month. Failure to adhere to this requirement, organisations are encouraged to talk to ZIMRA. Institutions are expected to keep complete and accurate records for a minimum of 6 years. Non-communication was indicated as one of the common mistakes usually made by NGOs. ZIMRA has an open-door policy, and they welcome organisations to engage them. Directors of organisations were encouraged to take an interest in the operation of organisations and not to overregulate staff.

Key Messages

- Implementation of the 'Talk to Your Regulator' Initiative
- Bridging Knowledge Gaps with QuAAM Initiative
- Active CSO Participation in FATF Processes
- Regulatory Support for CSOs

- **Implementation of the 'Talk to Your Regulator' Initiative:** CSOs and regulators must prioritize the implementation of the 'Talk to Your Regulator Initiative' designed by NANGO. NANGO will facilitate systematic and regular engagements and dialogues between CSOs and regulators to clarify compliance requirements and streamline the process to foster an enabling environment. To enhance this initiative, both CSOs and regulators should focus on improving outreach, communication, and providing clear, accessible information on compliance requirements, with built-in feedback mechanisms.

- **Bridging Knowledge Gaps with QuAAM Initiative:** NANGO must spearhead the rollout of the Quality Assurance and Accountability Certification Mechanism (QuAAM) initiative to bridge the knowledge gap in the sector. This includes organizing training sessions and providing tools for CSOs to meet quality standards and enhance their accountability frameworks.

- **Active CSO Participation in FATF Processes:** CSOs must demonstrate their commitment to actively participate in key FATF processes such as National Risk Assessments, Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) Risk Assessments, mutual evaluations, and outreach programs. CSOs should engage with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and the National Task Force on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) to ensure their full involvement in these processes.

- **Regulatory Support for CSOs:** Regulators must support, not stifle, the work of CSOs to ensure they can operate effectively and contribute to the well-being of Zimbabwean society. This includes fostering a more conducive regulatory environment that allows CSOs to thrive and contribute to sustainable development.

Session Eight: Visionary Leadership: Navigating Organisational Changes and Shifts.

Strong leadership is essential for navigating organisational changes and responding to emerging challenges. This session focused on developing visionary leaders who can guide their organisations through transitions and drive strategic growth. The dynamic and often unpredictable operating environment in Zimbabwe requires adaptive and forward-thinking leadership. This session therefore equipped CSO leaders with the skills and strategies needed to manage change and foster organisational resilience.

Fostering Employee Growth and Wellbeing for Sustainable Organisational Development

This session was moderated by Ms. Getrude Shumba, the Executive Director for FACT Zimbabwe while the discussants were Mr. Dzikamai Bere, the Executive Director for ZimRights Association, Ms. Rosewitta Katsande the Executive Director for YETT and Mr. Mandisodza from ICAZ. It explored the crucial role that staff capacity development and welfare support play in strengthening organizational resilience and long-term success. It also emphasized how investing in employee skills, leadership development and overall well-being enhances productivity, innovation and staff retention. Using different context and backgrounds the aforesaid discussants highlighted the subsequent:

Mr. Dzikamai Bere summarized and explored his presentation in five words, 'Strong teams for sustainable organizations.' He highlighted that with over 15 years as the civil leader, there are various tenets that he has learnt in building stronger teams. In his narration, Bere argued that prior to much exposure to the civic space he had a different view on what it means to be a team player and more so building a team. For him, by then, team building meant taking staff members

outside the conventional office setup to a destination where they would play games and even spend days outside a 'toxic' office environment. However, fast forward, the presenter emphasized that his earlier mindset of what teamwork meant was perhaps misconstrued and baseless if one were to qualify the earlier version then there is a possibility of losing talent and individuals in any organisation. Teamwork is never an event or periodical activity but a culture that should be sustained and invested.

Mr. Bere opined that there are three foundational principles for teamwork. First, he underscored that inclusive language brings out the logic upon which strong teams are built. Many times, leaders get isolated by their subordinates because they amass so much power and in turn, subordinates end up doing work for the sake of it as opposed to their passion. Organisations should adopt job titles like team leader, team player, or any other titles like team member so that subordinates might feel included in any decision-making exercise.

The presenter used an allegoric example drawing from Matthew 16: 13-20, "Who do people say I am?" Using this example, Bere maintained the fact that Jesus knew he was the Messiah but was very much comfortable being called a friend. In this regard, there are lessons to learn that leaders should choose tittles and soft language for teamwork to flourish. Language matters as it has the power to win the hearts of many. The title or language one can choose to use can either separate one from the team or build unity among team members.

The presenter emphasized that by so doing the subordinates will feel appreciated and improve on the quality of work they produce and further vision their assignments as the labour of love as opposed to employment. He further emphasized that teamwork is one of the most important tools when it comes to organizational efficiency. Teamwork in the workplace is when a group of individuals work together toward a collective goal in an efficient manner. When multiple people work together toward a common goal, your business can flourish. He summed up the first point by a quote from Andy Carnegie, 'teamwork brings out dream work.' He ended by emphasizing other steps to be adopted to have a winning team:

- Choose empowering titles instead of titles that often show hierarchy and control but opt for ones that show collaboration and empower individuals.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity and avoid terms that annihilate subordinates at every cost.
- Lead by example showing them values and further illuminating that leadership is never about titles but positive influence.
- Assess passion alignment with the organisation's vision
- Foster enabling environment for team members through staff capacity building, and development.
- Pay attention to factors that sabotage passion
- Build a tour guide operation

- Invest time to understand team members' stories.

Ms. Rosewita Katsande - YETT, Executive Director.

To achieve sustainable growth and create lasting impact, Ms. Katsande highlighted that it is essential to build strong, resilient teams by cultivating a culture of continuous learning and innovation and encouraging personal staff development. She further emphasized that by assessing each team member's career goals regularly, we can tailor developmental opportunities that align with both individual aspirations and organisational objectives. Leading by example is crucial, offering workshops and training sessions allows staff to expand their skill sets, embrace new ideas, and stay engaged. Recognising and rewarding continuous learning, i.e. by offering additional leave, bonuses, or public acknowledgment motivates employees to invest in their growth and contributes to a supportive environment. By sharing responsibilities, teams increase productivity and adaptability, building stronger relationships and trust among members. Ultimately, effective teamwork drives organizational success by creating a supportive and efficient work environment.

Employees are perhaps the asset in any organisation. Employee development must be a process of working with them to strengthen and improve their skills in line with professional and organizational goals. This could be by way of availing other opportunities that include trainings on personal skills. Developing employees gives rise to a proficient and motivated workforce that directly affects a company's performance. The presenter further noted that there was a need to develop employees by enabling them to perform higher-level duties from time to time. When employees get used to taking up higher responsibilities, they learn new skills and prepare for future leadership responsibilities and in turn prioritize giving them meaningful rests in the form of vacation leave.

Furthermore, empowering team members with resources for physical, community, and financial well-being ensures they feel valued beyond their roles. Providing access to wellness professionals for guidance on managing stress and encouraging healthy behaviours promotes resilience and job satisfaction. Additionally, fostering work-life balance through flexible working hours or remote work options shows a commitment to employee well-being, enabling them to manage personal responsibilities alongside their professional roles. Together, these efforts not only enhance individual growth but also fortify the organization's foundation for sustainable progress.

Mr. William Mandisodza: ICAZ

Mr. Mandisodza opined that human development from a professional perspective is crucial for the sustainable growth of any organization, as it largely depends on the strength and capability of its human capital. A significant challenge in many industries, particularly in the accounting field, is the high rate of attrition, which can disrupt organizational progress. As a result, technical development is not just beneficial, but essential, to ensure that employees stay equipped with the necessary skills.

Skills that develop them personally or skills that the organization invest in them. This will mean that in the event of any shortage of funds to outsource, an organization can use in-house skills. Additionally, fostering personal development is key, and employees should be encouraged to not only submit reports but also go beyond the basics by demonstrating how their work contributes to the broader goals of the organization.

The shifting trends in the workplace, including the rise of remote work made it essential for organizations to adapt meaningfully to the growing trends. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these changes, forcing many businesses to rethink traditional work models. As the CSO sector also faces these shifts, it's crucial to understand how to work effectively in teams where flexibility and collaboration are key, even when working remotely. Promoting work-life balance is especially important for young women, men, and youth. Managing time effectively is critical, being clear about schedules, allocating time for personal tasks, and ensuring support systems are in place for assistance can help. It is also vital to encourage employees to take time for themselves to recharge and prevent burnout.

Creating safe spaces within organisations for open communication is another essential practice. This can include regular one-on-one sessions with staff and appointing a focal person who ensures that directors are kept informed about developments. Promoting remote working should be part of the strategy, ensuring that work flows smoothly, tasks are completed on time, and deliverables are made. It is essential to embrace flexibility, recognizing that no single approach fits every situation. Instead, fostering regular conversations with subordinates helps ensure that everyone's needs are understood, and the organization remains adaptive to the evolving landscape.

Key Messages from the Session

- **Strengthening Complaint-Handling Mechanisms:** CSOs must develop and implement robust internal policies to support effective complaint and feedback systems. These policies should ensure that all concerns are addressed promptly, transparently, and in a manner that builds trust and accountability within the organization and with the communities served. CSO leaders should assign responsible staff members to manage these systems and ensure that concerns are tracked and resolved

- **Prioritising Team Well-being:** CSO leaders are called to prioritize the physical, mental, and financial well-being of their teams by providing resources for wellness programs. These programs should address stress management, promote healthy behaviours, and build resilience within the workforce. Leaders should allocate budgets for wellness initiatives and create a supportive environment that encourages work-life balance.

- **Fostering a Culture of Continuous Learning:** CSOs must foster a culture of continuous learning by offering regular opportunities for skill enhancement, including workshops and training programs. Additionally, CSO leaders should recognize and reward employees who demonstrate growth and professional development, creating an environment that encourages high performance and engagement.

- **Adapting to Emerging Trends like Remote Work:** CSOs must remain flexible and adaptable to emerging trends, including remote work, to ensure that workflows remain efficient and deliverables are met. Leaders should encourage employees, particularly young women, youth, and men, to effectively manage their time. This can be achieved by providing clear schedules, allocating time for specific tasks, and offering support systems to help staff balance work and personal responsibilities.

- **Supporting Leadership Development Programs:** Development partners are encouraged to provide financial and technical support for leadership development programs aimed at CSO leaders. This support will help build the capacity of leaders to effectively navigate challenges, inspire their teams, and drive positive change in the communities they serve. Development partners should collaborate with CSOs to identify and fund leadership development initiatives.

Breakaway Room I: Dialogue on Power Analysis and Feminist Circle on Collective Care and Wellbeing

The breakaway session, supported by JASS Associates, focused on building women's collective power for justice. Recognizing that women are at the forefront of crises and change globally, defending both people and the planet, JASS has developed innovative methods to amplify women's voices, visibility, and power. These efforts aim to join forces in creating a just and sustainable future for all. To fully equip women, JASS created a Power Toolkit designed to support activists and change-makers as they navigate and transform challenging environments. The toolkit offers cutting-edge ideas, practical tools, and strategic frameworks that empower social justice work in an increasingly authoritarian and climate-unstable world.

JASS identified power as a central issue that must be addressed, noting that power dynamics are often relational and unequally distributed. During the session, CSO leaders engaged in dynamic discussions around the concept of power as a foundation for analysis. The *Power Guide* was introduced as a practical tool that organizations can use to build a shared analysis of power dynamics within the workplace. The session focused on three key questions: What is power? Why is it important? And how do we analyze it? The Power Guide consists of six chapters, each focusing on thematic areas.

CSO leaders and activists were encouraged to connect power analysis with strategic action to drive change. The toolkit serves as a resource to help NGO leaders and activists develop responsive strategies. During the Summer Retreat, it was agreed that creating a world

conducive to the empowerment of women and girls requires changing the systems that hinder their progress. The locally-led development movement in Zimbabwe uses the power framework to analyse and lead development initiatives, reinforcing the importance of addressing power dynamics to create an equitable future.

Breakaway Room II: Protecting Human Rights Defenders—Strategies for Operating in Shrinking Civic Spaces

The session, facilitated by Mr. Fortune Kuhudzekwe from the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, focused on equipping Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) with strategies, tools, and modalities to ensure their safety while discharging their duties. Mr. Kuhudzekwe emphasized that not all human rights defenders' workplaces are at risk, as some operate in relatively protected environments. However, the scale and severity of violations against HRDs and the critical need to recognize their contributions to human rights advancement underpin the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the establishment of the Special Rapporteur's mandate to safeguard their work and existence.

Drawing on evidence and statistics from the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Mr. Kuhudzekwe highlighted the violations HRDs face, including executions, torture, beatings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, death threats, harassment, defamation, and restrictions on freedoms of movement, expression, association, and assembly. Individual defenders have been subjected to defamatory campaigns, including accusations of fabricating abductions. Furthermore, anonymous social media profiles have increasingly been used to slander and threaten HRDs. Civil society organizations (CSOs) assisting victims of rights violations have also faced systemic attacks.

Participants shared specific cases of recent abuses targeting individuals such as Namatai Kwekweza, Robson Chere, and James Timba. It was noted that violations often target HRDs or the organizations through which they work, and in some instances, extend to family members to exert additional pressure. Women HRDs face unique risks due to gender-specific vulnerabilities, necessitating tailored responses.

Some organisations in Zimbabwe have faced deregistration, accusations of promoting regime change, or unfounded claims of failing to provide evidence for their advocacy. Legislative frameworks like Section 10 of the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MOPA) further constrain freedoms by prohibiting gatherings near specified locations without prior approval, effectively restricting peaceful assemblies and demonstrations. This provision undermines constitutional rights such as freedom of expression and movement and contravenes international human rights obligations.

The use of domestic legislation, such as MOPO, to curtail HRD activities, despite its inconsistency with international human rights standards, highlights a lack of political will to create an enabling environment for human rights work. These restrictive measures violate rights enshrined in both national and international instruments, including Zimbabwe's Constitution, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
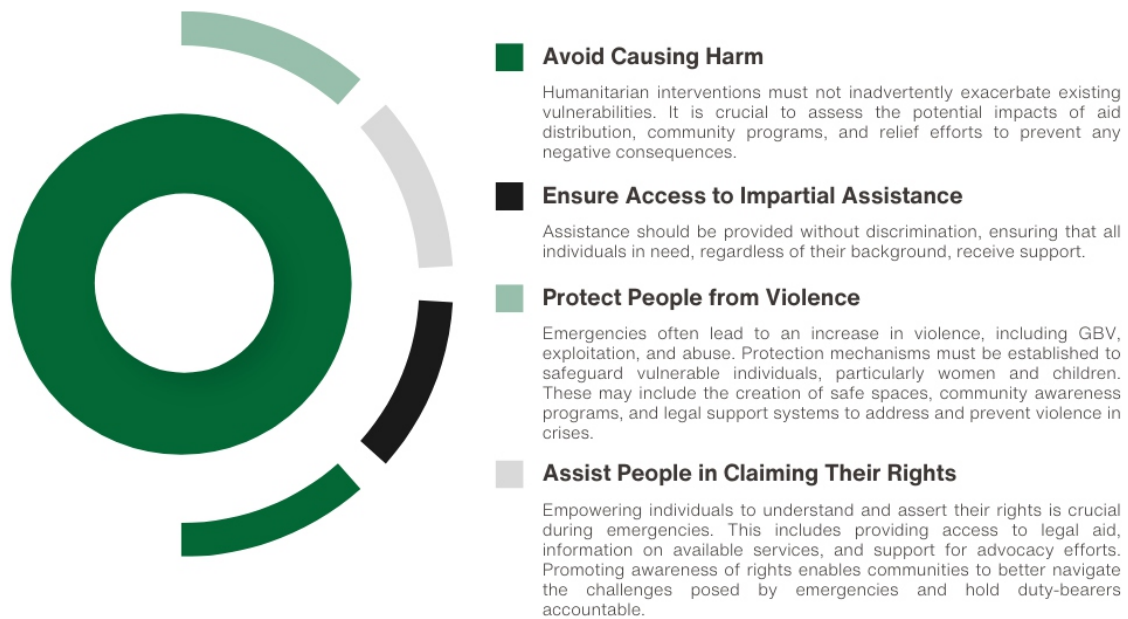
HRDs play a pivotal role in participatory democracy by holding authorities accountable, supporting victims of rights violations, and promoting socio-economic rights. Zimbabwe's vibrant civil society, despite operating under challenging conditions, continues to educate communities, raise awareness, and demand accountability from the government on issues like governance, corruption, and public resource mismanagement.

The session concluded with a call for the Government of Zimbabwe to adopt measures to safeguard HRDs and promote human rights.

Breakaway Room III: Prioritising the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Amid El Niño-Induced Drought in Zimbabwe.

This breakaway session, sponsored and led by ActionAid Zimbabwe, focused on the urgent need to safeguard vulnerable groups affected by the devastating impacts of the ongoing El Niño-induced drought in Zimbabwe. Drawing on the climate change actions and response interventions of CSOs, the discussion explored practical strategies for mitigating the severe social, economic, and environmental insecurities resulting from prolonged drought conditions. Key areas of focus included enhancing food security, access to water, and livelihoods for marginalized communities, particularly women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities (PWDs). Participants discussed innovative approaches to climate resilience and community-based adaptation, emphasizing the collaborative efforts of local, national, and international actors in protecting those most at risk. By prioritizing the needs of vulnerable groups, the session aimed to foster inclusive climate action and response strategies, ensuring that no one is left behind during times of crisis.

It was noted that vulnerability tends to increase during emergencies due to various factors, including the disruption of social structures, loss of livelihoods, and limited access to essential services. In such contexts, marginalized groups—particularly women, children, the elderly, and PWDs—face heightened risks. The following four key principles underpin the protection of these vulnerable populations during crises:

Avoid Causing Harm

Humanitarian interventions must not inadvertently exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. It is crucial to assess the potential impacts of aid distribution, community programs, and relief efforts to prevent any negative consequences.

Ensure Access to Impartial Assistance

Assistance should be provided without discrimination, ensuring that all individuals in need, regardless of their background, receive support.

Protect People from Violence

Emergencies often lead to an increase in violence, including GBV, exploitation, and abuse. Protection mechanisms must be established to safeguard vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children. These may include the creation of safe spaces, community awareness programs, and legal support systems to address and prevent violence in crises.

Assist People in Claiming Their Rights

Empowering individuals to understand and assert their rights is crucial during emergencies. This includes providing access to legal aid, information on available services, and support for advocacy efforts. Promoting awareness of rights enables communities to better navigate the challenges posed by emergencies and hold duty-bearers accountable.

Assessing vulnerability in various hazardous scenarios is essential, as the nature of a disaster determines who is most exposed. The facilitator introduced the "onion tool" or "layered tool," which helps map involved stakeholders. At the core is the individual, surrounded by family, community, social networks, the state, and regional bodies. These entities can either promote or violate human rights during disasters. A study by ActionAid in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia indicates that such disasters significantly increase vulnerability, especially in areas like access to water, where the need to travel long distances exacerbates the risk of sexual abuse and heightens inequalities between the wealthy and the poor, as well as between genders. Additionally, the burden of unpaid care work increases, and violence against women and girls can manifest in forced marriages and child labour.

Empowering local stakeholders and ensuring accountability to affected populations is critical. While men are also vulnerable during disasters, it is important to implement coping mechanisms to prevent involvement in substance abuse, robbery, and other negative behaviours. As gatekeepers and decision-makers, men often conduct meetings that exclude women and youth. Therefore, it is crucial to engage women and youth in these discussions to promote inclusive programming. Additionally, men should be active participants in all stages of programming, as they too can be victims of gender-based violence.

Although some women hold positions of power, they frequently face expectations of submission to their husbands

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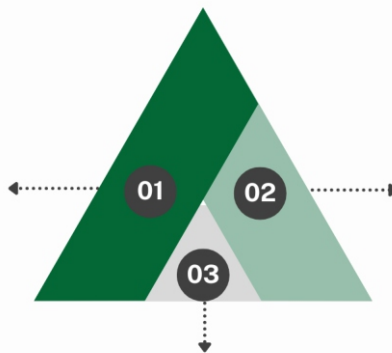
Social norms often prevent women from assuming leadership roles.

Zimbabwe currently lacks comprehensive disaster management legislation and relies on the Civil Protection Act of 1989. There is an urgent need to invest in insurance systems that help communities absorb shocks and enhance resilience.

To effectively address these challenges, it is essential to strengthen partnerships with various stakeholders and raise awareness of the issues faced by vulnerable groups. Advocacy efforts should focus on the unique challenges these populations encounter, promoting collaborative solutions. Recognizing the increasing vulnerability during emergencies is vital for effective humanitarian response. By adhering to these four key principles, stakeholders can help safeguard the rights and well-being of the most affected populations, ensuring their needs are prioritized and addressed meaningfully.

Session Nine: Navigating Zimbabwe's Law-Making Process — Institutional Roles, Legal Reforms, and Opportunities for CSO Advocacy.

This session focused on the law-making process in Zimbabwe, providing a platform for presentations by key institutions involved in shaping the country's legislative framework. As Zimbabwe witnessed a wave of legal reforms, with numerous new bills and amendments under consideration, it became essential for CSOs to understand how these processes worked and where they could engage effectively. Discussants from relevant government departments, legislative bodies, and regulatory agencies outlined their roles in the development, amendment, and enactment of laws. The session also explored opportunities for collaboration between CSOs and these institutions, highlighting how CSOs can contribute to legal reforms through advocacy, public participation, and partnerships. As a result, CSOs were better equipped to influence policy decisions and ensure that legal reforms are inclusive, transparent, and aligned with democratic principles.

This session, moderated by Dr. Patience Ndlovu, the Policy, Research, and Advocacy Manager with the Law Society of Zimbabwe, featured a panel of discussants, including Mr. Brian Crozier (Consultant with Veritas), Mr. Mukaratiwa (Office of the Attorney General), Mr. Manhiri (Chief Law Officer), and Mr. Perfect Mashapa from the Parliament of Zimbabwe. It focused on Zimbabwe's law-making process, offering insights into institutional roles, key legislative reforms, and opportunities for civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in advocacy.

The discussion began with a presentation by Mr. Mukaratiwa, Director of Legislative Drafting from the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). He explained that the OAG is established by statute and its leadership is appointed by the President. Unlike other legal entities such as

Parliament and commissions, the AGO's functions are narrowly defined to include acting as the principal legal adviser to the government, representing the government in civil and constitutional proceedings, drafting legislation, promoting and upholding the rule of law, and performing additional duties assigned by Parliament. He emphasized that the AGO's mandate includes advising the government, and CSOs are encouraged to engage with the office to express reservations or propose amendments to acts or bills.

Using the PVO Amendment Bill as an example, Mr. Mukaratiwa highlighted the AGO's advisory role, noting that while they provide recommendations on provisions they consider positive or negative, the executive ultimately decides whether to act on their advice. He encouraged CSOs to take a proactive approach in initiating bills or acts rather than waiting for Parliament to act. He cited the successful enactment of legislation aimed at eradicating early child marriages as an example of the impactful contributions CSOs can make in addressing societal challenges.

Mr. Brian Crozier, a seasoned legal practitioner, emphasized the importance of inclusivity and collaboration among stakeholders when drafting or challenging bills. Drawing on his experience with organizations such as the Law Society of Zimbabwe, the AGO, and Veritas, he stressed the need for CSOs to avoid working in silos. He outlined four key steps for effective legislative advocacy:

1. **Increase Awareness:** Educate the public about the legislative process, their rights, and potential solutions to their challenges.
2. **Engage Inclusively:** Involve stakeholders throughout the drafting process by seeking input and feedback.
3. **Collaborate with Experts:** Work closely with legal experts, policymakers, and community members to create well-informed and comprehensive legislation.
4. **Ensure Transparency:** Make the drafting process open and accessible to the public by sharing updates at every stage.

The session concluded with a presentation by Mr. Perfect Mashapa from the Parliament of Zimbabwe, who provided an overview of the legislative framework established by Zimbabwe's Constitution. He explained that legislative authority resides in Parliament and the President, deriving its mandate from the people through democratic elections. Section 117(2)(b) of the Constitution grants Parliament the power to amend the Constitution and make laws for the peace, order, and good governance of the country.

Parliament is also tasked with promoting democratic governance, ensuring that all state institutions act in alignment with the Constitution and the national interest, and holding the executive to account. Mr. Mashapa identified key areas where CSOs can collaborate with

Parliament, including:

- Exercising oversight and engaging in debates on state organs.
- Contributing to the drafting and review of laws for good governance.
- Monitoring and influencing the ratification of domestic and international conventions and treaties.
- Analysing and scrutinizing national budgets and approved projects.

Session Ten: Promoting and Recognising Best Practice and Innovation Within CSOs.

Recognizing and promoting best practices and innovations is essential for fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement within CSOs. This session highlighted successful strategies and initiatives that have made a significant impact. Celebrating achievements and innovations is important for motivating CSOs and encouraging the adoption of effective practices. The session showcased exemplary work and innovative approaches, providing inspiration and practical insights for other CSOs to emulate.

Supported by EWMI/USAID, this session focused on recognizing and promoting best practices and innovations as crucial for fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement within CSOs. The CEAA encourages interventions that promote income generation innovatively and experimentally.

The Best Practice and Innovation Award, launched in 2023, prioritized applications from organizations that collaborated with other stakeholders. The 2024 session of the award highlighted successful strategies and initiatives by CSOs that have made a significant impact in the development discourse. This session served to motivate other CSOs and encourage the

adoption of effective practices. The selected organisations showcased exemplary work and innovative approaches that can be adopted by other CSOs.

Previous award winners were given an opportunity to present their work and highlight the key factors that contributed to their success. This was followed by presentations from the incoming winners, who showcased their innovative initiatives, discussing the challenges they faced and how they overcame them.

Community Talk Trust, based in the Midlands, presented its initiative involving the establishment of a vibrant WhatsApp group for citizen engagement. This initiative, driven by citizens, was used for updates and raising concerns about service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was later linked with duty bearers to ensure prompt responses. The initiative was further developed into a weekly roundup newsletter, which citizens use to communicate with their regulators regarding service provisions.

Another Best Practice Award winner, YETT, developed an initiative called "GigaTurnip" aimed at encouraging youth participation in the 2023 harmonized elections. The initiative was born out of the concern that youth were disinterested in the voting process. "GigaTurnip" successfully addressed voter apathy, encouraging youth to engage in the electoral process.

The presentation of the second edition of the Best Practice and Innovation Awards and adjudication was conducted by Mr. Chikowore, Deputy Chief of Party at EWMI/CEAA. The two Best Practice Award winners were each awarded $1,000. Organisations were encouraged to continue seeking innovative solutions to the challenges faced by the people of Zimbabwe.

Session Eleven: Unconference Session

The reading and adoption of the draft Troutbeck Resort Action Agenda Document was facilitated by the Executive Director of NANGO, Mr. Nyimai. Participants and delegates agreed that the draft document accurately reflected the discussions held and emphasized the need for all stakeholders to work as a team to ensure the successful implementation of the agreed actions as stated in the Troutbeck Resort Action Agenda 2024. The outcome and resolution document was duly adopted during this session.

In their closing remarks, representatives from various institutions across different sectors expressed their appreciation for the well-organized and informative 14th NGO Directors' Summer Retreat. Ms. Dorcas Makaza, the Chief of Party for EWMI Partnerships for Justice (PfJ), commended the work being done by local CSOs, particularly emerging organisations that are achieving significant results despite having limited resources. She specifically recognized the winner of the Best Practice Award, highlighting how their innovative efforts are making a real impact. By acknowledging these initiatives, CEAA is playing a vital role in advancing the localization discourse in Zimbabwe.

A representative from MoPSLSW, Mrs. Chiputura, speaking on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, expressed strong support for the "Talk to Your Regulator" initiative designed by NANGO. This initiative was praised for its potential to bridge the information gap that exists between CSOs and regulators. She emphasized that this collaboration would significantly enhance communication, fostering greater understanding and cooperation. She further encouraged NGOs to remain focused on their mandates and to continue complementing government efforts while adhering to the country's regulatory frameworks.

Mr. Mabenge, representing development partners, highlighted four critical areas essential to CSO work, particularly at a time when CSOs are facing an existential crisis within their operating spaces. He stressed that CSOs exist to complement government efforts and should always operate within the boundaries of the law. Mr. Mabenge acknowledged the growing trust deficit between NGOs and regulators, noting that this issue has reached a critical level that requires immediate attention and resolution.

Mr. Mapisa from Stanbic Unayo, representing the private sector, expressed sincere gratitude for the positive relationships being cultivated between CSOs, the private sector, and other stakeholders. These collaborations are seen as essential for creating a better future for all Zimbabweans. The private sector's involvement in supporting CSOs was recognized as an important aspect of building a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Finally, Mrs. Siraha, representing NGOs and the NANGO Board, thanked all participants for their invaluable support and participation throughout the 14th NGO Directors' Summer Retreat. She acknowledged the efforts and contributions of all attendees, noting that the success of the event was due to their collective engagement and commitment to strengthening the civil society sector in Zimbabwe.

2nd Edition of the Best Practice and Innovation Awards

The 2nd edition of the Best Practice and Innovation Awards (BPIA), launched in 2023, ran in conjunction with the NANGO Annual NGO Awards, hosted by the East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI). This year, EWMI collaborated with local Zimbabwean CSOs as part of the ongoing Citizen Engagement for Accountability Activity (CEAA), a five-year initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). CEAA aims to strengthen a culture of political and civic engagement in Zimbabwe by fostering more effective citizen participation in governance at multiple levels, with a focus on citizen-driven development. Through this initiative, EWMI seeks to activate citizen agency for accountability, strengthen women's leadership and inclusion, and increase youth empowerment and positive engagement. Working through local organisations, CEAA emphasizes innovative pathways and partnerships to achieve its mission.

To support CEAA's Social Labs Approach, which encourages grantees to test new methods for addressing local challenges, EWMI created the Best Practice and Innovation Awards as a platform for Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and local, national, and locally registered international organisations to showcase their innovations and collaborations. This year, CEAA presented two awards under the BPIA, recognizing and rewarding outstanding efforts in social impact with cash prizes of up to USD 1,000,00 each. The Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) and CommuTalk emerged as the distinguished awardees, both celebrated for their commitment to impactful innovation and community-driven solutions. This edition of the BPIA not only highlighted their achievements but also reinforced CEAA's dedication to promoting a dynamic culture of civic engagement and accountability throughout Zimbabwe.

Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust - BPIA Award Winner

Community Talk Trust - BPIA Award Winner

2024 NANGO Annual NGO Awards

The 12th edition of the NANGO Annual NGO Awards celebrated excellence within Zimbabwe's civil society, recognizing outstanding achievements by individuals and organisations dedicated to social impact. Hosted on 25 October 2024 at Troutbeck Resort in Nyanga, the ceremony gathered leaders, activists, and supporters from across the country to honour remarkable contributions across various sectors. Marisa Marinda, ZTN Morning Rush presenter, hosted the event, which was made possible through the generous sponsorship of Ecobank Zimbabwe, the Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF), and VTU Platinum Lodge.

The ceremony awarded accolades in ten key categories, each highlighting a distinct aspect of civil society's work in Zimbabwe. Amnesty International Zimbabwe received the Human Rights Defender of the Year Award for its unyielding commitment to justice, while 4-H Zimbabwe Foundation was honoured with the Community Development Award for its impactful community engagement initiatives. The Gender Equality Award went to the Musasa Project in recognition of its efforts to support survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and advocate for women's rights. Tariro Foundation of Zimbabwe Trust was awarded the Disability Rights Award, celebrating its dedication to accessibility and inclusivity. The EmpowerYouth Excellence Award recognized Welead Trust for empowering youth and promoting active participation in decision-making. Mwanasikana Wanhasi received the NGO Communicator of the Year Award for its effective outreach and advocacy, while Dzikamai Bere, Team Leader of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, was named NGO Director of the Year for his exceptional leadership in human rights advocacy. The Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, acknowledged as the Donor/Development Partner of the Year Award, was recognized for its sustained support of civil society projects. Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe's commitment to corporate social responsibility earned it the Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Award and the Centre for Innovation & Technology (CITE) received the Outstanding NGO Reporting Award for its contributions to journalistic integrity.

The awards ceremony underscored NANGO's dedication to highlighting the vital role of NGOs in shaping a more just and inclusive Zimbabwe. It provided a platform for celebrating these achievements and inspiring further dedication and collaboration among civil society actors. Each awardee's story exemplified the resilience, passion, and impact of Zimbabwe's NGO sector, marking the event as a significant milestone in the journey toward sustainable and transformative social change.

Dzikamai Bere - Director of the Year Award Winner

Welead Trust - EmpowerYouth Excellence Award Winner

Embassy of Sweden - Donor/Development Partner of the Year Award Winner

Tariro Foundation of Zimbabwe Trust - Disability Rights Award Winner

Mwanasikana Wanhasi - NGO Communicator of the Year Award Winner

4-H Zimbabwe Foundation - Community Development Award Winner

Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe - Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Award Winner

Centre for Innovation and Technology - Outstanding NGO Reporting Award Winner

Thank You to Our
Partners and Sponsors

NANGO extends its heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed partners and sponsors for their invaluable support in making the 14th NGO Directors Summer Retreat a success. Your commitment and generosity have empowered us to deliver a meaningful and impactful experience for all participants, strengthening the civil society sector in Zimbabwe and beyond.

This event would not have been possible without the collective effort of our partners and sponsors, whose resources and dedication allowed us to foster collaboration, share innovative ideas, and address the evolving challenges facing civil society today. Your partnership is instrumental in advancing our shared mission of empowering communities and driving positive change.
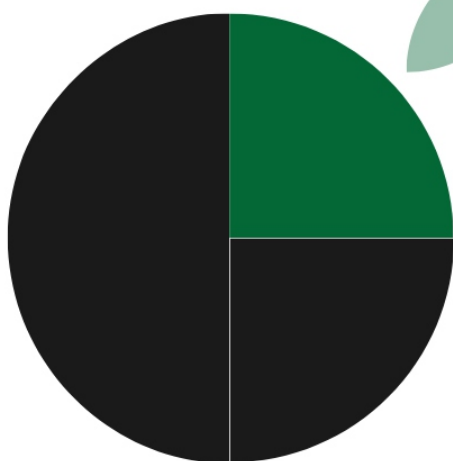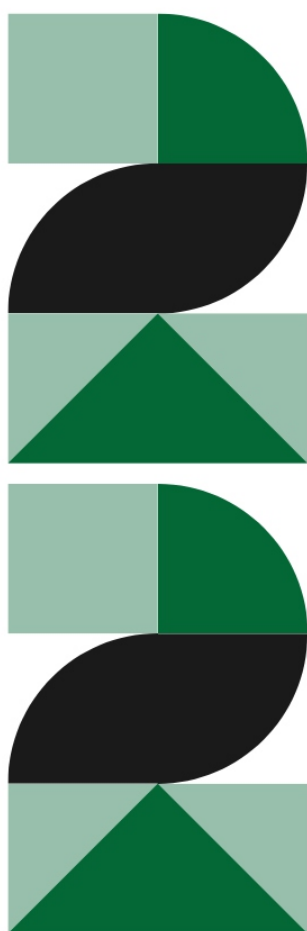
We look forward to continued collaboration as we work together to build a more resilient, inclusive, and vibrant future for our communities. Thank you once again for your unwavering support and for joining us in this journey toward collective impact.

Siyabonga | Tatenda | Merci beaucoup | Thank You

2024