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# **Corruption in Zimbabwe: Is There Any Sign of Improvement?**

**An Analysis of the Efforts Being Made in  
Fighting Corruption: A Citizen Driven  
Perspective**

**February 2022**

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## **An Analysis of the Efforts Being Made in Fighting Corruption: A Citizen Driven Perspective.**

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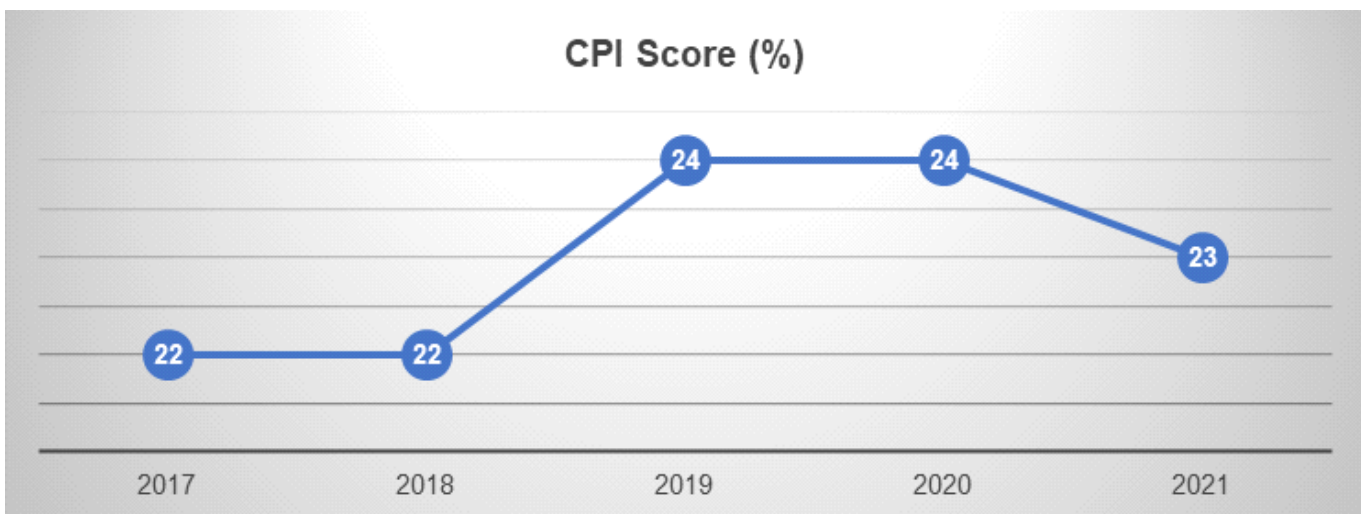
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The recent results for the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) revealed that grand corruption continue to be bedevilling economic recovery efforts for many countries. The link and correlation between corruption, human rights and democracy continue to be echoed internationally. Globally, there is a clarion call to accelerate the fight against corruption if countries are to halt human rights abuses and democratic decline across. It is anticipated that the stagnation in anti-corruption efforts in various countries has a negative bearing in the promotion of human rights and democracy. Worryingly, the global CPI average for 2021 remains unchanged for the tenth year in a row, at just 43 out of a possible 100 points. This is happening on the backdrop of multiple commitments that are being made by governments without significant progress against corruption in the last decade. Assessments by Transparency International showed that protecting human rights is crucial in the fight against corruption evidenced by the realisation that countries with well-protected civil liberties generally score higher on the CPI, while countries who violate civil liberties tend to score lower.

The government of Zimbabwe, in particular the second republic, purportedly continue to praise themselves for achieved a lot in the fight against corruption. The efforts vary from capacitation of institutions established and mandated to fight corruptions to the development of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) which was launched in July 2021. However, the status quo is revealing otherwise as corruption continues to be rampant and its negative externalities are fuelling huge inequalities and undermining access to social services by the general populace of Zimbabwe. The 2021 CPI report ranked Zimbabwe 157 out of 180 countries. Zimbabwe's score has dropped by 1 point from 24 in 2020 to 23 out of 100 percent signifying potential increase in corrupt activities in the public sector of the economy. The CPI is currently the leading global indicator of public sector corruption that is internationally recognised. The trend analysis of Zimbabwe score is worrisome especially from a realisation that the country is investing significant proportion of the public resources in the fight against corruption. There is no tangible proceeds that are being realised from the efforts and investments being made in the fight against corruption. Figure 1 illustrates Zimbabwe's performance on CPI ratings since 2017.

Figure 1: Trend for Zimbabwe CPI Scores (2017 – 2021)



Source: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi>

The expositions illustrated in Figure 1 clearly shows that Zimbabwe is stagnant in terms of advancing mechanisms and efforts to deal with corruption which is rampant in the public sector. . This is an impediment to the achievement of sustainable

economic, political and social development including the COVID19 recovery efforts. Should this trend continue the National Development Strategy I and Vision 2030 targets will remain pipelined dreams.

The intermittent economic meltdown that is being experienced in Zimbabwe is hindering service provision as businesses and captains of industries forego innovation and competitiveness for bribery and self-interests. More frequently, senior government officials are accused for diverting funds that should be used to promote the welfare of the citizenry. Such activities have opportunity cost from a developmental perspective. When corruption starts being practiced by leaders, followers lose confidence in the rule of law and that will affect all the Government efforts of trying to put Zimbabwe on the global map especially for official development assistance.

Zimbabwe is yet to enact a Whistle-blower Act despite aggressive lobby and advocacy that is being spearheaded by civil societies and human rights defenders across the country. Whistle blowing works directly with the watchdog role of community members on observing and exposing corruption. This remains a glaring area which continue to pose more questions and answers on whether the government is committed to fight corruption or not. The absence of the whistle-blower is incentivising politically well-connected officials who capitalise on every resource at their disposal to victimize and threaten whistle blowers.

It is also questionable that Zimbabwe is not making use of investigative media which is critical in raising public awareness, promoting integrity, detecting and reporting on corruption activities. Successful action against corruption is dependent on knowledge and information which can be delivered by media and thus missing in Zimbabwe. Media raises public awareness and knowledge about corruption, its impact, externalities and realistic remedies and thus can mainstream a culture of integrity nationwide. Also, media can investigate, detect and report incidences of corruption, bringing corruption cases into the public sphere and fostering judicial involvement. However, the effectiveness of the media depends on access to information and freedom of expression which is also missing in Zimbabwe, as well as a professional and ethical cadre of investigative journalists. This has been identified as a gap by the Human Rights Council during the recent Universal Period Review for Zimbabwe, 26 January 2022. The absence of the Whistle-blower Act contribute to this flaw since there is no guarantee to protect journalists who expose corruption or investigate the interests of powerful private and public sector leaders.

The recent attempts to shrink civic space through the Aid Coordination policy and the ongoing Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Act limits the ability of CSOs to fight corruption through investigations, whistleblowing and civic engagement on Auditor General's reports. Civil society exist to demand transparency and accountability in the use of public resources through monitoring and where appropriate amplify citizens' voice and demands. However, administratively it is difficult for Civil Society Organizations to access and use information and mobilize for greater accountability. There is therefore need for creation of an enabling environment conducive for CSOs to perform checks and balances on the conduct of state actors and officials from a welfare maximisation perspective.

Corruption reports in Zimbabwe are revealing corruption as well-seated and institutionalized to the extent that its practice has been accepted by others as their purpose means of survival due to a total collapse of systems that offer checks and balances. This is all happening because corruption has obliterated the public integrity system. Having integrity reflects on deepest values, which seeks about being honest with everyone, and you always keep your word. Citizens have, therefore, lost

integrity. Even those who are paid to curb corruption have lost faith in it. This is further exacerbated on an account of lack of public engagement in the fight against corruption due to security threats and fear of victimisation.

It is globally believed that citizen-led initiatives have more impact on the public sector's willingness to support accountability initiatives. These can be done through a combination of top-down and bottom-up accountability approaches which can be implemented starting at grassroots level. This has contributed to marginalisation of women, persons with disabilities, youth and other disadvantaged groups who are often left behind in the development discourse. The impact of corruption cannot be underestimated in Zimbabwe. World Bank (2021) estimate that about 50 percent of people in Zimbabwe are living in poverty. It can be apparent that underdevelopment in the country is in a huge way being fuelled by extensive corruption which scare off investors and discourage development. Misappropriated funds account for significant development losses in Zimbabwe. Why the constitutional, legal, institutional and administrative reforms on the 'fight against corruption' remains incapable is a cause for concern.

What is more worrying is that corruption practices is now overlapping beyond the public sector and across society. Researches conducted by Transparency International Zimbabwe has revealed systemic corruption in the communities where unethical activities are normalised or regularised with public accountability an exception and not the rule. The reports suggested that the systemic corruption is manifesting itself through greed, patronage, nepotism, bribery, embezzlement, fraud, sextortion and extortion among others. Some of the root causes are poverty, income disparities, inadequate civil servants' remuneration, lack of accountability and transparency. According to TIZ reports, materialism and meanness are pushing grand corruption exponentially in Zimbabwe.

This justifies why Zimbabwe continue to be in looming debt and confidence deficit from the international business community and has been barred from loans and grants from international monetary institutions for infrastructural, educational and other developments of which Zimbabwe is in dire need. The pace of development is, thus, slowed down or brought to a complete stop. The solution could be to make sure that all known corrupt people are brought to book thorough investigation. This is not currently obtaining in Zimbabwe with defenders accusing the government of impunity and state capture of institutions mandated to prosecute corrupt people. In this regard, the law is a very inadequate instrument for fighting corruption in Zimbabwe.

The recurrent scandals and instances of official mischief in government pose a great threat to the democratic notions of the rule of law and constitutionalism. Corruption undermines economic rights especially when it occurs within the procurement system of the country. When contracts are awarded illegally by means of bribes, the losing competitors can be said to have had their rights to a fair and impartial bidding process abridged. The public's right to have purchases made in the most efficient and least costly fashion is also subverted.

The public needs to be educated on the advantages of good governance and participate in promoting it. The public itself bears a large share of responsibility for insisting on honesty and integrity in government business. The public needs to learn: (a) not to let anybody buy their votes; (b) not to pay bribes themselves; (c) to report incidents of corruption to the authorities; (d) to teach their children the right values, for example, that integrity is good and corruption is bad. Educating and involving the public in building integrity is the key to preventing corruption through public education, community convergence for the fight against

corruption and investigative journalism.

### What is the possible way forward?

- Fighting corruption must encompass continuous reform of state administration and institutions;
- All fighters of corruption should undertake a comprehensive diagnosis of the scope, causes and consequences of corruption;
- There is need to institute reforms of the political, legal, social and economic systems in order to strengthen good governance;
- There is need to create a CSO enabling environment through progressive engagement with civil society in the fight against corruption and involving them in the progress of anti-corruption measures.
- It is imperative to the public sector management and finance in the fight against corruption, as opportunities and incentives for corruption are very much deeply rooted in public sector management.
- There is need to enhance public participation, transparency and accountability in financial management processes for improved service delivery and equity in the distribution and utilisation of public resources.

### ABOUT US

**Citizen inAction Southern Africa (CIASA)** is a registered apolitical and citizen's rights focused organisation established by a group of young human rights defenders and activists coming together to defend, promote and empower marginalised and disenfranchised community groups in its diversity to fully enjoy their rights. The organisation was registered in 2020 as a Trust. The **CIASA** formation was meant to tackle important issues at a scale where it can achieve significant and measurable impacts. The **CIASA** was formed after the realisation that marginalised community groups are being left behind in the empowerment, democracy and governance, and national development discourses of several Southern African countries owing to lack of specific targeted interventions and investments for vulnerable groups particularly youth and women. The team who established **CIASA** also recognised the solidarity and movement building crisis ailing countries in addressing national crisis especially lack of proper democratic and economic governance interventions targeting diverse youth and women and girls in marginal setups such as hard-to-reach rural areas, resettlements and other economically excluded areas. **CIASA** was established immediately to provide oversight and think tanking around the welfare and rights of marginalised groups with a sole purpose of ensuring progressive realisation and enjoyment of rights by all. The organisation work with citizens in low living standards where social harmony for marginalised women is threatened. Access to basic social services such as water and sanitation, health and education have turned out from being a right into a privilege in both rural and urban areas. **CIASA** is therefore influencing the policies as it relates to the rights of women and girls in their diversity and advance the rights-based and pro-people approach to political, social and economic empowerment through well-thought citizens or community-driven and led reforms premised under the principles of transparency, accountability, democracy and good governance. The organisation is there to create and facilitate space for citizens and communities to have a collective voice to challenge oppressive systems and structural barriers and in turn effectively participate in key decision making processes across the cultural, political, social, environmental, technological and economic spectrum. **CIASA** communicates and measure its results based on its theory of change framework which seeks to defend, promote and empower citizens in all spheres of life.





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