

ZIMBABWE 4th CYCLE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

**CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
STAKEHOLDERS' REPORT**

17 JULY 2026.

**ZIMBABWE
4TH CYCLE UPR**



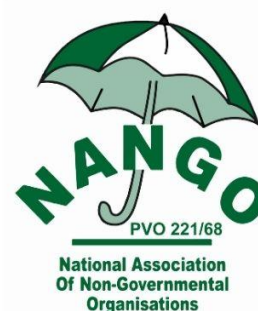
Co-ordinated by:



Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) is a not for profit law-based human rights organisation, established in 1996, whose core objective is to foster a culture of human rights, equality and respect for the rule of law in Zimbabwe. ZLHR's secretariat and member lawyers provide legal defence support to human rights defenders, and conduct strategic impact litigation, training, research and advocacy, in all areas of human rights law.



National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO), is Zimbabwe's official coordinating body for registered Non-Governmental Organisations, founded in 1962 and registered as a Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) under the PVO Act [Chapter 17:05]. Non-partisan, non-profit, and non-denominational, it is mandated to strengthen the voice of NGOs for the betterment of the Zimbabwean people. As of December 2025, NANGO's membership stood at 1,277 registered NGOs, drawn from PVOs, Trusts, and Common Law Universities, with 893 active during the year. Governed by its constitution and overseen by an elected Board, NANGO operates through five regional offices coordinating activities across all ten provinces. Its members are organised into ten thematic clusters—including Health, Human Rights, Youth, Economic, and Humanitarian—unified through collaboration, networking, and shared best practices. NANGO's mission is to strengthen, represent, and coordinate the work of NGOs through dialogue and engagement, guided by a vision of a proactive NGO community committed to sustainable development, human rights, democracy, good governance, and poverty alleviation for all Zimbabweans.



Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum), formed in 1998, is a coalition of 21 specialist human rights NGOs in Zimbabwe, that advocates for greater protection and promotion of human rights, with particular focus on organised violence and torture. Harnessing the collective expertise and resources of its 21 members who are leading human rights organisations in Zimbabwe in their own right, the Forum has demonstrated considerable success in citizen empowerment; provision of legal and psycho-social support to victims of human rights violations; research, information and analysis; advocacy and lobbying (including transitional justice advocacy); and coordination of human rights institutions.



Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), is a national membership based network of 86 women rights organisations and 2000 individual women's rights champions. It is a forum where women meet to engage in collective activism on issues affecting women and girls in Zimbabwe. WCoZ's central role is to provide a focal point for activism on women and girl's rights. WCoZ brings females from diverse backgrounds to collectively advocate for the attainment and enjoyment of their rights. WCoZ's individual and organizational members work in diverse fields and are grouped into eleven thematic clusters and four forums. These include Health, Legal and Constitutional Rights, Education, Gender-Based Violence, Economic Empowerment, Peace Building, Environment, Media and ICT, Politics and Decision Making, Girl Child as well as the Humanitarian Cluster. The forums include the Director's Forum, the Women with Disabilities Forum, Young Women's Forum and the Indigenous Women's Forum.



Contributing Civil Society Organisations

A total of 94 civil society organisations listed below contributed to this Report:

1. Amnesty International Zimbabwe	48. National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
2. Batanai HIV and AIDS Support Group	49. National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped
3. Bongai Shamwari	50. National Clinic and Counselling League for Peace and Freedom
4. Building Bridges Zimbabwe Trust	51. Nzeve Deaf Centre
5. Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Organisation	52. Network for Empowerment of Women and Girls
6. CARITAS Mutare	53. Peace Building and Capacity Development Foundation
7. Centre for Gender and Community Development in Zimbabwe	54. Pelum Zimbabwe
8. Centre for Natural Resources Governance	55. Quadriplegics and Paraplegics Association of Zimbabwe
9. Christian Care Zimbabwe	56. Restless Zimbabwe
10. Citizens in Action Southern Africa	57. Real Agenda for Youth Transformation
11. Community Solution Zimbabwe	58. Self Help Development Foundation
12. Community Technology Development Organisation	59. Shamwari YeMwanasikana
13. Community Working Group on Health	60. Sign Language Interpretation Trust
14. Creative Youth Development	61. SolidarMed
15. Counselling Service Unit	62. Teach for Zimbabwe Trust
16. Deaf Zimbabwe Gweru	63. The Big Conversation Organisation
17. Diocese of Mutare Community Care Programme	64. The Girls Table
18. Disability Amalgamation Community Trust	65. Transparency International Zimbabwe
19. Disability Youth Advocacy Network in Zimbabwe	66. Ukuthula Trust
20. DP Foundation	67. WeLead Trust
21. Ebenezer Women Social Entrepreneurship Trust	68. Wheelchair Tennis Association
22. Elevation Zimbabwe	69. Window of Hope
23. Evangelical Fellowship in Zimbabwe	70. Women Academy of Leadership and Political Excellence
24. Federation of Organisations of Disabled People in Zimbabwe	71. Women Coalition of Zimbabwe
25. Gay and Lesbians of Zimbabwe	72. Women Institute for Leadership Development
26. Girls and Women Empowerment Network	73. Women Prosperity Group
27. Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association	74. World of Mercy Trust
28. Gweru Residents Forum	75. Young Men's Christian Association
29. Hope Alive Child Network	76. Young Women's Christian Association
30. Human Impact Hub	77. Youth Development Initiative Trust
31. Ibhetshu LikaZulu	78. Youth Innovation Trust
32. Institute of Community Development in Zimbabwe	79. Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders
33. Integration of Persons with Albinism Organisation	80. Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations
34. Justice for Children	81. Zimbabwe Community Development Organisation
35. Lend a Hand Foundation	82. Zimbabwe Down Syndrome Association
36. Legal Resources Foundation	83. Zimbabwe Humanitarian Livelihoods Development Trust
37. Loving Hand	84. Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
38. Manicaland Albinos Association	85. Zimbabwe Institute
39. Manicaland Youth Assembly	86. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
40. Maranatha Orphans Care Trust	87. Zimbabwe National League of the Blind
41. Masakhaneni Project Trust	88. Zimbabwe National Resource Dialogue Forum
42. Masvingo United Residents and Ratepayers Alliance	89. Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association
43. Men 4 Equality Trust	90. Zimbabwe Peace Project
44. Midlands Association for the Promotion of the Rights and Welfare of the Blind	91. Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association
45. Multi-Aid Support Organisation	92. Zimbabwe Youth for Impaired Persons Trust
46. Musasa Project	93. Zivai Community Empowerment Trust
47. Mwana Child Is Hope Zimbabwe	94. Zoe Empowers Zimbabwe

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HRD	Human Rights Defender
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICPPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MOPA	Maintenance of Peace and Order Act
NAP	National Action Plan
NMIRF	National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
ZACC	Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission
ZDHS	Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZGC	Zimbabwe Gender Commission
ZHRC	Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
ZICC	Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZLHR	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

PART A: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Overview of the human rights situation

1. The review period saw legislative and institutional developments, including the Children's Amendment Act, the Marriages Act, abolition of the death penalty, accession to the ICRMW, and operationalisation of the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission (ZICC).
2. Zimbabwe held the 2023 Harmonised Elections, however, gaps remained in constitutional alignment, electoral reform, civic space, accountability and human rights protection.
3. Economic challenges, climate change and recurrent droughts continued to affect human rights. Emerging concerns included digital rights, technology-facilitated GBV, environmental degradation, substance abuse and identity documentation.
4. Provincial consultations and documentary evidence identified persistent implementation gaps across key human rights sectors despite legislative reforms.
5. Emerging concerns included digital rights, technology-facilitated GBV, environmental degradation, climate-induced displacement, substance abuse and access to identity documentation.

Methodology

6. This report was prepared through a consultative process coordinated by Zimbabwean CSOs.
7. Consultations with CSOs and other stakeholders assessed implementation of Third Cycle recommendations and identified priority human rights concerns.
8. The assessment draws on legislation, policies, government and constitutional commission reports, treaty body and Special Procedures reports, court judgments, election observer reports, CSO reports and national data.
9. Recommendations noted during the Third Cycle are assessed separately in Annex I.
10. Consultation findings were analysed alongside documentary evidence and validated by participating organisations.
11. This submission reflects the collective position of participating CSOs.

PART B: IMPLEMENTATION OF THIRD CYCLE UPR RECOMMENDATIONS

C1 – Ratification of and accession to international human rights instruments

Assessment: Partially implemented

12. Zimbabwe's accession to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW) was an important step.ⁱ However, despite repeated recommendations by peer States over the past UPR cycles, Zimbabwe has yet to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and ILO Convention No. 169.ⁱⁱ Non-ratification limits protection against torture, enforced disappearance and statelessness, and delays alignment with international human rights standards

13. Recommendations:

- (a) Ratify CAT and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT), the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to permanently safeguard the prohibition of on capital punishment.
- (b) Ratify ICPPED, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples;
- (c) Accelerate the domestication and implementation of ratified international and regional human rights instruments through legislative review and policy reform.

A61 – Cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms; follow-up to the UPR

Assessment: Partially implemented

14. Zimbabwe maintained engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the UPR, treaty body reporting processes and regional mechanisms.

15. Implementation of recommendations arising from previous UPR cycles, treaty bodies and Special Procedures is uneven. Reporting backlogs, limited institutional coordination and resource constraints undermine implementation, monitoring and follow-up.ⁱⁱⁱ

16. Recommendations:

- (a) Establish and adequately resource a permanent National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up on international and regional human rights obligations;
- (b) Strengthen implementation, coordination and reporting on recommendations arising from the UPR, treaty bodies and Special Procedures;
- (c) Ensure adequate resourcing of constitutional commissions to support monitoring, implementation and reporting on human rights obligations.

A41 – Constitutional and legislative framework; aligning laws with the Constitution

Assessment: Partially implemented

17. Zimbabwe enacted and amended key legislation, including the Marriages Act, the Children's Amendment Act, the Education Amendment Act, the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act, the Persons with Disabilities Act (Act No 3 of 2025) and the Death Penalty Abolition Act.^{iv}

18. Key legislation, including aspects of the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act and the Prisons and Correctional Service Act, has yet to be brought fully into conformity with the Constitution.^v Concerns were raised regarding the implementation of constitutional provisions and the implications of recent and constitutional amendments for the separation of powers, judicial independence and constitutional governance.^{vi}

19. Recommendations:

- (a) Complete the alignment of all outstanding legislation with the Constitution and accelerate the domestication of ratified regional and international human rights instruments;
- (b) Strengthen implementation and enforcement of constitutional and legislative protections relating to human rights and democratic governance;
- (c) Ensure that legislative and constitutional reforms are undertaken through transparent, inclusive and participatory processes and remain consistent with Zimbabwe's international human rights obligations.
- (d) Complete the resentencing of all persons formerly under sentence of death, and repeal the provisions of the Defence Act permitting the imposition of the death penalty.

A21 – National human rights institutions and independent commissions supporting democracy

Assessment: Partially implemented

20. Constitutional commissions continued to monitor human rights, investigate complaints and conduct public education.^{vii}

21. Resource constraints, concerns over institutional independence, limited decentralisation and weak implementation of commission recommendations continue to limit the effectiveness and accessibility of constitutional commissions, particularly for rural and marginalised communities.^{viii}

22. The NPRC mandate expired in 2023. The absence of a successor mechanism has left a gap in national healing, reconciliation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.^{ix} Although the Government launched the Chiefs-led Gukurahundi Community Outreach Programme in July 2024, it lacks a legal and policy framework and falls outside recognised transitional justice standards.

23. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Strengthen the independence and effectiveness of constitutional commissions in line with the Paris Principles;
- (b) Provide adequate and sustainable financial and human resources for constitutional commissions, in line with the Paris Principles;
- (c) Strengthen implementation of recommendations by constitutional commissions and improve accessibility through decentralisation;
- (d) Establish a sustainable, victim centred framework or successor mechanism for reconciliation, national healing, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

F31 – Children: protection and child marriage

Assessment: Partially implemented

24. The Marriages Act and Children's Amendment Act strengthened the legal framework for child protection.

25. Zimbabwe demonstrated commitment to addressing child marriage through the National Action Plan (NAP) and Communication Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2019–2021), which provided a national framework for prevention, protection and response.^x The NAP has, however, lapsed, and a successor plan had not been adopted at the time of writing.

26. Child marriage persists. The ZDHS 2023–24 found that 16.2 per cent of women aged 20–24 years were first married before the age of 18.^{xi} Prevalence is higher in rural communities and is closely associated with poverty, harmful social norms, adolescent pregnancy and school dropout.

27. Documentary evidence, corroborated by consultations across the provinces, points to continuing child protection challenges, including child marriage prevalence reported within some Apostolic sects, adolescent pregnancy, child labour, sexual abuse and neglect. Poverty, harmful social and cultural practices, school dropout and limited social protection were consistently identified as drivers of children's vulnerability, particularly in rural areas.^{xii}

28. *The coalition recommends that Zimbabwe:*

- (a) Strengthen enforcement of laws prohibiting child marriage and adopt, resource and implement a successor National Action Plan on Ending Child Marriage;
- (b) Strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms and responses to violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices affecting children;
- (c) Expand education, social protection and economic support for vulnerable children and households, accompanied by community awareness initiatives on child protection and the harmful effects of child marriage.

F31 – Children: access to birth registration

Assessment: Partially implemented

29. Zimbabwe expanded birth registration through decentralised and mobile services. However, many children, particularly in rural and border communities, still face barriers to obtaining birth certificates, increasing their risk of exclusion from essential services and statelessness.^{xiii}

30. *Recommendations:*

- (a) Expand access to birth registration and legal identity through decentralised and mobile civil registration services;
- (b) Remove administrative, documentary and financial barriers that prevent children from obtaining birth certificates and identity documents;
- (c) Strengthen measures to prevent statelessness, particularly among children from vulnerable, undocumented and border communities.

F13 – Violence against women

Assessment: Partially implemented

31. Zimbabwe adopted the National Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence (2023–2030), but violence remains widespread.^{xiv} the ZDHS 2023–24 found that 35 per cent of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, with intimate partner violence among the most prevalent forms of violence against women.^{xv}

32. Limited access to shelters, psychosocial support and legal services, together with harmful social norms and stigma, hinders prevention, reporting and access to justice.^{xvi} Technology-facilitated GBV and online harassment of women, particularly those in politics and public life, require strengthened prevention and protection measures.^{xvii}

33. *Recommendations:*

- (a) Strengthen implementation of laws and policies to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls;
- (b) Expand access to survivor-centred services, including shelters, psychosocial support and legal assistance;
- (c) Strengthen prevention of harmful social norms and intimate partner violence through community-based GBV programmes.
- (d) Adopt and enforce specific measures to prevent, investigate and prosecute technology facilitated gender-based violence.

F12 – Discrimination against women and women's participation in political and public life

Assessment: Partially implemented

34. Zimbabwe adopted measures to promote gender equality, including Constitution Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021, which extended women's quotas in the National Assembly and local authorities and established a youth quota. It also adopted the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2024–2028) to advance women's participation in peacebuilding and decision-making.^{xviii}

35. Women's representation remains below parity. Following the 2023 Harmonised Elections, women held 31.4 per cent of seats in the National Assembly and 43.7 per cent in the Senate, while representation in the National Assembly declined despite temporary special measures.^{xix}

36. Women continue to face barriers to political participation, including political violence, discriminatory social norms, unequal campaign financing and high nomination fees. The Elisabeth Valerio case and the experiences of women candidates in the 2023 Harmonised Elections illustrate these barriers.^{xx}

37. *Recommendations:*

- (a) Review temporary special measures, including the quota system, to advance substantive equality and increase women's representation in directly elected and decision-making positions;
- (b) Remove legal, financial and structural barriers to women's participation in political and public life, including nomination fees and campaign financing;
- (c) Strengthen measures to prevent and respond to violence against women in politics and promote women's equal participation in leadership and decision-making.

F4 – Rights of persons with disabilities

Assessment: Partially implemented

38. Despite the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 and adoption of the National Disability Policy, gaps remain in alignment with the Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the African Disability Protocol.^{xxi}

39. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) encounter barriers to accessibility, inclusive education, health care, employment, transport and public services. Limited access to assistive devices, sign language interpretation and disability-inclusive services, together with limited representation in political and public decision-making, restricts their full and effective participation, particularly for women and children with disabilities.^{xxii}

40. *Recommendations:*

- (a) Ensure full implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 and align the National Disability Policy with the Constitution, the CRPD and the African Disability Protocol ;

- (b) Strengthen implementation of the National Disability Policy by improving accessibility, disability-inclusive public services, access to food and productive resources and access to assistive devices and reasonable accommodation;
- (c) Promote the equal participation and representation of PWDs in Parliament, local authorities, public institutions and other decision-making processes.

E41 – Right to health

Assessment: Partially implemented

41. Zimbabwe recorded improvements in maternal and child health outcomes during the review period, including reductions in maternal mortality, increased institutional deliveries and high coverage of skilled birth attendance.^{xxiii}

42. Challenges persist in the health sector. Health facilities experience shortages of medicines, medical equipment and personnel, while the migration of skilled health workers, corruption, inadequate financing and failure to meet the Abuja Declaration target undermine access to quality healthcare. Access to specialist and cancer treatment services is particularly limited, especially for rural communities.^{xxiv} Intersex persons also continue to face barriers to accessing appropriate and rights-respecting healthcare, including the absence of legal recognition and protections against non-consensual “corrective” surgeries.

43. Recommendations:

- (a) Increase domestic financing for the health sector and progressively meet the Abuja Declaration target;
- (b) Strengthen governance, transparency and accountability in the health sector, including measures to prevent corruption and improve the efficient use of public health resources;
- (c) Enhance the recruitment, retention and welfare of health workers, and improve the availability of medicines, medical supplies, specialised services and essential health equipment;
- (d) Expand equitable access to affordable, quality health services including maternal, cancer and other specialised services particularly for rural and underserved communities.

E51 – Right to education

Assessment: Partially implemented

44. The Education Amendment Act strengthened protection of learners' rights, including the right of pregnant girls to remain in and return to school.^{xxv}

45. Access to quality education remains affected by financial barriers, inconsistent implementation of BEAM, inadequate infrastructure and limited teaching resources. Concerns over teachers' and lecturers' welfare have also disrupted learning, particularly in tertiary institutions.^{xxvi}

46. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Ensure equitable access to quality education by addressing financial barriers and strengthening BEAM and other education support programmes;
- (b) Increase investment in education infrastructure, teaching and learning resources, and the recruitment, retention and welfare of teachers;
- (c) Strengthen inclusive education for learners with disabilities and other vulnerable groups through access to assistive devices and specialised support services;
- (d) Reduce school dropout and improve learner retention through targeted educational and social protection interventions for vulnerable children.

E22/E26 – Rights to water, sanitation, food and development

Assessment: Partially implemented

47. Investment in water infrastructure continued, including rehabilitation of water systems and construction of the Gwaii–Shangani and Kunzvi dams, alongside agricultural support, irrigation and climate resilience initiatives.

48. Access to safe water and sanitation remains inadequate, particularly in urban and rural communities. Ageing infrastructure, droughts, under-investment, water contamination and cholera outbreaks continue to undermine access.^{xxvii}

49. Food insecurity persists due to drought, climate change and economic instability, alongside allegations of partisan distribution of food aid and agricultural inputs. Women and vulnerable groups remain disproportionately affected by inadequate water and sanitation.

50. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Increase investment in safe water supply, sanitation and waste management infrastructure, particularly in underserved urban and rural communities;
- (b) Strengthen measures to prevent water contamination, improve water quality monitoring and prevent outbreaks of water-borne disease;
- (c) Expand climate-resilient agriculture, irrigation and food security programmes targeting vulnerable communities;
- (d) Strengthen social protection measures to improve access to food, safe water and sanitation, particularly for women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

D33 – Arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and conditions of detention

Assessment: Not implemented

51. Positive rehabilitation initiatives, including Marondera Female Open Prison, demonstrate progress towards offender reintegration. However, these initiatives remain limited and have not resulted in meaningful improvements across the prison system.^{xxviii}

52. Concerns persist over arbitrary arrests, prolonged pre-trial detention, torture, ill-treatment and fair trial violations, particularly affecting human rights defenders, journalists and political activists. Overcrowding, poor detention conditions and inadequate healthcare persist despite periodic Presidential amnesties.^{xxix}

53. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Strengthen safeguards against arbitrary arrest, prolonged pre-trial detention, torture, ill-treatment and violations of fair trial rights.
- (b) Address prison overcrowding by reducing prolonged pre-trial detention, expanding non-custodial sentences and improving access to justice.
- (c) Improve detention conditions by ensuring adequate accommodation, sanitation, healthcare and essential services in line with the Nelson Mandela Rules
- (d) Implement the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act and strengthen independent oversight of law enforcement and places of detention.
- (e) Enact legislation criminalising torture as a distinct offence in domestic law, consistent with section 53 of the Constitution.

H1 – Human rights defenders, freedom of association and assembly, and civic space

Assessment: Not implemented

54. Although the Constitution guarantees the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, the operating environment for CSOs, HRDs, journalists and activists give rise to serious concern.^{xxx}

55. The PVO Amendment Act, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and MOPA continue to restrict the freedoms of association, assembly and expression. Human rights defenders, journalists and political actors continue to face harassment, arbitrary arrest, attacks and enforced disappearances.^{xxxi}

56. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Amend legislation affecting civic space, including the PVO Amendment Act, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and MOPA, to ensure compliance with the Constitution and international human rights obligations;
- (b) Protect the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, including during elections and legislative processes;
- (c) Ensure that HRDs, journalists, CSOs and political actors can operate free from intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest and undue restrictions.

D43 – Freedom of expression and access to information

Assessment: Partially implemented

57. Restrictions on freedom of expression, media freedom and online expression persist. The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and the Cyber and Data Protection Act remain inconsistent with the Constitution and international human rights standards.^{xxxii}

58. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Review legislation affecting freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information, including the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and the Cyber and Data Protection Act, to ensure compliance with the Constitution and international human rights obligations;
- (b) Protect journalists, media practitioners and citizens from intimidation, harassment and undue restrictions on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

D7 – Participation in public affairs and electoral rights

Assessment: Not implemented

59. Zimbabwe conducted the 2023 Harmonised Elections. Constitution Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021 introduced temporary special measures to enhance the representation of women and youth.^{xxxiii}

60. Women, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups continue to face barriers to electoral participation. Election observers raised concerns over ballot paper delays, voter education, accessibility, electoral independence and the broader electoral environment.^{xxxiv}

61. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Strengthen the independence, transparency and effectiveness of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), and ensure equitable access to voter education and electoral information;
- (b) Ensure that the composition and operations of the Zimbabwe Electoral Delimitation Commission, as well as the transfer of responsibility for the voters' roll to the Registrar-General, comply with constitutional principles of independence, transparency, impartiality and public confidence in electoral processes.

C5 – Good governance, accountability and corruption

Assessment: Partially implemented

62. Measures to strengthen transparency and accountability and to combat corruption were undertaken through institutions such as the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and public sector governance reforms.^{xxxv}

63. Concerns remain over recurring Auditor-General findings, weak implementation of audit recommendations, delays in corruption investigations and prosecutions, and limited whistleblower protection. The Whistle-Blowers and Witness Protection Bill, gazetted in May 2026, remains unenacted.^{xxxvi}

64. **Recommendations:**

- (a) Strengthen accountability institutions, including the ZHRC, ZACC, the Office of the Auditor-General and parliamentary portfolio committees, as accessible and responsive grievance mechanisms, particularly for vulnerable groups.
- (b) Expedite the enactment and effective implementation of the Whistle-Blowers and Witness Protection Bill;
- (c) Improve transparency, accountability and the timely investigation and prosecution of corruption cases, particularly in public service delivery sectors.

E31 – Human rights and climate change

Assessment: Partially implemented

65. Zimbabwe implemented climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and environmental sustainability programmes aimed at strengthening resilience to climate-related shocks. Dedicated framework climate legislation had, however, not been enacted at the time of writing.^{xxxvii}

66. Climate change continues to affect the rights to food, water, health and development. Droughts, water scarcity, environmental degradation, human–wildlife conflict and displacement disproportionately affect rural communities and other vulnerable groups.^{xxxviii}

67. Recommendations:

- (a) Expedite the enactment of the Climate Change Management Bill and strengthen implementation of climate adaptation and resilience-building measures;
- (b) Increase investment in climate-smart agriculture, water security and disaster risk reduction programmes;
- (c) Strengthen protection and support for communities affected by climate change, including those at risk of displacement and loss of livelihoods.

D51 – Administration of justice and fair trial rights

Assessment: Partially implemented

68. Zimbabwe expanded court infrastructure, electronic case management and specialised courts, including Victim Friendly Courts.

69. Delays, case backlogs, prolonged pre-trial detention and resource constraints undermine fair trial rights. Access to justice remains limited, while fast-track trials raise fair trial concerns.

70. Recommendations:

- (a) Strengthen measures to reduce case backlogs, prolonged pre-trial detention and delays in the administration of justice;
- (b) Increase investment in and strengthen the implementation, accessibility and sustainability of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS), including through adequate resourcing, infrastructure development, capacity building

and measures to ensure its effective use across all courts, particularly in underserved communities.

(c) Ensure equal access to justice and effective fair trial guarantees for all, particularly women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

PART C: EMERGING HUMAN RIGHTS AND PRIORITY ACTIONS

71. Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment) Act (No.3) 2026 - The enactment of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Act, 2026 has emerged as a significant human rights concern. CSOs have raised concerns regarding its implications for constitutionalism, the separation of powers, judicial independence, the tenure of senior public office holders and meaningful public participation in constitutional reform processes.^{xxxix}

Recommendation: Ensure constitutional reforms uphold constitutionalism, judicial independence, separation of powers and meaningful public participation.

72. Environmental Degradation - Unsustainable mining and other extractive activities, particularly by multinational corporations, continue to cause severe environmental degradation, including land degradation, pollution, and the destruction of wetlands. These practices have also resulted in arbitrary evictions and continue to undermine the rights to health, water, food, housing, and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Recommendation: Implement the Mines and Minerals Act and climate change legislation, promote responsible investment, enforce environmental standards, and protect mining-affected communities.

73. Digital Rights and Online Freedoms - Digital rights, online freedoms, cybersecurity and technology-facilitated GBV are of increasing importance as digital technologies become more deeply integrated into everyday life.^{xi} The criminalisation of broadly defined cyber-related offences continues to undermine legitimate online expression and civic participation, while limited access to affordable and reliable internet services has exacerbated the digital divide in Zimbabwe.

Recommendation: Strengthen legal and policy frameworks on digital rights, cybersecurity and online safety while safeguarding the rights to privacy, freedom of expression, access to information, and universal, affordable and reliable access to the internet, and strengthen measures to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

74. Climate Change - Climate change continues to drive food insecurity, water scarcity, environmental degradation, displacement and human-wildlife conflict, particularly affecting rural communities and other vulnerable groups.^{xli} Despite increasing climate-related impacts, Zimbabwe has yet to enact the Climate Change Management Bill, limiting the country's comprehensive legal and institutional framework for climate action and adaptation.

Recommendation: Expedite the enactment of the climate change legislation and strengthen climate adaptation, mitigation, disaster risk reduction and protection for affected communities.

75. **Shrinking Civic Space** - Shrinking civic space including the regulation of CSOs, the exercise of the freedoms of association, assembly and expression, and participation in public affairs requires continued attention.^{xlii} The continued arrests, persecution, and intimidation of civic leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, legal professionals, and political actors, together with the curtailment of fundamental freedoms, have significantly narrowed civic space in Zimbabwe.

Recommendation: Review and amend legislation affecting civic space to ensure compliance with the Constitution and international human rights obligations, and promote an enabling environment for civil society.

76. **Economic Instability** - Persistent economic instability continues to undermine the enjoyment of economic and social rights, contributing to high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people. Rising unemployment has in turn fuelled increased gambling, substance abuse, poverty, and economic vulnerability.

Recommendation: Address youth unemployment, regulate gambling and strengthen substance abuse prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for young people.

77. **Access to Healthcare and Health System Governance** - Growing pressures on the health sector have emerged as a significant human rights concern, driven by the migration of health professionals, corruption within the health sector, inadequate medical supplies and infrastructure, limited access to specialised and cancer treatment services, and increasing demand on public health systems.^{xliii}

Recommendation: Increase investment in the public health system by improving health worker retention, expanding specialised services, infrastructure and essential medicines, and ensuring equitable access to quality, specialised and cancer treatment services for all.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ United Nations Treaty Collection, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Zimbabwe deposited its instrument of accession on 5 November 2024; entry into force for Zimbabwe on 1 March 2025), depositary notification C.N.457.2024.TREATIES-IV.13.

ⁱⁱ Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Zimbabwe, A/HRC/50/9 (2022); United Nations Treaty Collection, status of ratification of the core international human rights treaties; Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Zimbabwe, CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Concluding Observations on Zimbabwe's Combined Periodic Report; Coalition of Zimbabwean CSOs, NGO Report to the Human Rights Committee on Zimbabwe's Second Periodic Review (3 February 2025); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

ⁱⁱⁱ Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Zimbabwe, A/HRC/50/9 (2022); national report of Zimbabwe on the implementation of accepted Third Cycle UPR recommendations; Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) annual reports (2021–2025); CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Zimbabwe, CEDAW/C/ZWE/CO/6 (2020); ACHPR, Concluding Observations on Zimbabwe's Combined Periodic Report.

^{iv} Marriages Act [Chapter 5:17]; Children's Amendment Act, 2023; Education Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 15 of 2020); Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act [Chapter 10:36] (No. 5 of 2022); Death Penalty Abolition Act, 2024

^v Veritas Zimbabwe, Constitutional Alignment Tracker, <https://www.veritaszim.net/node/2053>; CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024).

^{vi} Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021; Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026 (n 1 above); annual reports of the ZHRC, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). Additionally, about 60 people who were on death row still await resentencing and the Defence Act still provides for the death penalty for military officers.

^{vii} Constitution of Zimbabwe, Chapters 12 and 13; annual reports of the ZHRC, ZGC and ZEC (2022–2025)

^{viii} Constitution of Zimbabwe, Chapters 12 and 13; annual reports of the ZHRC, ZGC and ZEC (2022–2025, COMMISSIONS WATCH 02-2026 -Is Re-assignment of Commissioners Constitutional @<https://www.veritaszim.net/node/7970>

^{ix} Constitution of Zimbabwe, Chapters 12 and 13; annual reports of the ZHRC, ZGC and ZEC (2022–2025)

^x Government of Zimbabwe, National Action Plan and Communication Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2019–2021); Women and Law in Southern Africa and Equality Now, joint statement, 27 May 2025 (noting that a successor plan had yet to be adopted).

^{xi} Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and ICF, Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2023–24: Final Report (Harare, 2025).

^{xii} Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Zimbabwe* (2025); Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), *Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ahead of Zimbabwe's review at its 78th session* (2025); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Annual Report 2025* (February 2026), noting that economic hardship, climate shocks and public health emergencies increased children's vulnerability to child labour, early marriage and school dropout while access to child protection services remained inadequate; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2025).

^{xiii} Births and Deaths Registration Act [Chapter 5:02]; Civil Registry Department, Mobile Birth Registration Programme Reports; Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Zimbabwe, CRC/C/ZWE/CO/2; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Annual Report 2025* (February 2026), reporting continued efforts to expand birth registration while noting that children in remote and vulnerable communities continue to experience barriers to obtaining legal identity documentation..

^{xiv} Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16]; National Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence (2023–2030); Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act [Chapter 10:31]; Victim Friendly Unit of the Zimbabwe Republic Police; Victim Friendly Courts; One Stop Centres for survivors of gender-based violence.

^{xv} ZIMSTAT and ICF, ZDHS 2023–24 (n 12 above).

^{xvi} ZGC annual reports; CEDAW/C/ZWE/CO/6 (2020); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xvii} Zimbabwe Gender Commission, National Study on Violence Against Women in Politics in Zimbabwe (2024), <https://zgc.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ZGC-National-study-on-violence-against-women-in-politics-in-Zimbabwe.pdf>.

^{xviii} Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021; Government of Zimbabwe, *National Gender Policy* (2023–2027); Government of Zimbabwe, *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (2024–2028); United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent Women, Peace and Security resolutions.

^{xix} Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, 2023 Harmonised Elections Report; Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Parline data on women in national parliaments.

^{xx} Elisabeth Valerio v Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and Others (Electoral Court of Zimbabwe, judgment of 19 July 2023, overturning the rejection of Ms Valerio's presidential candidature); Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), 2023 Harmonised Elections Report; European Union Election Observation Mission, Zimbabwe Harmonised Elections 2023 – Final

Report; SADC Electoral Observation Mission, Final Report on the 2023 Harmonised Elections; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xxi} Constitution of Zimbabwe, sections 22 and 83; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Disabled Persons Act [Chapter 17:01]; National Disability Policy (2021).

^{xxii} ZHRC annual reports; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026), <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200015623/zlhr-writes-to-zec-over-pwds> as you refer to effective participation.

^{xxiii} ZIMSTAT and ICF, ZDHS 2023–24 (n 12 above).

^{xxiv} ZIMSTAT, ZDHS 2023–24 (n 12 above); National Health Strategy (2021–2025); Ministry of Health and Child Care annual reports; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2025) (documenting shortages of medicines and cancer services, long distances to health facilities, and costs associated with accessing maternal health services, including essential maternity supplies).

^{xxv} Education Amendment Act [Chapter 25:04]; Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, *Concluding Observations on the Combined 16th–20th Periodic Report of Zimbabwe*; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Annual Report 2025* (February 2026), reporting that 15 per cent of children aged 4–16 remained out of school, with rural children, girls and children from poor households facing the greatest barriers to education.

^{xxvi} Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ahead of Zimbabwe's review at its 78th session (2025); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xxvii} Ministry of Health and Child Care and National Action Committee Cholera Situation Reports; Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Annual Reports; Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) litigation concerning access to safe water and sanitation; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Annual Report 2025* (February 2026), reporting that only 72 per cent of the population had access to basic drinking water, 46 per cent to basic sanitation and 29 per cent to basic hygiene services, with governance, financing and infrastructure challenges continuing to undermine access to safe water and sanitation;

^{xxviii} Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013, sections 49, 50 and 53; Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act [Chapter 10:34]; Parliament of Zimbabwe, First Report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Thematic Committee on Human Rights on the State of Prisons in Zimbabwe (S.C. 22, 2025), highlighting rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives at Marondera Female Open Prison and Connemara Open Correctional Institution as positive correctional models.

^{xxix} Parliament of Zimbabwe, First Report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Thematic Committee on Human Rights on the State of Prisons in Zimbabwe (S.C. 22, 2025), reporting severe overcrowding across correctional facilities, including Gwanda Prison operating at approximately 350% of its approved capacity, Chikurubi Maximum Prison accommodating 2,689 inmates against a capacity of 1,114, and Harare Remand Prison holding 1,361 inmates against a capacity of 900. The Report further documents prolonged remand detention, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate sanitation, shortages of medicines, limited access to healthcare and concludes that periodic Presidential amnesties have not addressed the structural causes of overcrowding. See also Human Rights Committee, *Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of Zimbabwe* (CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/3); Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, *Landmark Ruling: Zimbabwe Court Affirms Prisoners' Right to Free Healthcare*.

^{xxx} Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act, 2025; Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Act, 2023; Maintenance of Peace and Order Act [Chapter 11:23]; CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); Zimbabwe Civic Organisations, *Shadow Report on Zimbabwe's Review by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights* (May 2025), documenting the harassment and, in some instances, enforced disappearance of political activists and opposition party supporters; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xxxi} Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Act, 2023; Cyber and Data Protection Act [Chapter 12:07]; Freedom of Information Act [Chapter 10:34]; Human Rights Committee, *Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Zimbabwe*, CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Annual Report 2025* (February 2026), observing that enactment of the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act contributed to shrinking civic space for civil society organisations and affected service delivery, particularly in rural communities; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026). Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2025) (documenting harassment of journalists and restrictions on expression and online freedoms).

^{xxxii} Constitution of Zimbabwe, sections 61 and 62; CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); European Union Election Observation Mission, *Zimbabwe Harmonised Elections 2023 – Final Report*.

^{xxxiii} Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021; Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, *2023 Harmonised Elections Report*.

^{xxxiv} African Union Election Observation Mission, report on the 2023 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe; SADC Electoral Observation Mission, Final Report on the 2023 Harmonised Elections; European Union Election Observation Mission, *Zimbabwe Harmonised Elections 2023 – Final Report*, and European Union Election Follow-up Mission findings; CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xxxv} Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission Act [Chapter 9:22]; Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, *Annual Report 2024*, reporting implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, intensified asset recovery, investigation of high-profile corruption cases and corruption prevention measures through Integrity Committees and Compliance Reviews

^{xxxvi} Whistle-Blowers and Witness Protection Bill, 2026; Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, *Annual Report 2024*, noting continued advocacy for enactment of whistle-blower and witness protection legislation, amendment of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act and implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy; Auditor-General of Zimbabwe, Annual Reports.

^{xxxvii} Climate Change Management Bill [H.B. 5, 2025], gazetted 2025, not yet enacted at the time of writing; Constitution of Zimbabwe, section 73; National Climate Policy (2017); National Climate Change Response Strategy (2014); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xxxviii} UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, report on her visit to Zimbabwe, A/HRC/43/44/Add.2 (2020); Government of Zimbabwe, declaration of a state of disaster over the 2023–2024 drought and food security situation (April 2024); Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee, rural and urban livelihoods assessment reports; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xxxix} Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Act, 2025; Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Legal Analysis of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill (2026); Veritas Zimbabwe, Constitution Watch and legal analyses on Constitutional Amendment No. 3 (2026)

^{xl} Cyber and Data Protection Act [Chapter 12:07]; Coalition of Zimbabwean civil society organisations, NGO Report to the Human Rights Committee on Zimbabwe's Second Periodic Review (3 February 2025), documenting internet shutdowns and technology-facilitated harassment of women in public life; Zimbabwe Gender Commission, National Study on Violence Against Women in Politics in Zimbabwe (2024) (n 18 above); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xli} Climate Change Management Bill [H.B. 5, 2025] (n 39 above); UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, report on her visit to Zimbabwe, A/HRC/43/44/Add.2 (2020) (n 40 above); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xlii} Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act, 2025; Maintenance of Peace and Order Act [Chapter 11:23]; CCPR/C/ZWE/CO/2 (2024); Zimbabwe Civic Organisations, Shadow Report on Zimbabwe's Review by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (May 2025) (n 32 above); Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

^{xliii} Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and ICF, *Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2023–24*; Ministry of Health and Child Care Annual Reports; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Zimbabwe Annual Report 2025* (February 2026), noting that declining external assistance, shortages of health personnel and increasing demand for specialised services continue to place pressure on Zimbabwe's public health system; Zimbabwe National Consolidated UPR Evidence Matrix (2026).

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