
POLICY BRIEF

CORRUPTION

August 2024

A close-up photograph of a wooden gavel with a brass band, resting on a stack of books. The background is blurred, showing a person's hands and a wooden surface.

Transparency and
Accountability: A Framework for
Anti-Corruption Reform

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a pervasive obstacle to economic development, democratic governance, and social justice. For Zimbabwe, there have been several corruption scandals in the public and private sectors. While the cases are reported, this has not always translated to successful trials and prosecution of perpetrators, leaving the public unsatisfied. The judiciary has been seen to lack independence, which delays the prosecution of corruption cases. By its very nature, corruption erodes trust in institutions, undermines the rule of law, and diverts resources away from essential public services. This policy brief proposes a comprehensive framework for anti-corruption reform, emphasising transparency, and accountability as the cornerstones of a robust strategy. It is a culmination of work conducted by participants of the 2023-24 SIVIO Institute Policy Advocacy Lab.

THE COST OF CORRUPTION

Corruption hinders economic growth and discourages foreign investment which aggravates poverty and inequality in a country. The World Bank (2000) called for immediate and practical strategies to reduce corruption levels by noting the harmful effects of corruption on economic growth and social stability.

There is a need for a robust legal framework and strong institutions to prevent, detect, and prosecute corruption, to pave the way for economic growth and social stability in the country. Rethinking the existing measures to curb corruption will promote a better development trajectory for Zimbabwe.

According to the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index, Zimbabwe ranks 149 out of 180 countries, with a weak overall score of 24 out of 100 (Transparency International, 2023). These statistics suggest that Zimbabwe is perceived to have a highly corrupt public sector. A 2019 report by the Auditor General of Zimbabwe found that state-owned enterprises had incurred ZWL\$1.3 billion **(US\$ 77.5 million)** in irregular expenditures. The same report also revealed that the government had lost over **ZWL\$3 billion (US\$ 178 million)** in potential revenue due to corruption and illicit financial flows between 2015 and 2018. However, the Zimbabwe Anticorruption Commission (2022) states much higher figures of approximately **US\$1.7** and **US\$1.9 billion** annually.

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Participants of our 2023 Policy Advocacy Lab which focused on corruption, raised concerns noting that this phenomenon now manifests even at the community level. The majority of councils are characterised by poor service delivery and in some instances embezzlement of funds. Jowah (2023), in the most recent Citizens Perceptions and Expectations Survey by SIVIO Institute indicated that 49% of citizens ranked corruption as the biggest constraint in the performance of the central government.

CURRENT POLICY MEASURES

Several policy measures have been implemented to fight corruption in Zimbabwe.

- **2009** - Establishment of the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC), and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), these institutions were mandated to fight the vice.
- **2013** Amendment of the Constitution of Zimbabwe where Chapter 13 gave a mandate to institutions to combat corruption and crime (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013).
- **2018** - The Office of the President and Cabinet, in 2018 established the Special Anti-Corruption Unit (SACU), in a bid to speed up the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases. This unit however was stripped of prosecution powers in January 2024
- **2018** - Establishment of Anti-Corruption Courts- Specialised anti-corruption courts were created as a division of the High Court in Harare and Bulawayo in 2018 to speed up the hearing of corruption cases. As of December 2020, anti-corruption courts have been established in all ten of the country's provinces, mostly at the magistrate level (Anti- corruption Resource Centre, 2021).

- **2019** – The Introduction of the Money Laundering and Proceeds of the Crime Act. This Act was introduced to suppress the abuse of the financial system and enable the unlawful proceeds of all serious and terrorist acts to be identified (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019).
- **2020** – Launch of National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) for 2020–2024 which encompasses a multi-stakeholder approach in the fight against corruption. The NACS has provided an inclusive and participatory mechanism for Government, Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Law Enforcement Agencies, and the Private sector in anti-corruption issues (Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, 2022).

Furthermore, Zimbabwe is a signatory to a number of conventions/agreements aimed at the eradication of corruption. These include:

- The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC),
- United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC),
- African Union Convention on Prevention and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) and
- The SADC Protocol against Corruption of 2004.

These measures are however not enough. The Anticorruption Trust of Southern Africa (2021) raised concerns that although there are several anti-corruption policies and institutional arrangements in the country, cases of allegations of corruption are on the increase. In 2017 Transparency International reported that while Zimbabwe has made efforts to counter corruption, it faces significant challenges, for instance, political interference and resource constraints in improving transparency and accountability within state enterprises and parastatals.

The ratification of international conventions with the United Nations, AU or SADC protocols does not oblige the country to commit to certain policies until they are approved by parliament at which point they become binding in Zimbabwe even if they do not necessarily appear in the country's laws.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY ADVOCACY LAB PROCESS

Participants from our 2023 Policy Advocacy Lab on corruption developed several recommendations to fight corruption in Zimbabwe. Their key policy recommendations included:

1. Public Education

Fostering and promoting an ethical and integrity culture in Zimbabwe to achieve a mindset change in the country. There is need for awareness campaigns led by anti-corruption institutions, for instance, Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC), to educate the public about the harmful effects of corruption. The campaigns should be held across all 10 provinces three times a year for the next three (3) years. Moreover, it is recommended that the educational curriculum be revised from primary school level upwards to include ethics and integrity as a mandatory subject for all students with clear definitions and examples of what should and should not be tolerated and why.

2. Separation of powers

Appointment of anti-corruption commissioners should be merit-based, and not political party driven. Specific laws and procedures should be followed, for instance, where the Anti-corruption Commission Act states that the appointment of commissioners should be done by the President, those powers can be moved to Parliament instead, since the President is a member of a political party. When appointments are done, the law should ensure that anti-corruption institutions are independent of political party influence.

3. Adequate Resourcing to Anti-Corruption Institutions.

ZACC and NPA need sufficient resources to ensure investigations and prosecution of corruption cases are carried out effectively. Policy Lab participants recommended that the Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion should increase budget allocation for anti-corruption institutions by 30% more than what was allocated in the 2024 budget. In the 2024 budget, ZACC and the NPA were allocated a total of ZWL\$157.9 billion (Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion, 2023). Participants of the Policy Advocacy Lab recommended the additional financing because additional resourcing will allow these entities to work more independently without waiting for financial input or human resources from other government departments. This allocation should be included and announced in the National Budget.

4. Public Service Accountability

Participants of the lab recommend an amendment to the Code of Conduct Policy for Civil Service Employees to allow corruption cases to be displayed publicly so that the Public Service Commission which is responsible for training, and discipline in the civil service is more accountable, and the cases are traceable by the members of the public. *The penalties for corruption cases should be revisited for civil servants to make them more punitive especially where the impact is far-reaching on the economic state of the country.* The Public Service Commission itself should also be held accountable either by Parliament or other Civil Society Organisations where members of the public report corruption cases and nothing is done.

This may be better assessed where members of the public can publicly submit evidence and testimonies of their claims of harassment or raising the profile on corrupt behaviour. Such public naming and shaming practices will reduce the instances of government officials getting away with corrupt activities.

5. Independent Media

There is need to support independent media to investigate and expose corruption. This can be done through enacting laws that protect media houses and journalists from harassment. Laws are needed that support and promote transparency and access to information, legal protection and the safety of whistle-blowers to ensure sources of information are kept confidential. The government should encourage collaboration between media organisations and anti-corruption agencies and support independent media outlets through tax incentives or subsidies. By supporting independent media through these subsidies, the government will demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability, helping to build trust in government institutions. In addition, tax incentives and subsidies can help independent media outlets to maintain their independence, reducing the risk of capture by political or commercial interests.

6. Domestication of International Conventions/Treaties

It is also the responsibility of the Parliament of Zimbabwe to ensure that all treaties and international protocols that the President(s) (both current and past) have signed are enforced by them making them legally binding in the country where they are not.

This will ensure that both parliamentary and international pressure is available and applicable to reduce instances of corruption at all levels in the country.

7. Mind-set shift amongst citizens

Citizens should not just wait for the public officials to clean the country but work in a holistic way to address the public problem, for instance, reporting corrupt practices they come across through whistle-blowing mechanisms and ensuring that they refuse to pay bribes to access public services.

8. Public Education on Corruption

There should be constant curriculum review in the education system and intentionally teaching children against the scourge of corruption and how it is an obstacle to economic and social development. Participants also highlighted that citizens could play their part by advocating for the government to ***“make public information easily accessible for all citizens, be it auditing government contracts, reports, public procurement, and spending, to build trust between the state and citizens in general.”***

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER

Different stakeholders were identified to work with specific actions aimed at addressing the same challenge or problem of corruption. This clearly shows that no single entity can address this problem, but it takes a collective effort to achieve the same goal. Below are the identified stakeholders and the recommended actions they should take.

Stakeholder	Recommended Action
Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work independently without political interference in the appointment of commissioners and to enforce anti-corruption laws.
Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase budget allocations for anti-corruption institutions by 30% for the next fiscal year and document that in official budgetary documents.
Zimbabwe Republic Police and National Prosecuting Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrest and convict everyone caught in in corrupt incidents despite their political and social background.
Parliament of Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review its legislative agenda and ensure that all international and regional polices are made relevant to the countries legal landscape.

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Parliament of Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review its legislative agenda and ensure that all international and regional polices are made relevant to the countries legal landscape.
Ministry of Local Government and Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry should formulate, regulate, and monitor policies that promote sound local governance. These policies should curb corruption and corrupt practices which are mostly undertaken by local authorities

CONCLUSION

Dealing with corruption requires a concerted effort from state officials, parliamentary representatives, and the general citizens. Public engagements between these groups will enable transparency and accountability, focusing on the agreed terms to fight the vice. By implementing the above mentioned measures, the government can create an environment conducive to good governance, foster public trust, and ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to benefit all citizens.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SIVIO Institute recognises the contributions made by the participants of the Policy Advocacy Lab on Corruption: Ronald Bangidza, Thabo Dube, Dr Simbarashe Hove, Dr Melody Mandevere, Ray Masuka, Rudo Mukanganise, Redempter Mukumbuzu, Vusumuzi Ndlovu, Moses Ngozo, Joyleen Nyachuru, Chido Nyaruwata and Sebata Sefelepelo.

We extend gratitude to the Executive Director, Tendai Murisa and the Coordinator of the Centre for Civic Engagement, Eddah Jowah. We also recognise the contributions made by Matron Muchena, Sharon Murisa, and Rebekah Cross throughout the Policy Advocacy Lab Process.

ABOUT SIVIO INSTITUTE

SIVIO Institute (SI) is an independent organisation focused on ensuring that citizens are at the centre of processes of socio-economic and policy change. It aims to contribute towards Africa's inclusive socio-economic transformation. It is borne out of a desire to enhance agency as a stimulus/catalyst for inclusive political and socio-economic transformation.

SIVIO's work entails multi-disciplinary, cutting-edge policy research, nurturing citizens' agency to be part of the change they want, and working with communities to mobilize their assets to resolve some of the immediate problems they face. SIVIO Institute has three centres/programs of work focused on:

- (i) Civic Engagement
- (ii) Philanthropy and Communities
- (ii) Economic Development and Livelihoods.

In the process SI addresses the following problems:

- Inadequate performance of existing political and economic systems
- Increasing poverty and inequality
- Limited coherence of policies across sectors
- Ineffectual participation in public processes by non-state actors
- Increased dependence on external resources and limited leveraging of local resources