


# NewThinking Review 2nd Edition

SPOTLIGHT PUBLICATION - APRIL 2021

**SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:  
NO-ONE IS LEFT BEHIND IN COVID RESPONSE AND  
RECOVERY**

**CONTEXT AND WAY FORWARD FOR ZIMBABWE**

 **NewThinking Development**

## Acknowledgment

This spotlight publication results from research, a comprehensive review, and interrogation on the concept of social accountability in the Zimbabwe context. It has benefited from engaging a wide range of stakeholders from individuals, civil society organizations, development partners, and global partners. The process included questionnaires and interviews with experts, civil society partners, and private sector partners interested in or working in the social accountability space. While the individual contributions are too numerous to mention, NewThinking is grateful to all those who volunteered their time to participate in the questionnaires and interviews and the different partners who contributed to the discussions held throughout the research process. Finally, special thanks to the following organizations for their contribution to the findings and recommendations.

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## Feedback

We appreciate feedback on this publication, please write to [team@ntdevelopment.org](mailto:team@ntdevelopment.org).

## **About NewThinking Development**

NewThinking Development is a start-up initiative that encourages collective action between government, private sector, technologists, and civil society to promote citizen-focused innovation and policymaking in Zimbabwe. We believe that citizen-focused innovation and policymaking are critical to improving participatory democracy and delivering social services by harnessing collective wisdom and encouraging social accountability.

Our approach is premised on the philosophy that lasting solutions to challenges must be designed, developed, and implemented domestically. This ensures ownership, sustainability and offers the greatest chance to transform human lives.

NewThinking Development was founded on the belief that citizen-centric innovation and policy-making are critical to improving participatory democracy and delivering social services at the national and local levels. Citizen-centric innovation and policy-making harness collective wisdom, build trust in government, encourage public action, and are essential for a strong democracy. When government, civil society, private sector, and trade unions come together, it builds stronger and safer communities that can contribute to citizen-being.

## **The Purpose of this Publication**

The 2nd Edition of the NewThinking Review seeks to generate an understanding of constraints and challenges in advancing and implementing social accountability reforms. As Zimbabwe continues to respond and begins the recovery process from the global pandemic, equal distribution of vaccines and public service quality will be vital to ensure that no-one is left behind and recover the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation trajectory that has been affected. The challenges that have been further exposed by the pandemic on the governance of public services reinforce the need to build transparent, effective, inclusive, and accountable processes to reduce poverty and inequality, advance fundamental freedoms, justice and promote sustainable development. The publication will include the following sections:

1. Social accountability a transformation tool
2. Contextual environment for social accountability in Zimbabwe
3. Creating an enabling environment for social accountability
4. Funders: Supporting social accountability in a challenging environment
5. Private sector leadership for social accountability success
6. Government as an enabler for social accountability
7. Civil Society 2.0: Taking social accountability to the next level

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to severely strain Zimbabwe's social and economic spheres and push millions into poverty. The lasting effects of the pandemic are posing dire challenges to the country's growth trajectory and transformation agenda outlined in the National Development Strategy. Like many countries, the government declared the COVID-19 crisis a "national disaster" through Statutory Instrument 76/2020 Civil Protection (Declaration of State of Disaster Rural and Urban Areas of Zimbabwe) (COVID-19) Notice, 2020. This allowed the government to allocate emergency resources towards fighting COVID-19, purchase vaccines, and deploy the necessary personnel. As shown by recent evidence from global experience, transparency and social accountability can be powerful antidotes to the COVID-19 crisis.



The response and recovery to the global pandemic are taking place in the context of a struggling economy and high levels of inflation, poor public service delivery, polarized political environment, slow development, and mounting corruption scandals across different sectors. For

Zimbabwe to sustainably respond and recover from the pandemic, large-scale social and economic interventions that place citizens at the center will have to be taken. These measures will need to be implemented in an open and accountable manner. Only then will they have the potential to protect lives and protect livelihoods for millions of citizens so that no-one is left behind.

The unique mission of social accountability approaches is simple yet strategic for citizens, civil society, and the private sector together with the government to ensure that resources are efficiently and effectively used. The social accountability approaches enable citizens and the government to join forces, commit to government accountability reforms, and ensure that government institutions work for citizens. The evidence on the value of social accountability is growing on improving the use of resources by public officials, public procurement, quality of public investments, and service. Social accountability builds trust between government, citizens, and the private sector, thus, building a new social contract that could help strengthen Zimbabwe's response and recovery to COVID-19. Deepening social accountability approaches will also build trust with the international community, who can help to finance Zimbabwe's response and recovery plans and ensure emergency funds for vaccines are well spent.

Therefore, big questions remain: Does the current environment foster social accountability? What do civil society, funders, and the private sector need to respond to the environment? What opportunities exist for cross-sector collaborations to deepen social accountability to strengthen COVID-19 response and recovery?

## Social Accountability a transformation tool

**Social Accountability** should be understood as actions and mechanisms beyond elections that citizens can use to hold the government to account and make it responsive to their needs. This includes actions on the part of the state and non-state actors such as civil society, media, the private sector, and other institutions that promote or facilitate these efforts. Social accountability increases transparency and quality of government policy development and implementation processes. It thus becomes an important tool to solving governance issues that hinder the improvement of the quality of life for citizens. Elements for social accountability include:

1. **Citizen action** (*voice and participation*): The actions taken by citizens to provide feedback, raise concerns, and pro-actively interact with government and service providers.
2. **Government-action** (*listening*): Government actors, parliament, and service providers' actions in soliciting and responding to citizen's voices.
3. **Information availability** (*transparency*): Information should be easily accessible to citizens, service providers, and appropriate content in easily readable format and channels.
4. **Citizen feedback** (*responsiveness*): Process of interaction between government and citizen actors. It can be collective, or individual, face-to-face or virtual.
5. **Citizen mobilization**: Covers various forms of citizen-to-citizen support that can propel concerned citizens to action, including, for example, training and facilitation by civil society organizations.

## Value of Social Accountability

Social accountability can better people's lives by improving the quality of and access to public services, including health, education, and water and sanitation. It enhances transparency and accessibility of information that matters to citizens. It helps improve direct engagement between the government, the private sector with citizens in creating appropriate mechanisms that improve public service delivery.

Mechanisms for social accountability can be initiated by the government, parliament, and citizens. They can either be formal or informal in five key functions of the government:

1. Policies and planning,
2. Budgets and expenditures,
3. Delivery of services and goods,
4. Public integrity,
5. Public oversight.



## **The Evidence of Success From Mud Structures to High- Quality School Buildings, Ntungamo District, Uganda<sup>1</sup>**

Community members in the Ntungamo district undertook to monitor the Global Partnership for Education-funded government school projects to mobilize their own resources to plug infrastructure gaps. Using pre-tested contract monitoring tools, the communities analyzed procurement contracts from five districts to construct 16 primary schools. The analysis of the contracts revealed a range of issues, such as a mismatch of information across various documents, which created opportunities for fraud, collusion, and mismanagement of resources by contractors and government officials. The monitoring gave evidence of poor quality, misuse of building material by contractors, and failure to complete the projects on time. After presenting findings to the Ministry of Education and Sports, the communities requested to work with the contractors to complete the building projects. This led to the renovation of old mud structures into brick structures for classrooms and accommodation for staff. In one of the schools in the district, enrolment increased from 50 pupils before the renovations to 543 pupils the following year.

## **Social Audits deliver sanitation, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Community, South Africa<sup>2</sup>**

A group of 11 informal settlement community members in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality decided to undertake social audits on chemical toilets. The residents analyzed all available and relevant government documents, budgets, and contracts related to the project. The

analysis by community members found misappropriation of funds, collusion, and delay in implementing contracts by contractors. Rather than simply deal with 'the municipality, the community identified the specific officials responsible for these government contracts and engaged them. The result was that the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Council completely rewrote the \$110 million contract providing sanitation to 600 000 informal settlement residents. The residents were emboldened to engage the government on a range of other issues.

## **A Change of 360 Degree, Sekondi- Takoradi, Ghana<sup>3</sup>**

Following the discovery of oil and other natural resources, the Sekondi- Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly experienced rapid urban growth. This increase in population led to high levels of corruption in acquiring land, development permits, and increased illegal construction work. To address these issues, civil society organizations partnered with the government to create a digital platform that informs citizens of infrastructure projects happening in the area known as STMA360. The platform completely digitized the application process for development permits, allowing citizens to monitor these applications online, and reduces the chances of bribery and other forms of corruption when applying for permits. STMA360 has empowered citizens by giving them access to information on land use (commercial, residential, mining, and agricultural) and development projects, including new buildings, schools, and houses. The platform has allowed citizens to report irregularities in land use back to the metropolitan government and demand accountability on land use.

## **Community Scorecard improving Health Services, Shamva, Zimbabwe<sup>4</sup>**

HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) were high in Shamva District because of the high mobile population or immigrants due to illegal mining activities. The district health system was not prepared for the high influx of the immigrant population. The district already faced numerous public service challenges, poor infrastructure, inadequate water supplies, poor telephone network, and bad roads, which further affected health services. Using community scorecards as a social accountability tool, through the Strengthening Community Participation in Health Programme (SCPH), the Shamva

community demanded better health services. Community facilitators and monitors conducted scorecards to patients at health care centers. The community scorecards enabled citizens to amplify their voices and to build confidence that led them to share challenges at their health center without fear. This increased the health rights knowledge of citizens and improved relations between health care staff and communities. The scorecards established a dialogue between citizens and the health care staff, which helped iron out key challenges which contributed to improvements in the quality of health service provision.



<sup>1</sup><https://www.thegpsa.org/stories/how-social-accountability-helped-gpe-financing-do-more-uganda>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.internationalbudget.org/2019/08/transparency-and-corruption-are-not-always-what-they-appear-to-be/>

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.ogpstories.org/impact\\_story/sekondi-takoradi-a-change-of-360-degrees-enhancing-infrastructure-transparency/](https://www.ogpstories.org/impact_story/sekondi-takoradi-a-change-of-360-degrees-enhancing-infrastructure-transparency/)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340678321\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Community\\_Score\\_Card\\_Strategy\\_in\\_Improving\\_Quality\\_Health\\_Services\\_The\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Shamva\\_District](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340678321_The_Impact_of_Community_Score_Card_Strategy_in_Improving_Quality_Health_Services_The_Case_Study_of_Shamva_District)

## Contextual Environment for Social Accountability

The Constitution of Zimbabwe establishes institutions and mechanisms that seek to advance social accountability of government institutions. The constitution begins by acknowledging the need to entrench transparent and accountable governance. Some of the provisions provided by the constitution include:

- **Good Governance (s9):** Policies and legislation adopted and implemented should enhance accountability, transparency, personal integrity in all state institutions and agencies at every level. This includes measures to expose, combat, and eradicate corruption and abuse of power by political and public officials;
- **Citizen Participation (s14):** Democratic participation in government by all citizens, communities and the participation of local communities in the determination of development priorities within their areas;
- **Freedom to demonstrate and petition (s59):** All citizens have the right to demonstrate and to present petitions;
- **Access to information (s62):** All citizens have the right of access to any information held by the state or by any institution or agency of government at every level required for public accountability;
- **Public administration and leadership (s196):** Public officials must abide by the principles of accountability to the public for decisions and actions; and be committed to the service of the people;

Beyond the constitution, Zimbabwe has policies that advance and encourage social accountability, including:

- **National Development Strategy (NDS)** places transparency and social accountability as a critical pillar for the

achievement of the blueprint plan, to improving governance and delivery of public services, addressing corruption, and improving development assistance of the state;

- **The Devolution**, objectives are promoting peoples' participation in decision making, the rights of communities to manage their own affairs, and promoting a democratic, effective and accountable government;
- **The New Dispensation's Core Values** rests on building a governance system that is based on, among other things, transparency and accountability as the bedrock for a new democratic developmental Zimbabwe, especially for the mining sector and public resources;
- **The Public Finance Management Policy's** main objective is to secure improved allocation and use of resources in a transparent and accountable manner to citizens and to strengthen democracy. The Public Finance Management Act seeks to exert transparency, accountability, and sound management of any entity's revenues, expenditure, assets, and liabilities.

Implementation of the public finance management policy has seen Zimbabwe improve scores on transparency and participation in budget processes. The Open Budget Survey improved Zimbabwe's budget transparency score from 23 out of 100 in 2017 to 49 out of 100 in 2019. Citizen participation in budget processes also improved from 9 out of 100 in 2017 to 33 out of 100 in 2019, above the 14 out of 100 global average. Participatory budgeting enables citizens to express their opinions on how government resources should be allocated. For social accountability, participation should be accompanied by citizens being able to sanction public officials if they are not responsive to citizen demands.



## Binding Constraints for Social Accountability

While Zimbabwe has a constitution, policies, and legislative instruments that create a framework to advance social accountability, there is still a lack of alignment with practice. An analysis from regional and global data shows that the socio-political environment in Zimbabwe creates constraints for social accountability initiatives.

Indicator	Score out 100	Source
<b>Transparency and Accountability</b>		
Accountability and Transparency	32.4	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
Disclosure of Financial & Judicial Information	37.4	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
Access to State Information	32.3	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
Civic Check and Balances	35.6	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
<b>Civic Space and Participation</b>		
Civil Society Space	19	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
Participation	22	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
Freedom of Association and Assembly	12.5	2020 Mo Ibrahim Index
Civil Society Entry and Exit into Citizen Life	25	2020 OGP Eligibility Index
Civil Society Participation with no Repression	25	2020 OGP Eligibility Index
Civic Freedoms	Repressive	2020 Civicus Monitor

**Inadequate access to information provisions:** Citizen's access to information is important for social accountability because it allows them to know where and how decisions are being made. Zimbabwe has the **Freedom of Information Act (FOI)** enacted in 2020 to replace the much-criticized Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act [AIPPA]. The act is more progressive than its predecessor because it gives effect to the constitutional rights on freedom of expression, media freedom, and access to information held by government entities, in the interest of public accountability or for the exercise of a right. However, the same act makes it very difficult for citizens to request information because of the limitations and exemptions for the disclosure of public and private information. These limitations and exemptions create loopholes to circumvent citizens' access to information, proactive transparency, and social accountability.

The act limits the information that private companies can publicly, proactively disclose and sets limitations on the type and how much information private companies can disclose upon request. It further sets various conditions that must be met, such as: showing that the information requested by the public is necessary for public accountability; complying with various procedures, such as the submission of a form; and seeking recourse only through the courts.

**Civic space remains a challenge:** Civic space determines the extent and capacity of citizens to hold the government and service providers to account and make them responsive to their needs. Zimbabwe continues to experience a decline in civic space and the attack on activism. Trends include a crackdown on peaceful protests, constraints on online expressions, societal and corruption problems treated as political or national security threats, and deployment of new technologies to invade privacy and constrain civic action. According to Civicus, by August 2020, over 60 activists, journalists, and citizens had been arrested, with a wanted list of 14 others for calling out the government. The unchecked arrest and intimidation of activists and civil society combined creates a hostile environment for social accountability. A striking number of new citizen protest movements have emerged over the past year, reflecting the inexhaustible and universal desire for accountability. Some of the challenges civil society faces in Zimbabwe stem from the outdated **Private Voluntary Organisations Act of 1967 (PVO)**, which provides for their registration and regulates donations. The act does not align with the 2013 Constitution on several elements, such as the right to freedom of association and other civil and political rights.

**Dysfunctional local government system:** A functional local government system is an important enabler for social accountability because of the direct interface between citizens and government in delivering public services. For two decades, the local government system has deteriorated and now fails to provide basic services such as safe water, sanitation, refuse removal, and health care. The challenges facing the local government system are both political and economic. These varied challenges include lack of funding, centralization of power in the national government, violent local government elections. At the center of these challenges is the local government legislation such as the **Urban Councils Act** used to settle political scores as evidenced by unilateral appointments of Commissions and firings of legal institutions.

**The decline in trust between citizens and the government:** Citizens need to trust that the government will be responsive and serve their needs. The declining trust in Zimbabwe is deep-rooted. For the past three decades, trust has been declining caused by political, social, and economic challenges the country has been facing. Advances in human rights and the fabric of democratic institutions have also been under duress. The politics of the last two decades has led to a divided society because of political polarization; both the government and citizens have become intolerant of opposing views. When citizens become distrustful of government, political participation declines, and the government finds it difficult to command legitimacy, respect, and mobilize the resources to govern effectively. Citizens' disillusionment is also closely linked to high corruption at all levels of the government.

The 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index scores Zimbabwe 24 out of 100, ranking 157 out of 180 countries. This means citizens perceive high levels of corruption of government institutions, with the 2019 Corruption Barometer noting that one in four people paid a bribe to access essential public services, like health care.

**Centralized political and economic system:** Centralization creates opaqueness and secrecy in how decisions are made and resources are distributed. When the governance system is decentralized, it encourages openness, inclusion, citizen participation, and accountability. Since independence Zimbabwe's political and economic system has been controlled by the central government. The devolution and decentralization policy was launched in 2020 and details a framework for citizen participation, devolved service delivery, financial and administrative capacity. Since the policy is new, implementation is yet to be seen; meanwhile, policy, planning, and resources remain centralized. Local governments continue to implement policies and projects decided by the central government. The resources allocated to the local governments are earmarked to support national policies and strategies. The political and economic authority remains centralized.



## Creating an Enabling Environment for Social Accountability

The starting points to creating an enabling environment for social accountability in Zimbabwe is understanding that the citizen is the key actor. It is the extent and capacity of citizens to hold the government and service providers accountable and make them responsive to the needs of citizens and beneficiaries. The full support of citizens on the government's strategy and plan to recover from the pandemic will be determined by the enabling environment for participation and meeting their needs. An enabling environment for social accountability is vital for building a collaborative approach between citizens and government.

**A robust legal framework that encourages social accountability:** A robust legal framework that promotes social accountability articulated by the constitution is vital. The various policy initiatives should provide the necessary foundation in which these reforms are firmly rooted. It offers legal certainty for citizens, the government, and the private sector to work together and initiate accountability. Such a robust legal framework equips citizens with the mechanisms and the protection needed to voice their opinions and bring in suggestions free from fear of oppression. **The Freedom of Information Act** forms the backbone of social accountability initiatives- citizens cannot hold the state to account if they do not have accurate information. The right to access public sector information is a crucial element of social accountability.

**Build a new social contract between citizens and the government:** A new social

compact rooted in openness to citizens, tolerant to opposing views, encourages civic participation, and for all levels of the government to be held accountable. Such a social contract can help to bolster trust between citizens, the government, and the private sector that can underpin the structural reforms to the economy and society that can strengthen Zimbabwe's response to COVID-19 and resilience for the long term. Proposed legal instruments such as Constitutional Amendment 2 and the Patriotic Bill widen the trust gap between citizens and the government. Parliament can play a critical role in helping build a new social contract built on openness and social accountability because of its oversight role. When Parliament creates genuine space for citizens to hold the government to account, it begins the process of establishing a new social contract.



**Devolution- bringing public policy close to citizens:**

Local governments are where citizens and policies meet. The most iconic examples of social accountability initiatives have been created not by national governments but by local governments. This is because they are responsible for the tangible and basic public services, ranging from water and sanitation to health, and from waste disposal to policing, forming the most immediate relationships between government and citizens.

**The Devolution and Decentralization Policy,**

if implemented right, has the potential to bring public policy to citizens, create space for participation and social accountability. The devolution process will require to be driven by a bottom-up approach through which municipal councils collaborate with citizens, civil society, the private sector, and other relevant non-governmental stakeholders. Such an approach will identify local needs, create space for citizen participation and encourage accountability on decisions and resources.

**Civic participation- do it right:**

Citizen participation in the legislative and policy cycles is one of the key pillars of social accountability and has to be an integral element of **budget cycles, devolution, and public service delivery**. Effective participation creates renewed attention to the mechanisms through which the government goes beyond the role of a simple provider of services towards a greater partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including academia, civil society, media, private sector, and other government institutions. The last two decades have seen the relationship between citizens and the government change to the former being a passive receptor of the latter's information. Recent events surrounding corruption scandals, public service strikes, and political activism stress the need for an active two-way dialogue between citizens and the government.

**Illustration on creating an enabling environment for social accountability**

<b>Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make government information and data easily available</li> <li>▪ Government is proactive in sharing information and data</li> <li>▪ Make citizens knowledgeable about important issues</li> </ul>
<b>Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allow citizens to mobilize of issues that matter to them</li> <li>▪ Establish opportunities for citizens to participate in policy processes and</li> <li>▪ Establish effective and efficient complain mechanisms</li> </ul>
<b>Responsiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen, other stakeholder's submissions and complaints are responded to by government</li> <li>▪ Establish opportunities for citizens to enquire how decions are made on issues that matter</li> <li>▪ Encourage a culture of co-ownership and co-decision making</li> </ul>

## Moving towards a culture of social accountability

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an important occasion to explore how the government can make sure no-one is left behind as the country continues to respond and recovers from COVID-19. The advent of the pandemic has affected lives, livelihood, and social accountability can be an important tool to return the trajectory, support, and advance the ambitious aims of the SDGs. Promoting the principles of social accountability can inform both the substance of SDGs implementation (by directly contributing to the achievement of the goals) and the process by which Zimbabwe can pursue the SDGs throughout the policy cycle. Engaging citizens, civil society, and the private sector as partners in the policy cycle help ensure that their needs are identified and responded to, thereby leading to higher success.

Engaging in social accountability approaches needs to be done based on an analysis of the specific problem or issue/s at stake. Social accountability activities entail costs not only in terms of resources but, more importantly, in terms of the time of all its participants. The following are social accountability tools Zimbabwe stakeholders can utilize:

**Complaint mechanism:** Formalized mechanism through Parliament or Chapter 12 institutions that give citizens a chance to report cases and bring attention to mismanagement of resources or poor delivery of services. For genuine social accountability, complaints mechanisms need to have effective response mechanisms or feedback loops. This ensures that issues and grievances raised by citizens are addressed. Institutions, such as the **Human Rights Commission** and the

**Anti-Corruption Commission**, have established complaint mechanisms; however, the response mechanisms are either poor or non-existent. Establishing effective response mechanisms will enhance accountability and build trust.

**Citizen-based monitoring (CBM):** The tool focuses on citizens' experiences in relation to government performance to improve accountability in public service delivery. The CBM approach emphasizes the building of capacity of both citizens and public officials at the point where services are delivered to (i) monitor how citizens experience service delivery, (ii) analyze the feedback, (iii) take actions for improvements, and (iv) communicate to all stakeholders. Through councils, the **devolution process** and **local governments** need to establish citizen-based monitoring systems that have transparency, participation, and accountability at the core.

**Community/ citizen scorecards (CSC):** It is a citizen-based monitoring tool that enables citizens to voice their assessment of public services (education, health, infrastructure, waste disposal) they are receiving. CSC is an instrument used to elicit accountability and increase the responsiveness of service providers. By providing an opportunity for direct dialogue between citizens, councils, service providers, and the government, the CSC process empowers the public to voice their opinion and demand improved service delivery. Through the **Urban Councils Act**, **local councils** need to partner with civil society, community-based organizations, and the private sector to roll out community-based scorecards to allow citizens to give them feedback on public services.

**Open Parliament:** This is the interaction between citizens and the legislature that promotes parliamentary openness to ensure transparency and access to public information, accountability, and citizen participation. As part of the **Strategic Plan**, Parliament has created spaces for citizen participation and collects citizen views through public hearings on legislative changes. Some Parliamentary procedures are open to the public and are shared via different platforms. However, to encourage social accountability, the next step for Parliament would be to establish a formal feedback mechanism to respond to public hearings and submissions. Mechanisms for social accountability enable Parliament to undertake the oversight responsibility using a citizen-focused approach.

**Procurement Monitoring:** Public procurement is an essential component of government spending; it makes up about 60% of the expenditure. Procurement monitoring involves citizens monitoring how the government delivers its services, makes procurement decisions, and how citizens receive the public services. Publishing public procurement information and data is the first step towards social accountability. Since its launch in 2019, the **Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ)**, is taking steps to share some information and processes related to public procurement and bidders. However, for genuine transparency and accountability, PRAZ will need to carry out some important reforms. Firstly, PRAZ will need to establish a procurement platform to share all non-sensitive procurement information in open data format. Secondly, establish clear feedback mechanisms and opportunities for the public to act on the disclosed procurement data by filing complaints, reporting irregularities, or suggesting improvements. Ideally, these

mechanisms would be standardized and enable interaction between PRAZ, the private sector, and civil society, both within and across sectors.



**Social audits:** A social audit is a citizen-led process that facilitates public participation in monitoring government service delivery and expenditure. During the social audit process, citizens study government documents and compare them to their experiences as public service recipients. These citizen-led analyses of service delivery and expenditure enable dialogue between government officials and citizens on the true state of affairs. Social audits are an opportunity for institutions such as **local councils, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Anti-corruption Commission**, and **PRAZ** to partner with civil society and citizens to monitor service delivery's reach, efficiency, and effectiveness. Building on the momentum by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to improve transparency and participation in the budget process, social audits could be the next step to encourage social accountability on government resources.

## Funders: Supporting Social Accountability in a Challenging Environment

Over the last decade, funder support for accountability initiatives has declined in Zimbabwe, preferring humanitarian initiatives. A critical concern for funders is accountability initiatives' ability to achieve meaningful results in a context of fragile democratic governance, shrinking civic space, and a polarized economic and political environment. However, adequate funding is vital for the efficient and sustainable implementation of social accountability reforms that can limit the impact of COVID-19 on citizens. To achieve this, funders should:

**Increase available funding to community groups and leaders to advance greater social accountability.** Existing funders are increasingly aware of the funding gap for social accountability and the need to allocate more resources towards community-led solutions. However, changes in resource allocation or funding practices have been slow to materialize. More should be done to encourage localization of social accountability funding; support new funding vehicles that are specifically geared towards grassroots communities and local leaders.

**Invest in and develop social accountability leaders and champions, valuing local knowledge and approaches.** Local leaders and champions, especially those without advanced education, do not lead or manage social accountability programs. A bottom-up approach to leadership development means codifying the best practice and

knowledge around community leadership. Incorporating local learnings into leadership development curricula and creating more opportunities for emerging local leaders to participate in leadership development programs and related advancement opportunities.

**Broker collaborative action and partnerships between civil society, community leaders, government, and the private sector.** Funders are well positioned to broker collaborative relationships that can advance social accountability by using their large resources, including political connections, networks, expertise, and knowledge. This depends on the design of funder instruments, their level of understanding of the operating context, and the degree of involvement and flexibility in the partnership. However, this can only be achieved if funders remain honest and impartial brokers that can create a safe space for dialogue and collective action. These partnerships can be transformational with a focus on the low-hanging fruits.

**Contribute research to the knowledge and evidence base on social accountability and community leadership.** A more robust evidence base is needed to mobilize resource allocation and support for social accountability and community leadership. It involves encouraging both civil society and the government to move towards evidence-based policy-making. This will help civil society, policymakers, and providers of services to make better decisions and achieve better outcomes by drawing upon the best available evidence from research and evaluation and other sources.



## Private Sector Leadership for Social Accountability Success

The private sector in Zimbabwe tends to distance itself from social movements, including social accountability, for fear of government retaliation. However, COVID-19 has brought to bear the negative impact of poor governance and corruption on the economy and social issues that continue to affect businesses directly and indirectly while fueling poverty, unemployment, and inequality in Zimbabwe. Systemic corruption and bribery problems increase the cost of doing business, create unfair competition by creating monopolies and cartels, and curtail efficiency-improvement and innovation critical for economic

profitability and sustainability. These systemic failures have undermined trust equally in the private sector and government institutions.

Corporate and local businesses, associations, and chambers of commerce can actively support and participate in social accountability processes by helping develop and contribute to policy development and discussion. The World Bank Voice and Accountability Index shows that governments that are more accountable to their citizens have higher foreign direct investment inflows and lower borrowing costs. A more transparent and accountable business environment makes it easier for responsible businesses to operate.



The private sector can support social accountability initiatives by:

**Promoting transparency and disclosure of information on contracts and beneficial ownership.** Corruption and poor public governance increase risk and instability for the private sector and deprive people of critical public services, well-functioning infrastructure, and fundamental human rights. To prevent corruption and boost accountability, the private sector needs to champion transparent and ethical practices. Firstly, the private sector needs to encourage disclosure and openness in public procurement by implementing open contracting standards. Secondly, encourage the disclosure of company ownership to know who they are doing business with, and financial institutions need to know their customers. Evidence shows that transparency and social accountability enables fair competition and increases market access for business. It helps large companies better understand opportunities and enter new markets and enables small and medium-sized enterprises to decide whether or not to compete for contracts.

**Corporate and private sector foundations can support social accountability initiatives led by civil society and community organizations.** Many organizations in Zimbabwe working on social accountability initiatives struggle with adequate funding. To meet social accountability for effective public services and governance, significant investments are needed at the national and community level. The private sector can contribute to the achievement of social accountability as a funding partner. Channeling and scaling available finances towards social accountability initiatives will strengthen the capacity of civil society and community

institutions by covering the current funding gap. Corporates and private sector foundations can allocate about **30%** of their **Corporate Social Responsibility** towards social accountability initiatives.

**Broker community partnerships between the private sector, cooperatives, and community organizations and leaders.** Cross-sector partnerships between government, private sector, and civil society are critical for creating systemic change to achieve social accountability and solve the most pressing challenges affecting Zimbabwe. With their unique characteristics, the private sector can broker and facilitate collaborations that can strengthen and deepen social accountability initiatives. They can be a convener, mediator, and learning catalyst to promote public-private partnerships for social accountability.

**Partnerships with civil society and government for innovative tech tools for social accountability.** The innovative use of technology breaks down some destructive barriers hindering access to information, civic freedom, access to public services allowing proven solutions to be accessed by those communities and individuals that need them the most. The private sector can partner with civil society and government to develop digital transformative tools that can ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups. Innovation and digital technologies can be an integral part of advancing and supporting social accountability reforms and initiatives. Beyond eGovernment, innovative use of technologies in the **devolution** process can help streamline local government processes, enhance social accountability and participation of citizens.

## Government as an Enabler for Social Accountability

Social accountability initiatives should not exist in isolation. It is indeed a critical policy area for achieving several different policy outcomes to support COVID-19 plans and strategies in diverse domains. Thus, social accountability should be conceived as a whole-of-government approach to ensure the widest possible impact to move from passive awareness to effect a culture change. Principles and values of social accountability need to be identified, discussed and reinforced at all levels of government as part of the COVID-19 recovery and response plan. For the government to be a genuine enabler for social accountability, it should:

**Create an enabling environment for the advancement of social accountability initiatives.** Government is a central player in creating an environment that encourages and allows the successful implementation of social accountability initiatives. Zimbabwe already has the **2013 Constitution**, which creates a strong bedrock for reforms that encourage and help advance citizens genuinely hold the government accountable. **Access to information, civic space, freedom of expression, and citizen participation** form the backbone of social accountability. As noted above, the current environment in Zimbabwe is not favourable for social accountability initiatives. Formal and informal negotiations with public officials are few or non-existent in many sectors. A robust legal and policy framework will equip citizens with the mechanisms and the protection needed to voice their opinion and provide suggestions free from fear of oppression.

**Build civil service capacity to translate social accountability initiatives into feasible reforms and processes.** Evidence shows that human resources and public officials' capacity are challenges in implementing social accountability initiatives. Thus, it is essential to design interventions to increase the awareness, understanding, and capacity of public officials so that they are essential investments in the success of social accountability initiatives. There is a need to effect culture change, to embed principles and values of openness and accountability, and reinforce them at every possible opportunity. This means including them in vision documents and high-level strategic government priorities, public sector value statements, and civil servant competency frameworks. The **Public Service Commission** could play a role in embedding principles and values of social accountability in skills development and management.



### **Establish citizen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of public services.**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are indispensable to elaborate sound and robust public policies. Solid M&E mechanisms ensure that public policies achieve the intended goals and objectives, help identify challenges affecting the implementation of public policies, and provide responses to overcome them based on lessons learned. Citizen monitoring mechanisms provide legitimacy for the use of public funds and resources. It can moreover provide stakeholders with an evidence base in the accomplishment of governments' objectives. Therefore, the relevance of citizen monitoring and evaluation for public policies can hardly be overestimated, as it is part and parcel of evidence-based policymaking and can serve both learning and accountability purposes.



### **Cross-government social accountability policy strategy to achieve outcomes and effective coordination.**

Social accountability initiatives should not exist in isolation but should be conceived as a whole-of-government approach to ensure the widest possible impact. The government could create a country-tailored definition of social accountability that aligns the multitude of scattered initiatives to develop a comprehensive strategy. Such a medium- to long-term, comprehensive and coherent national social accountability strategy is a powerful tool for providing a clear direction to the entire government and its public administration in general. It is also fundamental for measuring the performance of social accountability actions and initiatives. A social accountability strategy could be critical for achieving several different policy outcomes in **public sector integrity** and the **fight against corruption, devolution, public service delivery, and public procurement**. The full-fledged national social accountability strategy should be based on policy principles, seek to achieve long-term outcomes, identify medium-term outputs, and include concrete short-term initiatives to achieve them.

## Civil Society 2.0: Taking Social Accountability to the Next Level

Social accountability connects citizens to the government, and civil society plays an important role in that process to better deliver citizen demands, including on economic, environmental, political, and social issues. Zimbabwe's highly polarized and restrictive environment has seen the relationship between civil society and the government deteriorate. This relationship was evident during the COVID-19 crisis as civil society did not trust and buy into the government strategies to build collaborative partnerships to fight the pandemic. This is neither sustainable nor effective in achieving the goals of social accountability initiatives. In such an environment, civil society will need to be innovative, test new approaches, and re-establish itself. This can be achieved by, among other things sharing and learning across sectors, thereby catalyzing further innovation and ultimately a stronger and more resilient civil society.

**Renewing trust from the roots up and creating resilience networks.** Civil society and community organizations need to establish network-wide initiatives to generate new learnings and insights on the link between dynamic social accountability and organizational resilience and inform future sector practices. These networks can include private sector leaders, civil society, and government reformers. This is achieved by creating accountability measurement processes and responsiveness to the main constituency – citizens – especially the marginalized. This process will allow horizontal monitoring and exploration of the factors and pathways that increase public support, build trust, and increase legitimacy. Communities begin to clearly articulate what civil society and community organizations are doing,

engage more effectively, and become part of the change process. Establishing broad-based citizen support, networks of allies or members as sources of solidarity and support can benefit civil society and community organizations' push for social accountability.



**Inclusive communication and social listening in a polarized environment.** Civil society needs to work transparently and communicate to communities the benefits of their programmes. Creatively reaching existing and new community audiences with positive messages on the value proposition and a clear theory of change for social accountability and the value it can deliver to their lives in a polarized environment like Zimbabwe. The value proposition and the theory of change should address relevant issues in everyday language, moving away from the highly technical language of social accountability. Frame social accountability issues within community values relevant to citizens' lives, using inclusive and non-aggressive language. Important to achieve inclusive communication is **social listening**. It enables civil society to monitor dialogue, conversations and establish a community of trust with communities and leaders. Social listening provides the space and support for civil society to attain the required longer-term commitments to resilience.



## Using digital tools to create an information base to combat misinformation.

Digitization is starting to transform how citizens can relate to civil society enabling a new accountability paradigm. Newly empowered citizens are demanding more active roles in co-shaping civil society programmes, policies, and processes. At the heart of these dynamic relationships lie two-way digital dialogues between citizens and civil society, which promote regular interaction, adaptive performance, and actionable decisions based on recent, visible data. To manage this relationship, civil society needs to invest in research, data, and evidence collection. Digital tools will then help facilitate these dialogues, sustain the ongoing support of tested accountability mechanisms.



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Innovative thinking that transforms citizen lives

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