ZIMBABWE CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT

FEBRUARY 2021

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<td>AT</td>
<td>Assessment Team</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-Based Organization</td>
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<td>CDCS</td>
<td>Country Development Cooperation Strategy</td>
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<td>CEADZ</td>
<td>Citizen Engagement for Accountability and Development in Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>CGCDZ</td>
<td>Centre for Gender and Community Development in Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>CNRG</td>
<td>Center for Natural Resource Governance</td>
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<td>COPAC</td>
<td>Parliamentary Select Committee</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
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<td>CSSP</td>
<td>Civil Society Support Project</td>
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<td>DO</td>
<td>Development Objective</td>
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<td>DRG</td>
<td>Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance</td>
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<td>GALZ</td>
<td>Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>GESI</td>
<td>Gender, Equality, and Social Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNU</td>
<td>Government of National Unity</td>
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<td>GONGO</td>
<td>Government-Oriented Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>GoZ</td>
<td>Government of Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>Intermediate Result</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITOCA</td>
<td>Integrated Technical Organizational Capacity Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key informant interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQI</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex</td>
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<td>MDC</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change</td>
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<td>MOPA</td>
<td>Maintenance of Peace and Order Act</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of understanding</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>NCA</td>
<td>National Constitutional Assembly</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>NPRC</td>
<td>National Peace and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<td>OAG</td>
<td>Office of the Auditor General</td>
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<td>ORI</td>
<td>Organizational Performance Index</td>
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<td>PEA</td>
<td>Political Economy Analysis</td>
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<td>PWD</td>
<td>Persons with disabilities</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WCoZ</td>
<td>Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>YETT</td>
<td>Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust</td>
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<td>ZANU-PF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front</td>
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<td>ZCC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Council of Churches</td>
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<td>ZCTU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>ZHRC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission</td>
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<td>ZINASU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe National Students Union</td>
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this assessment is to update the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID’s) understanding of the state of civil society in Zimbabwe; evaluate the impact of its support to the sector with special consideration given to its support for gender equity, youth, and social inclusion in civil society; and identify challenges and opportunities for civil society capacity development in Zimbabwe to inform USAID/Zimbabwe’s future strategy—2021–2026 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS)—and the programming supporting that strategy.

This report consists of six distinct yet interconnected sections: 1) a description and analysis of the evolution of Zimbabwe’s civil society sector noting recent trends, challenges, and opportunities in the political economy for civil society actors; 2) an evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of USAID’s support to civil society over the previous five years; 3) a stakeholder analysis that interrogates civil society relations with other actors and institutions in Zimbabwe; 4) a Gender, Equity, and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis of USAID partners and the general state of play regarding GESI integration in the sector; 5) an assessment of capacity development approaches for civil society; and 6) a concluding series of recommendations based on observations and findings contained in the sections that may be considered for the USAID/Zimbabwe 2021–2026 CDCS.

The Assessment Team (AT) used a mixed-methods research approach and conducted 64 key informant interviews (KII’s) with civil society groups in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo, and smaller towns. Some of the key informants are from civil society organizations (CSOs) that are receiving USAID support, while others are not. The AT also interviewed representatives of international donor agencies. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, most interviews were conducted on-line; an extension of the time period needed to conduct interviews was required due to scheduling constraints.

**ZIMBABWE’S POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

Zimbabwe’s civil society experienced a variety of successes and challenges over the past two decades. Successes include its collective action to push through constitutional reforms to guarantee the basic rights of citizens under illiberal and corrupt governments determined to rule rather than govern Zimbabweans.

Challenges that affected CSOs’ abilities to organize and achieve their goals with the State inadvertently created opportunities for the organizations to adapt and create new avenues for driving change. State repression has “forced” CSOs to carry out their interventions as a collective rather than as individual organizations so that leaders or organizations are not singled out for victimization by State security institutions and their individual personalities are not publicly vilified by the State media. Working together has added legitimacy to the civil society’s demands and made it difficult for any government or ruling party officials to gain public support when they attack the work of CSOs. Collaborations between city-based CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) based in rural areas have enabled national human rights organizations to reach remote areas with limited access to information on civic issues.

Nonetheless, this deliberate misrule made it extremely difficult and risky for active citizens and civil society groups to stand up for their rights and to constructively express their needs and concerns to the government. The Government of Zimbabwe views independent civil society actors that promote democratic governance or economic reform as agents of oppositional political parties and international actors interested in regime change. Threats and hostility from the government weaken social movements because most movements lack the capacity to provide wide and adequate social safety nets for activists.
who are under attack from the State, which discourages people from joining the movement. Civil society groups that promote the government’s policies in the health, education, agriculture, and economic development sectors are tolerated and, in some cases, lauded as examples of patriotic citizens working to advance the nation.

Apart from the restricted civic and political space, the AT noted that the ability of CSOs to organize and achieve their goals with the State has also been affected by a growing disconnection between the CSOs and their target constituencies because of the methods and strategies they use. This perception was mostly leveled against Harare-based CSOs working on human rights and democracy promotion and it is mostly held by CSOs or CBOs working on service delivery and other socio-economic issues. They argue that the CSOs have failed to maintain their connections with the grassroots because they rely too much on holding public meetings and using other methods appropriate for urban settings while ignoring organic ways of organizing that might be suitable for rural settings—such as nhimbe (work parties)—and other traditional spaces. Another challenge is the “monetization” of civic participation, whereby mobilizing communities around an issue that benefits them requires CSOs to give participants food and transport allowances, rather than people participating as a civic duty.

Local government spaces provided opportunities for CSO advocacy involving service delivery and social accountability. In general, local governments, regardless of party control, were more open to engaging with CSOs on reforms, and this could be because service delivery issues are deemed less politically sensitive. However, more recently, some respondents noted the government is taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to further restrict civil society’s social accountability efforts to monitor government accountability. There are also reports of abuse of donor funds targeted for COVID-19 mitigation measures.

Most of the challenges in the informal sector, which makes up roughly 60% of Zimbabwe’s economy, involve its governing policies, which ignore high formal sector unemployment levels. The informal sector has the potential to be a strong base for social movements; however, organizing within the sector over the past five years was hampered by the challenges highlighted above.

EVALUATION

USAID/Zimbabwe’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Office made significant investments in an array of civil society actors and institutions. The AT conducted a light evaluation of the successes and challenges of those investments. The DRG Office’s investment in the sector was channeled through the Civil Society Support Project (CSSP), 2012–16, which provided institutional and technical support to civil society via sub-grants, rapid response grants, and institutional capacity-building to CSOs and CBOs to articulate citizens’ demands and advocate for democratic governance. Its successor project, the Citizen Engagement for Accountability and Democracy in Zimbabwe (CEADZ), 2017–21, focuses on advancing citizen advocacy and oversight at multiple levels; enhancing CSOs’ and coalitions’ implementation of constitutional provisions on accountability, participation, and civil and political rights; and empowering women and youth to engage and drive change in policies and practices that exclude them from decision-making.

The AT found that both projects yielded numerous benefits to civil society in Zimbabwe. USAID’s contribution and commitment to civil society helped to keep DRG-focused groups and activists alive in times of closing political spaces and allowed them to thrive as spaces to discuss and promote citizens'
constitutional rights and basic needs opened. USAID’s assistance strengthened the internal governance of nearly all its partners, which contributed to their resiliency. USAID’s assistance also helped marginalized CBOs that focus on social and economic concerns to help citizens articulate their problems to government officials and work through CSOs and CBOs to resolve them. USAID’s main implementing partner, Pact, uses an applied political economy lens and adaptive management techniques to ensure the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of its programming. One of the ways it does this is by supporting civil society to promote dialogue on topics that are not explicitly associated with democratic governance or accountability but generate expectations that “solution holders” play by the rules and principles enshrined in the new constitution.

CEADZ’s main objectives/component areas remain relevant and are well-designed. They have the potential to address some of the ongoing challenges in Zimbabwe in terms of governance and human rights. It has also been able to penetrate the decentralized level which has historically been neglected due to the high politicization and political polarization of the country. It is also important to highlight CEADZ’s attempts to increase the involvement of groups at risk of vulnerability and, in turn, make CSOs more inclusive. However, the AT observed that while linkages between the objectives were included in the project document, they are not sufficiently demonstrated during the implementation, which could explain the lack of integrated results. In fact, some of the results are overlapping in how they are measured and reported (e.g., improved participation and inclusion of marginalized group and improved civic participation) instead of reporting the same result using disaggregated data or through establishing logic links between outcomes (e.g., improved civic participation and improved citizen voice).

GESI INTEGRATION
Despite the CEADZ’s intentional inclusion of GESI organizations to support vulnerable groups, GESI seems to have been only partially integrated into the project design and implementation. CEADZ’s GESI approach mainly targets women and youth, diminishing its focus on other marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities (PWD). It was widely recognized that some CSOs have been making efforts to mainstream GESI in a more comprehensive and integrative manner, but it was observed that, in practice, CSOs are not sufficiently aware of the transformative power of GESI mainstreaming and its implications. In the case of PWD and youth, CSOs have struggled to provide an enabling environment that facilitates the participation of these groups by providing the necessary tools and mechanisms to ensure their engagement.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
The approach used to address the capacity-strengthening needs of CSOs varies by development partner. While CSOs interviewed for this assessment stated that funding partners usually provide capacity-building through generic training, CSOs acknowledged that the Pact-led capacity development differed from other donors’ capacity-building approaches. Pact’s Integrated Technical Organizational Capacity Assessment (ITOCA) methodology allowed civil society partners to self-assess and then tailor their capacity development over time based on the priority needs of the organization. Capacity development is closely monitored, which allows Pact to provide tailor-made solutions to organizations’ specific needs. Nevertheless, challenges remain regarding methodology and operational context. The ITOCA methodology might not be deemed equally useful for all the organizations as the target organizations (grantees and sub-grantees) have different structures, budgets, focuses, and sizes.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The AT made numerous recommendations based on the AT’s analysis of KII responses and experience with the types of investments in civil society that are most likely to be locally driven, effective, relevant, and sustainable. Below is a summary of these recommendations.

Regarding ensuring civil society and State relations contribute to a democratic society, the AT recommends that USAID’s CSO partners protect the reforms that have been made to the extent possible by leveraging relationships in government and with politicians that have been established. USAID should seek ways to support social movement building linked to legislative reforms to nurture broader alliances of civil society actors (see below).

Engage the informal sector. The structure of civil society is shifting; the main actors are now the informal sector (e.g., vendors, miners, transporters, emerging religious organizations, and community groups). Funding priorities should also follow these shifts. Emerging CSOs and unions working with informal sector groups require additional capacity and skills to understand and interpret laws (i.e., by-laws, national laws, and constitutional provisions). In that way, the unions or social movements can harness the collective mass power of their large membership base.

Revisit the policy of support for supply-side governance. Provide necessary capacity-building for select government officials where there is evidence of their clear political will to engage on issues that the citizens demand. Pilot projects that involve local authorities and CSOs/CBOs working together to solve discrete problems. This could be achieved by leveraging “soft” social welfare issues to push harder DRG issues, and by demonstrating how corruption reduces the quantity and quality of basic services at both the national and local levels. CSOs might also be encouraged to praise or “fame” government actions when possible rather than always shaming the government—this can contribute to reducing the stigma that civil society is only associated with the opposition.

Regarding improving the effectiveness and relevance of USAID’s support to civil society, the AT recommends co-creation and implementation of projects between Harare-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and rural CBOs. The current engagements are mostly informal and top-down, whereby Harare- and Bulawayo-based CSOs implement activities in communities together with CBOs on a one-off and ad hoc basis. The AT recommends continuing to invest in urgent social and economic issues via social accountability mechanisms linked to citizen-led (not donor-led) reform efforts. This support can be delivered through a more deliberate integrated approach focusing on addressing livelihoods and social and economic rights or basic services. This recommendation is linked to the support for “soft issues” above.

Provide core (not activity-based) funding for CSOs that are already working with communities on DRG issues. To ensure sustainability and transformational impact, the CSOs must demonstrate local legitimacy—a long relationship with the target communities as a prerequisite for core support.

Use in-kind grants to fund social movements and other unregistered organizations or support individual activists with fellowships. Or consider funding social movements through the Zimbabwe Alliance, which is establishing a social movement fund to extend financial support to social movements.
Regarding the recommendations towards strengthening internal CSO governance structures and systems, the AT recommends that an assessment of whether the CSO has sufficient funding for the implementation of internal governance reforms be conducted. ITOCA recommendations can be costly and, therefore, may not be implemented. Once external funding ends, internal governance reforms often do as well.

Integrate GESI into internal governance reforms. Performance in GESI capacity development should be monitored and a reward program for best performers launched. Demonstrate how the adoption of GESI behaviors contribute to organizational growth and success through research and exchange with peer organizations from other countries in Africa or in other continents. Promote or support the adoption of a code of conduct for CSOs, which should also include GESI principles.

Regarding recommendations for promoting GESI within civil society, the AT recommends strengthening capacity through more holistic and sustainable coaching and mentorship by qualified GESI specialists to all grant beneficiaries (both GESI CSOs and the other DRG organizations). Capacity development should include clarifications of the GESI concept, GESI analysis, GESI mainstreaming across the project (including the use of GESI-sensitive language), GESI budgeting, and GESI integration as part of the internal governance of the organization.

Conducting gender audits based on a statistically significant number of CSOs is recommended to determine the levels of GESI within the CSO sector and, in turn, design more context-sensitive actions aimed at supporting GESI within CSOs. This is necessary to conduct a full assessment of the state of play of GESI within CSOs and to understand the main obstacles in both formal and informal institutions so that adequate measures can be taken.

Carry out a GESI analysis at the project design stage or as part of the baseline study of any USAID program or project. A GESI analysis should then be used to design or review projects from a GESI perspective and thus be mainstreamed into projects. Use the data emanating from the research for awareness-raising about the importance of GESI to expand civil society understanding of GESI and its implications for capacity development.

Train women in executive leadership and build the skills they need to be executive directors or board members. Executive leadership coaching and mentorship should also target women who are already occupying these positions.

Regarding recommendations around capacity development of civil society, the AT recommends encouraging Harare-based CSO and local CBO to co-design and implement USAID activities. Require civil society partners to have legitimate access to communities in need. The CSOs demonstrate linkages to these constituencies. If they do not have these deep relationships, the local CBO should be a partner in the design and implementation.

Strengthen critical analytical skills of CSOs and CBOs to think and work politically and to increase their chances of making a more sustainable impact. This entails equipping CSOs with skills and tools to improve their understanding of the political economy and power dynamics at both local and national levels.

Reimagine monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for DRG: build capacity for story-telling, outcome harvesting, and other emerging methodologies to capitalize on results and their impacts to understand shifts in
political culture. Adopt a benchmarking framework for M&E to promote a paradigm change regarding the measurement of reform processes. Reforms are incremental and often cannot be anticipated because of the changing political context; thus, changes need to be benchmarked and recognized as “results” in a reform process (e.g., meeting with a general or high-ranking officer who becomes a key change agent and begins a new communication channel to solution holders).

1. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE, QUESTIONS, APPROACH, METHODOLOGY, AND LIMITATIONS

PURPOSE

The purpose of the assessment is to update USAID’s understanding of the evolution of Zimbabwean civil society from the late 1990s to the present and assess USAID’s contribution to civil society in the past five years. In particular, it is intended to define and analyze the operating environment, political economy context, and current issues affecting the role and impact of Zimbabwe’s civil society and how this differs for various types of civil society actors. This study also assesses the status of gender equity, youth, and social inclusion in civil society, specifically to uncover and identify opportunities to address overt and/or unconscious power dynamics. The assessment concludes by identifying challenges and opportunities for civil society capacity development in Zimbabwe in order to directly inform USAID/Zimbabwe’s future strategy (CDCS 2021–2026) and programming supporting that strategy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The AT asked the following meta core questions:

• How has Zimbabwe’s civil society evolved from 2000 to the present?

• What has USAID’s contribution been to civil society in the last 5 years?

• How does the current political and economic context influence the operating environment for different types of civil society actors?

• How have CSOs been able to promote GESI?

• What are the challenges and opportunities for civil society capacity development in Zimbabwe?

• What are the recommendations regarding future investment in civil society?

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1 Broad conceptions of civil society exist in academic literature. However, for the purposes of this study, a functional definition that we will use is one proposed by Sachikonye (1995: 7): that civil society is “an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of non-state activities—economic and cultural production, voluntary associations, and household life—and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures or controls upon state institutions.” Traditional notions of civil society include: NGOs, social movements, faith-based organizations, umbrella organizations/platforms/networks, trade unions, cooperatives, CBOs, and professional/business associations.
METHODOLOGY

This AT used a mixed-methods approach referencing aspects of the DRG Strategic Assessment Framework and incorporating an applied Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and a GESI lens as appropriate to achieve the assessment’s objectives. The methodology for this assessment consisted of two phases: desk research and field research consisting of qualitative research, triangulation of primary and secondary data collection, and observation in the field. After five weeks of fieldwork, the AT was able to interview 64 persons from civil society in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo, Domboshava, Penhalonga, and Juliusdale, representing a wide range of in-country informants which included CSOs, religious organizations, labor unions, CBOs, citizens groups, academics, and USAID and other international donor officials. The AT conducted both in-person and virtual KIIIs, reviewed interview notes, and held weekly check-ins throughout the research period. In brief and out-brief meetings with staff from USAID/Zimbabwe and USAID/DRG Washington took place on October 19 and November 16, 2020, respectively. A subsequent follow-on meeting was held with USAID Zimbabwe on November 19, 2020 to deepen the discussion on the findings and recommendations of the field research.

LIMITATIONS

There was a lower-than-expected response from some CSOs and CBOs to requests for interviews, which the AT attributed to the political sensitivity of the assessment. Few of the most vulnerable people’s groups were interviewed due to the AT’s inability to travel to the locations or to reach them via phone or internet. The COVID-19 pandemic restricted the number of in-person KIIIs, and poor connectivity occasionally interfered with the quality and duration of the interviews. No focus group discussions took place due to the pandemic and the political sensitivity of topics as groups of people who did not know each other were reluctant to engage in group discussions. Based on discussions with the Mission during the desk study phase of the assessment, the AT did not interview officials from the government or Government-oriented Non-governmental Organizations (GONGO’s).

2. ZIMBABWE’S CIVIL SOCIETY EVOLUTION

This section unpacks civil society’s evolution over the past 20 years. It analyzes the key changes and milestones in Zimbabwean civil society’s ability to organize given its historical relationship to the State in light of shifts and trends in Zimbabwe’s history, including the constitutional referendums of 1999/2000 and 2013, and its role in conducting advocacy to Parliament. It then concludes with the recent trends in civil society’s ability to organize and achieve its goals with the State.

THE RISE OF RIGHTS-BASED CIVIL SOCIETY

The rise and expansion of NGOs or CSOs addressing DRG issues can be traced from 1995 on, when CSOs increasingly focused on issues of corruption, democratization, electoral processes, and constitutional change. This was a departure from their earlier focus on development and social welfare issues that were dominant during the 1980s and early 1990s. These were elements of the birth of the Zimbabwe nation and aligned to a genuinely black regime that cared for the deprived rural areas and population affected by the war. The discourses of development and social welfare were often de-

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2 Masunungure, E.V, 2014
politcized and couched in language that emphasized complementarity with government policies and practices. These CSOs worked mainly at the local level/rural areas. They were characterized by filling the gap left by the government and providing health, educational, and other welfare-related services. Tolerated by the ruling party, they were often seen as “allies” of the government and even co-opted at times, becoming an extension of the State. Within this context, CSOs predominantly played a non-confrontational role, with limited opportunities to hold the government accountable.

The broader rise of DRG-focused civil society groups in the late 1990s marked a shift in discourses and the relationships between CSOs and the Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government, at both the national and local levels. The expansion of these types of CSOs was attributed to different factors; mainly to the inability of the government to provide social services, widespread corruption across State institutions, the failure of social and economic reform, and the subsequent repression of social unrest. The international community’s response to the government’s draconian measures came swiftly. While the United States Government reduced aid, European states imposed restrictive measures and redirected financial support through CSOs so that they could continue providing basic services. Limited access to aid weakened the government but strengthened the predominance of CSOs as service providers and their role as drivers of democratic reforms. This shift was characterized by a move from the de-politicized development and social welfare discourses to new narratives and demands by CSOs for a transformed governance framework with political agendas that promoted and protected the fundamental rights of citizens and provided the necessary checks against excesses of the State. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and church groups such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Ecumenical Support Services were central to the emergence of this new cohort of DRG-focused CSOs. These were created to channel the social discontent and frustration of a large part of the population, which led to a confrontational approach toward the ZANU-PF government as they engaged on and demanded governance and constitutional reforms.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROCESS OF 2000

During this period, DRG-focused CSOs began organizing themselves into coalitions and networks which, in addition to providing a united and stronger voice on governance and constitutional reforms, facilitated solidarity, mutual support, and information sharing among and between the groups. A defining moment in the late 1990s was the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1997, which was a key actor—albeit antagonistic to the government—during the constitutional referendum in February 2000. The ZCTU, ZCC, tertiary students, women’s and youth groups, and various other groups focused on governance and human rights issues were central to the formation of the NCA and also became members of the mass-based coalition. The NCA demanded a radical constitutional reform process that would result

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3 Kagoro, 2003 cited in Win, 2005:21  
4 Mair & Sithole, 2002  
5 Muchadenyika, 2017  
6 Masunungure, E.V, 2014; Muchadenyika, 2017  
7 Win, 2005: 23  
8 Masunungure, 2014 & Dorman 2003
in what it called a “new people-driven constitution” and argued that a new constitution and constitutionalism would resolve the governance challenges bedeviling the country. It further argued that this, in turn, would result in social and economic prosperity. The Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe (WcoZ) was formed in 1999 as a complementary body to the NCA and focused on pushing forward women’s demands around constitutional change. The WC served as both an umbrella body of women’s organizations and a platform for women to advance their constitutional reform agenda. They also established the so-called “strategic alliances” with the parties in the opposition, especially with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which often led the government to view CSOs as the only opposition to the ruling party.

The formation of CSO coalitions and networks in the late 1990s, such as the NCA and WcoZ, provided a “broader and more radical alternative means of engaging with the State,” and civil society groups started acting as an alternative mediator of State-society relations rather than solely the State itself. This was a radical challenge to the 1980s and early 1990s discourses and practices of ruling party elites and government officials who sought to control State-society relations while civil society played a subservient role. This shift to a new State-civil society dynamic also coincided with strikes, riots, and protests which became commonplace in the 1990s compared to the 1980s as trade unions and CSOs mobilized around the widespread economic and political grievances of the late 1990s. The trade unions and CSOs demanded a constitutional reform process that would reform governance structures and systems of the State and decouple State security institutions from the influence of ZANU-PF. The relationship between CSOs and the State became more complex from this time forward. CSOs confronted, negotiated with, and at times legitimized the State in various ways; at the same time, they were coerced, co-opted, and their activities were “criminalized” by the government.

CSOs faced intensified State-led restrictions and shrinking civic space immediately after the constitutional referendum in February 2000—i.e., during the violent farm occupations of 2000–2002, the electoral violence and manipulation that marred the 2000 general elections and 2002 presidential elections, and the violent attacks on opposition activists and supporters. Women were also victims of violent State repression during the early 2000s and beyond, including “hundreds of cases of rape, gang rapes, forced concubinage, murder, torture, and the physical abuse of women recorded since 2000.” CSOs responded by forming additional coalitions and alliances that could mitigate the rights violations while continuing to press the State to respect human rights and uphold the rule of law. Civic coalitions and networks, such as the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (2000), the Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (2000), and the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (2001), among others, were formed during this time. Their mandate included election monitoring and observation; civic education on human rights and democracy; peace-building, documentation of rights violations; provision of legal, medical, and psychological-social support to victims of violence; and advocacy on democratic reforms.

9 Win 2005:25
10 Chipato et al, 2020
11 Dorman, 2003, & Sachikonye, 2002
12 Chipato et al, 2020:1
13 Kagoro, 2005:23-25
THE RISE OF THE GONGO AND INCREASED STATE REPRESSION OF INDEPENDENT CSOS

The ZANU-PF created its own pro-government-oriented NGOs or GONGOs to oppose those claiming to be for democracy and human rights. These were State-sponsored organizations with a socioeconomic focus aligned to Party-State ideology and financially, politically, and administratively supported by the government. Further, the government became more repressive in response to protests and rights. Trade union leaders and CSO activists who protested were brutally assaulted by the police and army. The DRG-focused CSOs became a target of relentless attacks by the government, State security institutions, the ruling party, and veterans of the 1970s liberation war who aligned to ZANU-PF. The attacks were verbal, legal, and at times physical, and they reflected how the ruling party, ZANU-PF, was increasingly conflated with the “State” as State institutions were used to defend ZANU-PF’s rule and groups aligned to the ruling party such as war veterans used the State media to denounce and denigrate CSOs and trade unions.

CIVIL SOCIETY SHIFTS ADVOCACY APPROACH

The emphasis on rights, democracy, and governance issues by the new group of DRG-focused CSOs, coupled with the polarized environment and worsening humanitarian situation, inadvertently led to an unhealthy dichotomy between “development-focused NGOs” and “governance or human rights-focused CSOs.” The rights-focused CSOs failed “to bridge and connect political and other socio-economic and developmental issues—and build broad coalitions capable of confronting a broad spectrum of issues resonating with both urban and rural social bases.”

During the Government of National Unity (GNU)-era, the DRG-focused CSOs faced a choice between continuing with confrontational approaches or engaging the government on its purported reform agenda. From the standpoint of the CSOs, the government during this time was composed of an untrustworthy traditional foe, ZANU-PF, on one side, and a traditional ally, the MDC, that seemed to have been co-opted into an ambiguous union with a sly partner.

During this period, some western governments and regional blocs, such as the European Union, also changed their approach to the Zimbabwean government from isolation to re-engagement. They urged CSOs to tone down their confrontational approaches and engage with the government in support of reforms and as a way to avoid undermining the MDC’s efforts to drive reforms within the GNU. In addition, donors focused funding on programs of the GNU, including social and economic stabilization programs, leaving rights-focused CSOs with less funding than previously and increasing competition between CSOs for dwindling resources.

Activism within civil society was also undermined as CSOs shifted from confrontational politics toward a more cooperative and technocratic approach to re-engage with the government. Development partners further pushed for a “professionalization” of the sector and “corporatization” of the organizations to be eligible for funding requirements. CSO interventions were now primarily driven by fundraising and project cycles rather than by emerging socio-economic and political issues affecting the masses. Civic activism was not completely absent but was greatly reduced during this era, and it was mostly confined to the

14 Ncube, 2013
15 Ncube 2013: 167
16 Chipato et al, 2020:13
constitutional reform process from 2009 to 2013 and did not extend to other socio-economic and political issues.

CIVIL SOCIETY, PARLIAMENT, AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROCESS AND THE 2013 ELECTION

CSOs participated effectively in the constitutional reform process (2008–2011), which was led by a Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC). Some CSOs mobilized citizens to take part in the consultation process, while others advocated for specific thematic issues, such as a bill of rights and independent constitutional commissions, which were eventually included in the new constitution. The women’s movement formed an umbrella “lobby group” under the WCoZ to push for gender parity in the constitution-making process—the loose mantra of their campaign was “50-50.” Though the COPAC-led constitutional reform process was highly contested between ZANU-PF on the one hand and the MDC and CSOs on the other, CSOs drew on long-term experience advocating for constitutional reforms to ensure that progressive issues were incorporated into the new constitution.

The choice to participate in the COPAC process unfortunately divided civic groups; on one side were the NCA, factions of the ZCTU, and the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), who were against what they called an “elite-driven” constitutional reform process—on the other side were CSOs that decided to “engage” with the government and ensure that there was finally a new constitution. The NCA, ZCTU, and ZINASU were among the biggest mass-based groups that were central to activism and mass mobilization during the protests and riots in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The divisions which emanated from the 2009–2013 constitutional reform process thus left civil society divided.

The results of the 2013 elections, in which ZANU-PF resoundingly won in both parliamentary and presidential elections, further deflated the CSO sector and left many organizations in disarray as they were blamed for being complacent, being disconnected from the socio-economic issues affecting the public, and failing to advance the democratic reform agenda during the GNU era.

RECENT TRENDS IN CIVIL SOCIETY’S ABILITY TO ORGANIZE AND ACHIEVE ITS GOALS WITH THE STATE

CHALLENGES

The ability of CSOs to organize and push for meaningful reforms has mostly been affected by the restricted civic and political space in the country. Civil society leaders, activists, journalists, and opposition leaders have been the targets of State repression; tactics include abductions, unwarranted arrests and detentions, persecution through prosecution, and sometimes brutal and violent attacks, among other forms of victimization by suspected State security agents. CSOs have found it challenging and risky to organize and mobilize communities so they can exercise their constitutional right to participate in political and civic processes that sometimes challenge or oppose the ruling party and ZANU-PF. State repression that targeted CSOs and other dissenting groups has led ordinary citizens to be reluctant to participate in CSO

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17 Raftopoulos, 2013 & Dzinesa, 2012
18 Masunungure, 2014
activities, especially when they are about human rights and governance issues. Such high levels of risk aversion among citizens has weakened the connection between human rights CSOs and their target constituencies, especially CSOs that work on civil and political rights and are perceived to be aligned to the opposition, MDC. Repressive laws,\textsuperscript{20} selective application of the law, and arrests and disruptions of CSOs by ruling-party aligned hooligans, police, and State security agents have also deterred communities from participating in CSO activities where the government is put under scrutiny.

State repression disrupted the operations of CSOs as leaders and members went into hiding for fear of being violently attacked or victimized by State security agents. In some cases, CSOs had to close their offices and suspend operations when they were targets of violent State repression. This was also worsened by suspected cases of infiltration: “There are issues that are discussed in ‘behind closed doors’ meetings but soon afterwards you hear the information has already reached the government…it is increasingly becoming difficult to know ‘who is an ally and who is a foe’ within the sector.”\textsuperscript{21} The suspicions limited the extent to which CSOs could collaborate and organize together, especially with new CSO actors or organizations.

Apart from the restricted civic and political space, the AT noted that the ability of CSOs to organize and achieve their goals with the State has also been affected by a growing disconnection between the groups and their target constituencies because of the methods and strategies they use. One respondent who works for an organization advocating for water rights and service delivery pointed out that, over the past five years, “CSOs working on human rights and democracy promotion had not done enough to transcend from the old ways they used to engage or organize communities at [the] grassroots level; they now need to adapt their ways of organizing communities from a general ‘protest mode’ to ‘issue-based organizing and mobilization.’”\textsuperscript{22} This line of argument was made in most interviews, especially with organizations working on advocacy for service delivery and socio-economic concerns such as water rights, or informal economy sector advocacy. There is a growing realization among the CSOs that “protesting against violations of political rights while ignoring ‘bread and butter’ issues is further disconnecting rights CSOs from their target constituencies,” as pointed out by a youth leader of a CBO based in a rural district in Mashonaland East.\textsuperscript{23}

Some CSOs interviewed also pointed out that the interventions of the urban-centric and elite nature of CSOs weakened their ability to organize at the subnational level. This perception was mostly levelled against Harare-based CSOs working on human rights and democracy promotion, and it is mostly held by CSOs or CBOs working on service delivery and other socio-economic issues. They argue that the CSOs have failed to maintain their connections with the “grassroots because they rely too much on holding public meetings and using other methods appropriate for urban settings, while ignoring organic ways of

\textsuperscript{20} For example, the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act

\textsuperscript{21} Interview on 11/4/20,

\textsuperscript{22} Interview on 10/27/20

\textsuperscript{23} Interview on 11/15/20
organizing” that might be suitable for rural settings, such as *nhimbe* (work parties) and other traditional spaces.

Another challenge was what a leader of a church organization in Bulawayo termed the “monetization” of civic participation by CSOs over several years: “CSOs have monetized everything, which means even mobilizing communities around an issue that benefits them will require substantial financial resources.”

The monetization was said to be twofold: first, most CSOs need money (funding) to carry out their activities and they hardly rely on community contributions to organize and carry out activities without using donor funds. Second, most CSOs usually give participants in these activities food and transport allowances, which has become an incentive for people to attend CSO meetings, rather than people participating as a civic duty. This has meant that CSOs struggled to organize when donor funding dwindled during the past five years.

For organizations working with people in the informal sector, economic challenges and repressive and corrupt practices by local council officials affected their ability to organize their constituencies: “…transport costs, inflation, etc.; police and municipal police clampdowns on vendors; corruption at local councils; demands for sexual favors by municipal officials to get vending spaces—all these factors affected our members in the informal sector, and this also affected our capacity to organize them.”

These challenges tend to demobilize people working in the informal sector and they sometimes end up spending more time evading municipal police without having enough time to organize and mobilize around their grievances. Most of the challenges in the informal sector involve the policies used to govern it, which are outdated by-laws primarily enacted before independence that do not speak to the current reality of high formal unemployment and a growing informal sector. The by-laws are meant to limit informal sector activities, yet the sector now comprises 60 percent of the economy.

The informal sector has the potential to create a strong base for social movements, although organizing within the sector over the past five years was hampered by the challenges highlighted above.

CSOs must manage their programming in an unstable macroeconomic environment. The government’s unpredictable monetary policy measures make it difficult to access funds from the bank to cover their running costs. Moreover, the global COVID-19 pandemic has redefined methods of engagement, which can limit the reach and influence of CSOs. This is especially true for CSOs working with rural communities or other vulnerable groups that do not have access to online spaces being used because of the pandemic.

A newer threat to the space which civil society can freely operate in arose in the latter half of 2020. The Minister of Justice, Legal, and Parliamentary Affairs tabled the Patriot Bill before Parliament. This bill seeks to criminalize private correspondence with foreign governments, or any conduct aimed at undermining

24 Interview on 11/7/20

25 Work parties are gatherings held in rural areas where community members come together to assist one of their members to harvest crops. This is usually a social way of mobilizing community labor in rural areas. Social and community development issues are usually discussed at such work parties.

26 Interview on 11/7/20

27 Interview on 10/30/20

28 https://www.hararecity.co.zw/resources/of/by-laws

29 https://www.techzim.co.zw/2018/01/zimbabwes-informal-sector-largest-africa-second-world/
the country. The government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) cited the Logan Act, a law passed by the US Congress in 1799, to compare its use of legislation to protect the country from undue foreign interference as the U.S. government had once done. Similar to the effect of the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MOPA), which was used to stifle media and freedom of expression, the Patriot Bill is targeted to intimidate Zimbabweans from speaking up and reaching out to allies of civil society at home and abroad by further restricting (with penalties and imprisonment) the space for civil society to operate.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

The challenges that affected CSOs’ abilities to organize and achieve their goals with the State inadvertently created opportunities for the organizations to adapt and create new avenues for driving change. State repression has “forced” CSOs to carry out their interventions as “a collective rather than as individual organizations” so that leaders or organizations are not singled out for victimization by State security institutions or their individual personalities publicly vilified by the State media. Working together has added legitimacy to the demands made by civil society, which makes it difficult for government or ruling party officials to gain public support when they attack the work of CSOs. Collaborations between city-based CSOs and CBOs based in rural areas have enabled national human rights organizations to reach remote areas with limited access to information on civic issues. They have collaborated around building constitutional literacy in marginalized communities or around sensitizing communities so that they are able to demand their rights as enshrined in the constitution.

The constitution enacted in 2013 presented opportunities for CSOs to enact programs around constitutional advocacy and to push for more meaningful legal reforms. CSOs can defend the constitution from unwarranted amendments by the ruling party, and they can advocate for its implementation and popularize it as a basis for citizens to claim their rights and demand service delivery and good governance. Legal reforms—i.e., aligning old laws with the “new” constitution, repealing laws that are ultra vires to the constitution, enacting new legislation as provided in the new constitution—has been very slow, especially when it relates to politically sensitive legislation or issues. Nonetheless, the government has steered legal reforms as a way of building its legitimacy; for example, the draconian Public Order and Security Act was repealed and replaced with the MOPA, the repressive Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act was repealed and replaced with the Freedom to Information Act. CSOs had an opportunity to participate in the respective legal reform processes and, to a certain extent, they were able to influence some provisions of the new laws. Other reforms, such as re-constituting the board of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe and licensing community radio stations, also presented CSOs with advocacy opportunities.

Local government spaces provided opportunities for CSO advocacy around service delivery and social accountability. Local authorities, regardless of party control, were more open to engaging with CSOs on key reforms, and this could be because service delivery issues are deemed less politically sensitive. However, it is easier to work with urban and peri-urban councils that are controlled by opposition parties. For example, the Combined Harare Residents Association successfully lobbied the City of Harare to establish a “budget advisory committee” that is representative of a wide range of actors and interested

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30 Kika, Musa, and Nhara Yassin, “The Proposed Patriotic Bill is all, but Patriotic.” The Standard, October 11, 2020

31 Interview on 11/4/20
parties (e.g., youth, disabled, businesses, informal sector, etc.). The committee provides oversight over budget implementation and conducts mid-year and end of year performance evaluations of city council departments. The Penhalonga Residents and Ratepayers Trust, a rural residents association, successfully lobbied the Mutasa Rural District Council to build a clinic since some residents had to travel long distances to access basic healthcare. The project was co-financed by the International Rescue Committee and the council provided land, equipment, and artisans while the residents association mobilized community labor for the project. The chairperson of the rural residents association noted that it was “easier to work on service delivery and community development issues—sometimes [councils] see us as good partners who can also help mobilize community labor… but it is difficult to work with [councils] on issues of accountability and transparency; they are not cooperative when we start asking questions about how financial resources are being used.”

Finally, constitutional commissions such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), Zimbabwe Gender Commission and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) have created opportunities for CSOs to conduct advocacy work on sensitive political issues. The constitutional commissions appear to be more insulated from political interference from government or the ruling party compared to other government agencies. The constitutional commissions are created through the constitution and they are not directly accountable to the government of the day, though (since they receive funding from the government) sometimes their work can be subjected to undue influence by government officials such as Ministers. By and large, the constitutional commissions are composed of eminent individuals drawn from their respective technical fields and they tend to be more open to engaging with civil society. This has resulted in commissions like the ZHRC signing memorandums of understanding (MoU) with CSOs such as Zimrights. The ZHRC has received reports of rights violations from CSOs that they have investigated, provided recommendations to government agencies, and released public statements condemning the rights violations.

3. USAID CONTRIBUTIONS TO ZIMBABWE’S CIVIL SOCIETY

This section provides a light evaluation of the AT’s understanding of USAID’s contribution to civil society over the last five years. The AT incorporated evaluative questions into its interview templates and reviewed the CSSP final evaluation, the CEADZ Mid-Term learning review, and CEADZ’s reports provided by Pact and USAID to ascertain the following: the extent to which USAID DRG Office support to civil society in Zimbabwe contributed to the evolution of Zimbabwe’s civil society, their sustainability, and their effectiveness; key successes and challenges resulting from USAID’s support to the civil society sector; the effect of successes and challenges on furthering the principles and practices of a functional democratic society in Zimbabwe; and the aspects of USAID’s support to Zimbabwe’s civil society that have not been successful with analysis of what has contributed to the lack of success.

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32 Interview on 11/11/20
33 Interview on 10/31/20
34 Ibid
35 Interview on 10/26
NATURE AND SCOPE OF USAID’S CONTRIBUTION TO CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

The AT’s analysis focuses on the contributions made through USAID’s international implementing partner, Pact, and its Zimbabwean civil society partners. As such, this subsection describes the nature and scope of the CSSP, which concluded in 2016, and the progress made under its current Activity, the CEADZ.

The CSSP (2012–16) provided institutional and technical support to civil society via sub-grants, rapid response grants, and institutional capacity-building to CSOs and CBOs to articulate citizens’ demands and advocate for democratic governance. CEADZ (2017–21) focuses on advancing four major objectives: 1) strengthened citizen advocacy and oversight at multiple levels; 2) advanced CSOs and coalitions implementation of constitutional provisions on accountability, participation, and civil and political rights; 3) empowered women and youth able to engage and drive change; and 4) improved civil society advocacy and representation of citizen views and concerns.

USAID’s support to civil society in Zimbabwe was designed to strengthen the capacity of CSOs and CBOs to articulate and channel citizens’ demands to the government and, more broadly, advocate for democratic and accountable governance. USAID support, implemented by Pact through the CSSP, promoted civil and political rights as well as voter education and mobilization for the 2013 elections. After ZANU-PF’s victory and the passage of a new constitution and bill of rights that same year, new political space opened resulting in a decision by USAID to pivot its approach to connect democratic practices and processes to social and economic rights—water, sanitation, food, shelter, health, and education—that were affecting the everyday lives of Zimbabweans. This pivot was actualized through building the capacity of CSOs in Harare and community-based groups outside the capital to understand how to use the provisions of the new constitution to hold the government accountable. Targeted training in social accountability mechanisms bolstered by grant support to CSOs and CBOs was intended to raise citizens’ voices and build an evidence base for policy change. USAID-sponsored training and grants enhanced the participation of women, youth, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups that had not held positions of political or economic power.

From 2016 to the present, this overall strategy has not varied much; however, some of the tactics have changed to accommodate the new political economy that emerged after the 2018 election. ZANU-PF retained power but changed its leadership. The “quiet coup” that ended Robert Mugabe’s 26 years in power resulted in a similar form of illiberal democracy: Mugabe’s successor, his former Minister of Internal Security, Emmerson Mnangagwa, continues to rule Zimbabwe through intimidation and infiltration of political parties and CSOs with ZANU-PF loyalists.

In the new phase of support to civil society, Pact (together with two Zimbabwean NGOs—YETT, a youth empowerment organization, and the WCoZ, which focuses on advancing the rights of women in Zimbabwe) are implementing the CEADZ activity. CEADZ was designed to support local organizations’ initiatives that contribute to achieving USAID/Zimbabwe’s Development Objective (DO) 3 in USAID/Zimbabwe’s CDCS: “Improved accountable, democratic governance that serves an engaged citizenry.” CEADZ seeks to increase the influence of Zimbabwean citizens, acting collectively through formal and informal groups to promote more democratic and accountable governance.

The CEADZ activity is now in its fourth year of operation. It has invested in both national- and community-level organizations engaged in ensuring government authorities (aka, solution holders) are held...
accountable through constructive dialogue on social, economic, and political concerns that affect the lives of the vast majority of Zimbabweans. Through the use of an applied political economy lens and adaptive management techniques to guide implementation, CEADZ has been able to operate in the ever-shrinking political space. It does this by promoting dialogue on topics that are not explicitly associated with democratic governance or accountability but generate expectations that “solution holders” play by the rules and principles enshrined in the new constitution. Simultaneously, CEADZ was designed to strengthen citizen and CSO capacity and confidence to demand greater government accountability at the ward and district levels. CEADZ focuses on enhancing the capacity and confidence of politically and economically marginalized groups to push for meaningful access to the basic services afforded them in the constitution and bill of rights.

USAID SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

This subsection seeks to provide insights on the USAID DRG Office’s support for the evolution of Zimbabwe’s civil society, its effectiveness, and its sustainability in the past five years. It then provides the AT’s opinions on the successes and challenges and effects of this support.

USAID’S SUPPORT FOR THE EVOLUTION, EFFECTIVENESS, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

USAID has contributed to strengthening the human and organizational capacity of civil society in Zimbabwe over the last five years. The AT’s interviews support the findings from the final evaluation of CSSP, which concluded that CSSP built the capacity of its partners to achieve their goals. USAID, like other international development partners, helped CSOs and activists to stay active in times of closing political space, and to thrive as that space began to open. The extent to which USAID’s financial and technical support influenced key constituencies within ZANU-PF or the bureaucracy is much harder to attribute. The CSSP evaluation concluded that the “incongruity between USAID’s DO and the CSSP results framework (as well as corresponding indicators) makes it difficult to draw direct linkages between CSSP interventions (capacity-building and financial support) and DRG outcomes that contribute to the DO.”

Given the light approach to the evaluative aspects of this assessment, the AT cannot state unequivocally that USAID’s support has led to major policy changes in the GoZ. However, the AT can confidently state that USAID’s investment in civil society has contributed to the sector’s evolution at both national and sub-national levels. Examples of these contributions are illustrated in the sections below.

EFFECTIVENESS—SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: MONITORING DUTY BEARERS’ [GOVERNMENT] PERFORMANCE AND INFLUENCING POLICY

Through its support, USAID has funded a critical element of human rights and democratic governance. Support for CSOs’ social accountability work has been critical because CSOs have managed to maintain some form of pressure on the government. According to one KII participant, “The fact that we have a somewhat vibrant civil society can also be used to point to [the] effectiveness of USAID support.” The government’s often violent and threatening reaction to the monitoring and advocacy efforts of CSOs, many supported by USAID, can be viewed as a form of relevance and effectiveness: “The response has

37 CCSP Final Evaluation 2016
38 Interview on 10/27/20
been effective because the State feels rattled,” indicated one interviewee.\(^{39}\) At some level, a response from the State means work is having an impact. If the work were not impactful, then the State would not feel compelled to threaten civil society.

It would be misleading to state that all GoZ-CSO relations are agnostic. USAID’s grants to civil society encourage finding common causes with government officials who expressed a willingness to uphold their responsibilities as duty bearers. CCJP has engaged with the president’s office on constitutional rights issues. Some grantees with support from CEADZ managed to strengthen their relationship with local authorities. For example, in Mvuma, a USAID grantee gained the confidence of district development coordinators to engage with citizen groups during budget consultations. This was a critical step to ensuring the citizenry is highly engaged in decisions regarding resource allocation in their communities.

Another example is from a CEADZ-supported CBO working to strengthen the skills and confidence of local communities in Binga to engage with duty bearers such as the police. The community in Binga is close to the Zambezi River but, to get a fishing license, they have to travel 900 km to Harare. CBOs have started engaging their local leaders so that they can obtain a fishing license closer to their communities. A similar process is taking place in Mutoko where local communities are beginning to explore ways through which they can also benefit from the mining of granite in their area. And, with USAID’s support, communities in Chiredzi are now working with its local leadership (traditional and governmental) to address the issue of child marriages.

Through its local CEADZ partners, Pact is empowering local communities to demand a share of the natural resource wealth in the areas near where they live. For example, communities in areas rich in timber, clay, and wildlife are not receiving economic benefits from these resources. With support from CEADZ, communities are beginning to assert themselves and to demand a voice in decision-making and compensation for the wealth generated from natural resource exploitation in their midst.

Both YETT and the WocZ have effective results thanks to USAID support. For example, the Young Women in Devolution program has successfully mobilized young women at the ward level to form working groups on accountability, which has strengthened their confidence to participate in local governance. YETT’s Youth Situational Analysis research study was very thorough, resulting in the identification of gaps in programming such as having a quota for youth representatives at all levels of government.

One grant recipient noted that “Most stakeholders have shown interest in working with us because the approach involves trying to engage all key stakeholders to focus on service delivery, which affects everyone irrespective of political persuasion.”\(^{40}\) The use of a stakeholder mapping tool, helped the grantee to identify which individuals within local authorities, local churches, councils, police, and traditional leadership to work with and how to work with them.

\(^{39}\) Interview on 10/30/20

\(^{40}\) Interview on 10/29/20
SUSTAINABILITY—STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL COMPETENCY

To enhance performance and sustain USAID investments, USAID has provided institutional technical support for upgrading internal governance, creating networking opportunities, funding activity implementation, and monitoring and learning from activities. This combination of support to CSOs attracts competent staff who contribute their expertise and dedication to further the effectiveness and sustainability of the organization.

USAID’s main international implementing partner for the CSSP and CEADZ activities, Pact, has a methodology for strengthening an organization’s capacity that was widely appreciated by KIs as useful and effective. Pact tailors its approach to capacity-building based on participatory self-assessments, such as the endline Organizational Performance Index (OPI) tool that measures performance improvements and the baseline ITOCAs, resulting in an institutional strengthening plan which empowers organizations to self-identify the areas of competence that require upgrading.

Through CEADZ and CSSP, Pact’s technical assistance has strengthened the internal systems, processes, and practices of its Zimbabwean civil society partners. Pact partners included well established Harare-based organizations as well as less organized groups based in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas receiving grant funding to improve their internal governance systems and protocols in an effort to enhance their organizational sustainability. In addition to the more traditional training or consultant-based technical assistance, Pact promoted peer-to-peer mentorship to encourage learning and sharing under the CEADZ program. Peer-to-peer mentorship was mostly demand-driven. For example, Habbakuk Trust is an organization working with marginalized communities on natural resource governance. It received a grant from CEADZ through Pact. As part of the grant, Habbakuk Trust was expected to improve its own internal governance while also supporting local CBOs promoting sound and fair natural resource governance.

RESULTS FROM USAID’S SUPPORT TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR

SUCCESSES

USAID’s CSSP activity was able to record numerous successes which can be viewed as key contributors to civil society’s continued resilience. Examples include the vibrancy of advocacy efforts to prevent the imposition of government policies on communities that were not consulted in policy development (e.g., the imposition of prepaid water meters, farming inputs); increasing the role for citizen voices in the lawmaking process through citizen petitions; and making legal challenges to government actions that infringe on citizens’ rights, such as the illegal demolition of urban housing and displacement of vendors.

In the artisanal mining sector, CSSP and its partner Silveira House worked with citizen groups to engage local authorities and mining companies in districts of Hwange and Mutoko that possess vast resources such as coal and granite but whose communities remain impoverished because they receive few benefits from the companies’ mining activities. As a result of CSSP, community groups agitated for employment opportunities, business contracts, and royalties to benefit the local communities.41

41 PACT Brief page 10
In essence, CSSP’s approach facilitated change by funding CSOs to be able to occupy existing democratic space and where possible to expand their presence. CSOs opened pathways for engagement between solution holders and citizens on matters of governance affecting their communities. Given Zimbabwe’s political environment, one that is marred with frequent violence and restrictions to basic freedoms, the ability for national and subnational groups to move the democratic needle forward (or at a minimum, hold it steady) is significant. Grantees concurred that such direct engagement was rare prior to CSSP, as communities were largely polarized and hostile against citizen demands for transparency, accountability, and inclusion in governance decision-making processes.42

Through investment in capacity development approaches that emphasize institutional growth such as ITOCA and OPI as well as GESI assessments, USAID support to civil society groups through CSSP and CEADZ has contributed to more inclusive and functional internal systems, processes, and practices of its civil society partners. These approaches have seen community and urban-based organizations improve their functionality, thereby increasing the potential to achieve results, which, in return, has enhanced the likelihood of survival. As one CEADZ grantee noted, “...we are now stronger as an institution and the work started by USAID can be taken forward even by other funders.”43

Feedback from CEADZ’s grantees suggests that they appreciated the three-year funding timeframe and enabled CSOs to plan, deepen relations within communities, and maintain continuity within interventions. Continuity is important because change takes time. Some grantees were able to create constitutional awareness in communities and have ensured that there are community ambassadors and councilors are invited to engage in key community challenges.

The added value from CEADZ is that there is a deliberate focus on ensuring that CSOs demonstrate how they are working with communities on the margins. CEADZ’s efforts to raise constitutional literacy within communities involve engaging communities on the need to participate in how they are governed. The entry point for this discussion about the constitution was that citizen rights include having meaningful access to basic services. Regarding support for youth groups, the AT noted that, for the most part, USAID priorities were in line with civil society’s goals. However, while most activities focus on political participation, accountability, and political agency of youth, USAID should equally address the economic agency of the youth through integrated programming. Once youths’ basic economic needs are secured, they will be better positioned to effectively participate in political processes and community development.

In terms of GESI, the CEADZ activity includes one objective (objective 3) that is devoted to supporting the participation of youth and women. This puts the inclusion of these two vulnerable groups at the core of project achievements and, in turn, embedded in the promotion of democratic governance, accountability, and transparency. CEADZ mainly targets GESI-oriented organizations whereby they are expected to maintain an active role in developing the capacities and raising awareness of women’s and youth groups at the community level and with local authorities. This approach has provided some tangible results in the form of increasing the presence of women on community decision bodies (e.g., Ward Development Committees and Village Development Committees), traditional structures such as traditional courts, or via more active participation of women in community participatory processes.

42 CSSP Final eval pp 23–24
43 Interview on 10/30/20
DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

To a large extent, CSSP and CEADZ activities have enhanced the participation and visibility of Zimbabweans in democratic and electoral processes, ensuring citizens speak up and their voices are heard by duty bearers and other relevant authorities. Numerous incremental gains have been observed within communities due to CEADZ initiatives. Communities that are CEADZ recipients have been empowered and are initiating and taking up advocacy issues at the grassroots level aimed at developing their communities and improving service provision. Several partners have reported communities are mobilizing resources to build women’s shelters at clinics to enhance service provision for expecting mothers. These communities have further engaged their local authorities to chip in and support their initiative. This suggests communities realize that citizens have a role to play in increasing service provision by using relevant channels and offices to pursue their agenda.

The strategic coordination and collaboration of CSOs is one notable outcome. In addition, the provision of exclusive “safe” spaces for women and youth to convene and make their voices heard ensured that women and youth carved a permanent bargaining position in Zimbabwe’s governance discourse. USAID support also ensured community representation on local governance issues at the grassroots level. The support to CBOs went a long way in promoting citizen participation in decision-making processes, particularly on service delivery issues. The increased participation of communities in local governance processes also helped inculcate a culture of transparency and accountability exhibited by the willingness of “solution holders” to share public documents like budgets and expenditure statements for public scrutiny.

The constitutional rights training particularly helped women to defend their rights to inheritance and to land ownership in a context where women’s economic empowerment initiatives were greatly undermined by women’s dispossession of land and other resources by men at inheritance. Overall, the integration of local governance training and constitutional rights training helped to enhance the capacity of women to advocate for their rights and influence local government decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods. Yet, the findings from CEADZ mid-term learning review showed that some of the training to enhance constitution knowledge was overly theoretical because it did not provide sufficient guidance on how to effectively lobby solution holders.

The support provided by USAID has been critical to maintaining pressure on the government. One respondent noted, “In Zimbabwe, if you want to see whether or not an institution is succeeding, just look at how the Government responds to them. The GoZ continues to be critical of U.S. support because that support has ensured there are Zimbabwean voices that point out the many excesses of the government.”

CHALLENGES

CEADZ PROGRAM LOGIC IS RELEVANT WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The AT sought to assess CEADZ’s program logic in view of the continuous and dynamic changes in the operating context. Overall, CEADZ aims to build the capacity of CSOs to play a stronger role in the Zimbabwe political reform processes by providing them with technical and financial support and organizational development support. As tracked by the CEADZ annual reports, CEADZ outcome-

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44 Interview on 10/28/20
harvesting report, and the interviews with the project partners and direct beneficiaries (sub-grantees), CEADZ’s strategy to preserve shrinking spaces for CSOs’ participation and push for reforms proved relevant to Zimbabwe. In fact, it is considered highly influential in the achievement of program outcomes, having achieved 70 outcomes. Nevertheless, the program logic might present some challenges in terms of the result chain and the way that outcomes are interconnected, with some of them overlapping (e.g., Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1 and IR 3.1) and others not being relevant to the overall project assessment. This is the case with outcomes related to influencing constitutional reforms (e.g., IR 2.1). Given CEADZ’s community focus, there are limited opportunities for communities to influence constitutional reforms, resulting in a “missing link” in the result/logic chain. As the CEADZ mid-term review highlighted and as was also observed by the AT, CEADZ could augment opportunities to link the constitutional literacy activities at the community level with community contributions to larger and wider advocacy actions that can promote bottom-up changes and more democratic reforms. This missing link might lead this aspect of the CEADZ to be viewed as less relevant to the community members and discourage them from continuing their engagement with the project and its activities once the project is finalized. This type of “missing link” was also noticed in other areas of the project, such as in addressing gender and youth issues.

SUPPLY-SIDE (GOVERNMENT) ENGAGEMENT POLICY
The main bottleneck with program design is the limited clarity of the CEADZ’s policy on involving government officials in capacity development. According to some interviewees and also highlighted in the CEADZ mid-term review, it was not clear how much the project could target and involve the local authorities (such as district administrators, youth officers, and gender officers) or traditional leaders for capacity-strengthening. Lack of specific guidance on who can be targeted for training and how much they can be involved has undermined engagement efforts with both national and local solution holders, including chiefs, and other key influential local government actors.

CEADZ supply-side capacity-strengthening is now being addressed via CSO-based training of local communities on roles and responsibilities of government officials, but government officials are not able to effectively respond to these new demands. For example, a village head at the ward level is a quasi-government official and is being trained in roles and responsibilities of effective democratic governance, but they are not the ones in charge of policy implementation. That is a function of district-level officials, not ward-level officials. In fact, the aspect of engaging and capacitating solution holders and duty bearers has been a struggle for some CSOs because of the lack of clarity about who the target groups and final beneficiaries are in relation to formal and informal community and local authorities.

LEVEL OF PARTNER ENGAGEMENT IN DESIGN AND LEARNING
Feedback from some interviewees showed a degree of frustration with the lack of their substantive engagement in the design of the grant activities, as well as feedback from Pact’s monitoring of their progress on implementation of their projects. There was a general sense that Pact could have spent more time engaging with CSOs when designing their activities by helping them to better assess the risks and better identify target groups, including applying a GESI approach to needs assessment analysis or timely assistance to sub-grantees who reported a struggle to report according to the grant requirements. While

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45 CEADZ Outcoming Harvesting Report (draft) December 2020

46 For example, the youth mapping/study was a missed opportunity to link support to youth at the community level with the policy level.
many partners did not mention this as a problem, some interviewees reported that the lack of learning loops and feedback mechanisms affected CSO’s capacity to make key adjustments during the program implementation and, hence, increase effectiveness. These limited opportunities for feedback from Pact to the beneficiaries and mutual learning were attributed to a rigid approach to grants management that may have been too results-focused, overlooking key processes such as feedback/learning loops on key issues.

The limited mutual learning opportunities further undermine the possibility to forge collaboration, networking, and information sharing among CEADZ partners. Through the analysis of the project implementation structure, the team observed that the relationship between Pact and its beneficiaries is vertical with few horizontal relations among sub-grantees, similar to a donor-recipient relationship rather than a partnership. For example, activities related to creating learning and networking platforms through cluster meetings or putting organizations working in similar issues or geographic areas in contact to discuss common challenges and possible solutions has not happened. Instead, according to the CEADZ MTR lessons learned, the absence of horizontal relationships among project grantees has resulted in limited collective action and solidarity and even duplication of activities, deficit knowledge systems, and the inefficient use of resources.

OUTREACH AND BENEFICIARY TARGETING ISSUES MIGHT BE UNDERMINING PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

Despite CEADZ’s considerable outreach efforts to communities outside Harare, the project seems to have a natural bias toward working in urban areas due to the level of government control over rural areas. However, support for Harare-based CSOs that are proficient at report writing as well as talking with and criticizing the government in the media may not be that useful to ordinary Zimbabweans compared to supporting CBOs to build their own agency at the community level without necessary confrontation with the government.\(^\text{47}\) According to Pact’s recent outcome harvesting exercise, only 40 percent of districts were engaged in some aspects of CEADZ’s programming. One of the main obstacles to engaging with local communities relates to CEADZ’s failure to assess dynamics at the local level and establish strong links with existing community governance structures (VIDCOs, WADCOs, Village Assemblies and Health Committees) in some areas, particularly where political spaces are closed. This has not only occurred because of shrinking space for public participation but also due to the need to reach the communities that pushed partner organizations without previous experience or with limited experience to work with communities and/or in new geographic areas, which requires first to build trust.

Insufficient internal capacity among partners to conduct robust political economy/situation analysis and come up with strategies for building trust and engagement in unfavorable contexts has further exacerbated an effective engagement with local communities. For some of these more marginalized CBOs, the lack of capacity to anticipate political and economic change and adapt simultaneously has often resulted in the disruption of activity implementation in some areas, especially in politically restrictive districts where political leaders are hostile to civil society. Within this context and under certain pressure to deliver results, the preferred option for grantees has been creating parallel community structures and networks that are not connected to existing local governance structures. Working through these parallel networks/structures has often led to weak community buy-in of CEADZ activities, conflict and tension between CEADZ representatives and local community leaders, and the under-strengthening of existing

\(^{47}\) Such as Silveria House, a Roman Catholic organization with good relations with powerful ruling party leaders and senior government officials, but training police officers on human rights and community peace-building.
local community governance structures. In fact, some of the interviewees feared that these structures are “artificial” and likely to disappear once the project funding ends, putting the sustainability of the CEADZ’s achievements at risk.

RESILIENCE OF CEADZ PARTNERS
Closely linked to targeting issues, a financial sustainability challenge exists in the civil society sector and there is a general feeling that CEADZ has insufficiently strengthened the financial resilience of some of its partners. They need to continue providing support to CSOs in fundraising after they have completed USAID-supported projects and, thus, have an “exit strategy” which does not exist today, especially for the smaller and non-Harare-based CSOs and CBOs. Based on the feedback provided by interviewees, it is also observed that CEADZ is not making efforts to change its approach to financial sustainability to move toward self-reliance.

THE REALITY OF COMPLIANCE AND THE NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY
Sometimes the rigid focus on compliance results in a loss of flexibility to engage within informal but effective spaces. Some interviewees mentioned that USAID’s funding approach has not been flexible to allow for adaptation, which is problematic because of Zimbabwe’s politically and economically challenging operating environment. CSOs need to be highly flexible to seize the few windows of opportunity that open. Unfortunately, the complexity of the program and rules to be followed does not easily allow for such flexibility. An example is that when there were currency changes, a CEADZ partner CSO could not obtain approvals to pay their monitors in cash, resulting in the loss of data collection because they could not give them allowances.

GESI MAINSTREAMING IS NOT TRANSLATED INTO INCLUSIVENESS
Despite the CEADZ’s intentional inclusion of GESI organizations to support vulnerable groups, GESI seems to have been only partially integrated into the project design and implementation. First, the CEADZ GESI approach mainly targets women and youth, diminishing the focus on PWD and other vulnerable groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI). Secondly, the overall project design lacks a GESI assessment that informs GESI within the overall CEADZ implementation as well as how GESI mainstreaming will be ensured at the level of sub-grantees. The activity has delivered a sectoral GESI assessment, concretely in Artisanal Small Scale Mining, which might be helpful to mainstream GESI if it is used to design projects/actions in this sector. This type of assessment is, however, lacking at the overall project level, which leads to a very weak GESI sensitivity to the activity. Thirdly, the fact that GESI is not part of the internal governance assessment of partner organizations results in an ad hoc GESI approach that does not provide sufficient capacity development nor incentives for CSOs to mainstream GESI in an effective manner. Moreover, the current GESI approach is not paying adequate attention to differences within the socially marginalized groups, including intersectional and cross-cutting issues within these groups. CEADZ’s project reports fail to provide disaggregated M&E data on beneficiaries that is broken down by sub-categories of age, region, class, or level of education underpinned by an analysis on how activities have promoted or challenged traditional beliefs and social norms (e.g., patriarchy or addressed intersectionality). Instead, a narrow GESI approach biased toward women and youth is seen as sufficient, reporting some data that is disaggregated by sex in the reports but leaving other gender diversities and PWD out of the project scope.

48 MTR lesson learned 3
CSO TRANSPARENCY AND LEADERSHIP

On the one hand, there were concerns that some of the work initiated and funded by USAID, especially focusing on democracy and governance, may not have been as successful as it could have been because some of the CSOs that were at the forefront were also not very transparent. According to some interviewees, exposure of corruption in CSOs had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the work supported by USAID. Concretely, “some CSOs cannot point the finger at the government when their own houses are not in order. Many have their own issues of corruption.” On the other hand, CSO leadership is assumed by courageous activists who are known and trusted by the larger community, resulting in a reluctance to change leadership—even if these leaders have serious deficiencies. However, this has deleterious effects on the sector because it inhibits the natural growth of new leadership. It also further undermines any attempt to achieve gender equality at the decision-making level within the CSOs as most of these activists are men and, thus, the trust and loyalties remain among men.

CEADZ OVERALL

Its three objectives/component areas remain relevant and are well-designed. They have the potential to address some of the ongoing challenges in Zimbabwe. It has also been able to penetrate the decentralized level, which has historically been neglected due to high politicization and the political polarization of the country. It is also important to highlight the attempt to increase the involvement of groups at risk of vulnerability and, in turn, make CSOs more inclusive.

However, the AT observed that, while linkages between the three objectives were made in the project document, they are not sufficiently demonstrated during the implementation, which could explain the lack of integrated results. In fact, some of the results are overlapping in the way they are measured and reported (e.g., improved participation and inclusion of marginalized groups and improved civic participation) instead of reporting the same result using disaggregated data or establishing logic links between outcomes (e.g., improved civic participation and improved citizen voice).

Furthermore, the AT finds a gap in the way the project is being monitored. Despite the number of tools to monitor and assess project performance, what it provides is rather subjective qualitative information, mainly supplied by the partners themselves. Quantitative information is generally missing (e.g., the number of people involved) as well as objective assessments of project results (e.g., capacities or skills developed). Reports are focused on describing specific changes attained in a specific context, not at an aggregated level, and as a result of a “one-shot” action that can be considered outputs, rather than outcomes. These outcomes are often repeated across the document with very limited analysis of the changes eventually achieved as a result of the action (outcomes) in the medium term.

At the strategic level, CEADZ does not seem to have integrated well with other sectors—i.e., livelihoods, health, or education—that have more traction at the community level and that could benefit from a governance component. Trying to engage in meaningful dialogue about constitutional amendments to communities that are hungry shows how disconnected (or driven by negative incentives) from the local reality some Harare-based CSOs can be. One interviewee bluntly stated a common theme: “You need to

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49 Interview on 10/23/20
link governance with some specific sector, otherwise people are not interested.”

Thus, the architecture needs to change toward including a specific governance objective in the other sectors.

Finally, it is also important to note the gap between the logic of strengthening CSOs as a way to strengthen the civil society sector. Despite CSOs being strengthened through CEADZ, the underlying problems of fragmentation within the sector, “monopolizing” leaderships, legitimacy and credibility issues, and competition for political space and financial resources still hinder the sector. The focus on individual organizations might even be increasing the competition for funding while deepening the fragmentation of the sector.

4. POLITICAL ECONOMY FACTORS

This section reviews how the current political and economic context influences the operating environment for different types of civil society actors. The AT applied a stakeholder analysis of civil society’s relationship with national and subnational actors to assess the current and likely future issues affecting civil society’s prospects today and in the future. The AT then assessed the factors that influence internal CSO governance, including the independence of governing boards, leadership challenges, and infiltration and co-option by government agents.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

NATIONAL-LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS

CSOs characterized their relationship with the government as confrontational, collaborative, and continually shifting. Relationships also differed depending on sectors or issues addressed. Relationships between civil society and government were also mediated by personal relations (especially with bureaucrats, who were considered more cooperative than politicians). The AT documented differences in relationships between civil society and government at the national and sub-national levels.

Confrontations between government and civil society stem from suspicions by the government that CSOs are funded to pursue a regime change agenda. A key informant outlined that the government deliberately creates a narrative that conflates civil society with the opposition. This is intended to delegitimize civil society and frame them as fronts for the opposition. Another key informant stated that the government is sensitive to criticism and intimidation. Violence and threats are therefore designed to deter organizations from pointing out shortcomings of the State. Other key informants highlighted that confrontational relationships between government and CSOs stem from a confrontational approach adopted by civil society toward government. The key informant remarked that “some CSOs are too confrontational in their approach and the government responds with threats, intimidation, and outright violence.”

50 Interview on 11/06/20
51 Interview on 11/06/20
52 Interview on 10/14/20
53 Interview on 11/13/20
A key informant from one of the social movements captured this perspective by stating that, “From our experience as a social movement, our approach towards the government was adversarial and confrontational. We had ten points of engagement—the number one demand was that President Mugabe should leave office, and the other nine points were dependent on the point that President Mugabe would leave...there was no room for positive engagement with the government led by President Mugabe. Our approach was direct confrontation with little room for engagement.” The government’s use of legislation\(^{54}\) to close civic space further points to the difficult relationship that exists. The government recently refused to facilitate a meeting between a delegation from South Africa’s African National Congress and civil society as well as the opposition.

Collaborative relationships exist between civil society and government in sectors and issues that are deemed non-threatening to the government’s hegemony. A key informant outlined that the government collaborates on issues “such as children’s rights and food security/relief/humanitarian relief.”\(^{55}\) Collaboration in such sectors was reported because the government does not feel threatened. In addition, key informants outlined that relationships between civil society and the government are collaborative in the women’s empowerment sector as well as within the health sector, to an extent. Collaborations in the health sector were mostly at service delivery levels and, with CSOs that work on health rights, the relationships were often hostile. Organizations such as the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights have consistently been targeted by the government, illustrating the sometimes-hostile nature of relations.

The AT documented a further strand of relationships which it defined as situational. Respondents outlined that relationships with the government are not static. Government approaches to engagement are dependent on how they perceive the issue as well as the benefits of engagement. A key example of the government’s situational approach to engagement is how ZANU-PF engaged civil society to demonstrate support of the November 17, 2017 coup. A key informant outlined that “where the government feels there is political mileage to be gained, they collaborate with civil society; but where there are no perceived benefits, they do not cooperate.”\(^{56}\) Government departments do not relate in a homogenous way with civil society. Those from the security sector were often characterized as hostile while those in the social services were often characterized as cooperative.

**SUB-NATIONAL-LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS**

At the sub-national level, the relationship with the government is fraught with suspicion. The government reportedly allowed civil society to operate, though there are always suspicions. A respondent from a CBO outlined that their “interactions with [the government] at the local level are formal, informal, and sometimes [using] personal relations. With the government, you cannot use one strategy. As an organization, you need to be able to nurture different kinds of partnerships and utilize whichever is applicable within prevailing circumstances.”

Some respondents at the sub-national level noted that the closer the CSO is to the community level, the easier it is to work with the government. This was attributed to the fact that communities are close

\(^{54}\) Interview on 11/23/20

\(^{55}\) Interview on 11/07/20

\(^{56}\) Interview on 11/4/20
together, maintain relationships, and are less likely to be antagonistic toward each other irrespective of differences in perspective. The key informant further outlined that “the higher you go, the grandstanding from government increases, the scrutiny increases, and their potential to harass you also increases.”

Relationships characterized by suspicion curtail the work of CSOs and reportedly results in self-censorship where CSOs deliberately work and engage in ways that do not result in the government victimizing them. Personal relationships with government officials provide opportunities for CSOs to use the space they have to try to advocate for reforms and not lose the gains made thus far. CBOs have the highest potential to exploit relations with the government, as they can provide access to communities while ensuring national-level CSOs tackle issues that are perceived as controversial.

CIVIL SOCIETY—GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Respondents cited violence as the biggest risk involved when they engage with the government. They provided examples of civil society actors and human rights defenders who were abducted, arrested on fabricated charges, and sometimes harassed. A human rights defender who was abducted asserted that the government deliberately uses violence to silence actors who are viewed as posing a threat to the dominant narratives that it supports.

Further, the human rights defender highlighted that “even after she had been abducted, there have been continued threats directed at her while her organization has continually been intimidated.” The violence is systematic and goes beyond abductions. The organization has not been able to get MoUs with authorities in locations where they want to work. The key informant went on to say that “as soon as the people within Rural District Authorities hear my name, they become hesitant. This kind of stigma follows you everywhere and people are afraid of being victimized because of association.”

There are also risks of intimidation where the government, through the president, makes pronouncements that characterize civil society as terrorists and set the agenda for their harassment. A key informant from an organization that coordinated the development of a pastoral letter that was critical of the government reported facing threats and being forced to cease providing civic education in one of the provinces. The respondent remarked that “we had been working with the government, even police and those from the Police Internal Security and Intelligence unit department. When the pastoral letter was published and the President publicly criticized the church, our relations at [the] community level changed. They became more hostile and, in one of the districts, we were asked to stop conducting civic education activities completely.”

Apart from the above, the other risk involved in engaging with the government included attacks and denunciation by colleagues in civil society. Key informants outlined that there were increasing trends of CSOs labeling each other State security agents. A key informant stated that the constitution-making processes exposed such fissures among civil society where those who chose to participate in the process

57 Interview on 11/28/20
58 Interview on 10/30/20
59 Interview on 11/03/20
were labeled as being “captured.” However, when the constitution was adopted, those CSOs who refused to participate used it to advance their agenda.

The AT did not document many strategies being adopted by civil society to mitigate against the risk of engaging with the government. Respondents reported working with the government, notifying relevant departments of planned activities, and sometimes allowing government representatives to accompany them as a key strategy in mitigating against risks. This is premised on the understanding that if the government knows about activities, it is less likely to harass CSOs. Another mitigation measure involved participation in the district development meetings to ensure the organization is known and possibilities of harassment are reduced. However, this is difficult for organizations perceived to be hostile to the government because participation in district development meetings only applies to organizations with MoUs. However, CSOs viewed as hostile to the government are often denied MoUs.

The nature of the relationships between CSOs and the government provides opportunities and threats to the role and impact of CSOs. There are opportunities in that government agitation with CSOs means the work (of CSOs) is effective and can be a deterrent to undemocratic practices. Government agitation towards CSOs illustrates the effectiveness of such activities. On another level, strained relationships between CSOs and the government curtail potential impact as activities are sometimes suspended while employees of CSOs are harassed and sometimes arrested.

CIVIL SOCIETY WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The AT documented minimal engagements between civil society and the private sector. The private sector’s potential to engage was reportedly informed by politics and profit. Respondents outlined that linkages between the State and businesses mean the private sector is cautious not to engage with democracy and governance. Associating with CSOs can potentially result in a loss of business and victimization. Where relationships existed, the private sector reportedly engaged where it did not feel politically threatened. Key informants highlighted that the private sector provided donations and supported philanthropic endeavors. A key informant outlined that the private sector has a stronger relationship with “whomever they feel gives them mileage.” The private sector reportedly has stronger relationships with organizations working on issues related to women/youth/PWD because “these groups are considered safe ground in terms of politics.” A respondent from a trade union outlined that the private sector in Zimbabwe infringes on the rights of workers and they have no incentive to engage with civil society, especially as that engagement can result in their practices being questioned.

The perception that CSOs pursue a regime change agenda has reportedly contributed to the private sector’s lack of willingness to engage with civil society. A key informant remarked that “the State is vindictive and the private sector is aware of it…being viewed as supporting a regime change agenda is bad for business.” Engagement is curtailed by the fear of victimization. The AT documented that the private sector does not want to engage because there are no opportunities for increasing profit by engaging with CSOs.

60 A term often used to refer to an entity being paid/sponsored to pursue an agenda.
61 Interview 11/6/20
62 Interview 11/4/20
Civil society respondents highlighted that they have not adequately developed and executed a coherent private sector engagement strategy. There has not been a “business case” for the involvement of the private sector in democracy and governance. A key informant remarked that “the private sector is in business to make money…that is what motivates them…I do not think we, as civil society, have done enough to make sure they understand the relationship between good governance and potential for improving business performance.”

Further, the absence of a strong private sector coordination structure contributes toward limited engagement between the private sector and civil society.

The AT documented that where relationships exist between civil society and the private sector, it involved the private sector donating money to specific initiatives through their corporate social responsibility programs. Key informants outlined that the private sector sometimes engages them in order to obtain access to communities. A respondent from an organization specializing in performing arts remarked that “the private sector sometimes contracts us to perform in communities but it is never sustained…we work with them when they want our services.”

Overall, CSOs want resources from the private sector while the private sector wants value or short-term return on investment. CSOs have experienced difficulty creating value that will incentivize the private sector to participate. Government threats and continued informalization mean the private sector engages cautiously without compromising its relationships with the government.

CIVIL SOCIETY WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

The AT noted the existence of relationships between civil society and political parties, especially the opposition. Respondents outlined that relationships between civil society and opposition political parties are often strengthened because of the “convergence of priorities.” The convergence of priorities between civil society and opposition political parties has contributed to the government equating CSOs to the opposition. Respondents outlined that the relationship between CSOs and parties is strong and this has contributed to curtailing their independence. A key informant remarked that “CSOs have become incubator opposition politicians…that has taken away some of CSOs credibility…it has also limited that range of issues that CSOs have been able to address.”

The relationship between civil society and ZANU-PF has been punctuated by threats from the latter, even though the two interact, especially when ruling party officials are invited to participate in CSO activities. This stems from the perception that CSOs seek to replace the ZANU-PF government. There were instances where different opposition parties converged with youth CSOs under the auspices of Tajamuka, which is a social movement. A key informant from a social movement remarked that theirs “was a different kind of a social movement—it was a coalition of youth wings for opposition political parties, youth organizations, and youth assemblies of other membership-based CSOs. We engaged with opposition political parties on that basis of being a broad social movement with political parties as members.”

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63 Interview on 11/7/20
64 Interview on 11/7/20
65 Interview on 11/04/20
66 Interview on 10/26/20
A respondent from a trade union highlighted that the relationship between civil society and opposition political parties is inevitable because “opposition political parties emerged from CSOs.”[6] Relations between CSOs and political parties have evolved and “there is an increasing realization that CSO relationship with the opposition has not been mutually beneficial—there is a tendency of opposition taking CSOs for granted. It is no longer like 1999 or 2007/8 where opposition used CSO as a sounding board for getting ideas and for collaborating in interventions. It’s a marriage of convenience, so it subsists because there is a shared quest for change, they are victimized together, and they come under attack together.”[67]

**CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

Relationships between CSOs and international development partners were characterized as cordial but asymmetrical. They were anchored on “a shared agenda toward democratization and reforms.” However, CSOs outlined that “donors control resources, so they have power over the prioritization of interventions; sometimes CSOs do not necessarily determine the programming priorities. Consultations occur between CSOs and donors now and then but there is no deep trust that allows CSOs to determine the priorities even though they are the ones on the ground.”[68] Some respondents mentioned that there has been minimal co-creation of interventions between CSOs and funding partners. This has reportedly contributed toward challenges in the extent to which CSOs successfully pursue an agenda that is organic.

**CIVIL SOCIETY CONSTITUENCY RELATIONSHIPS**

The AT documented that CSOs generally prioritize relationships with their constituencies. This occurs because CSOs derive their legitimacy from constituencies. A key informant from a trade union representing rural teachers remarked that “we are a member-based organization; it is imperative to work through the membership which is our primary constituency—otherwise our existence does not make any sense.” However, some representatives of civil society reported that some CSOs are elitist and out of touch with the grassroots. There were also perceptions that the inability of some CSOs to work with or engage constituencies reportedly results in loss of legitimacy, relevance, and funding.

CBOs collaborate through sharing trainings, workshops, and joint meetings. They also share resources and expertise while providing solidarity with each other, such as commemorations of Operation Hakudzokwe[69] every November in Bocha District hosted by local communities, CBOs, and some national CSOs such as the Center for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG). CBOs face challenges of gatekeeping by founding members who refuse/fail to draw upon the younger generation with diverse skills who can help the work.

Competition exists among CSOs and between CSOs and CBOs even though they also work together. Most CBOs reported not having received direct funding from donors, so most programs are brought by organizations from Harare. This reportedly results in mis-prioritization as programs brought from Harare may not be a high priority for communities. CBOs reported being left with no choice but to collaborate

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67 Interview on 10/30/20
68 Interview on 10/23/20
with Harare-based organizations that have the resources. Further, CBOs suggested the possibility of forming coalitions among themselves in order to improve coordination as well as to map out their issues and prioritize issues so that when Harare CSOs come, the CBOs can influence the implementation of programs that are relevant to their respective communities. Perspectives from social movements were that... “social movements do not always stay for long because their demands are usually short-term, they are angry, and they disagree with the government and then disappear after a short time—that was the fate of one prominent social movement. The 2017 coup, the coming in of a so-called new dispensation, and the 2018 election somehow led to the decline of the prominence and influence of the social movement over the past 4–5 years.” This may point to the potential effectiveness of issue-driven social movements in addressing some issues. It also points to challenges faced by CSOs in being consistently relevant and pursuing a sustained agenda.

Social movements are made up of diverse groups of people with different interests that converge because they need to demonstrate against a certain issue. Diversity of interest becomes a source of conflict and disagreement, which can affect the work of the social movements. Lack of adequate funding also affects the ability of social movements to organize. For example, Tajamuka was not an online movement; it was physically present and organizing required money, but the fluid nature of the movement (without proper structures) was not attractive to donor funding. Threats and hostility from the State weakened social movements and the lack of capacity to provide wide and adequate social safety nets for activists who are under attack from the State also discouraged people from joining the movement. They would calculate the risks against the support mechanisms that are available. Fear of State repression has weakened the capacity of social movement activists to properly organize.

INTRA-CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

The AT documented insights that characterized relationships within CSOs as collaborative, competitive, and non-existent. Relationships were characterized as collaborative where CSOs reportedly came together to implement initiatives. Examples included CSOs converging together to oppose the second constitutional amendment. Respondents reported that CSOs came together to interrogate the issue of a women’s quota in parliament. In addition, respondents reported that collaborations were necessitated by the need to have a consolidated voice on key advocacy issues. Issue-based collaborations took place whose existence did not transcend the challenge that necessitated their formation. Further, respondents cited collaboration based on funding partner recommendations. This was reported to be a result of funding partners recommending partnerships to leverage the different strengths of CSOs. These were reported to be effective only if each of the partners within consortia were provided with their own resources.

Competition among civil society actors was attributed to limited resources within the DRG sector. One respondent noted that there is competition for resources and competition within and between organizations. They cited the fall of the Crisis Coalition as a result of factions that were competing for space within the organization due to rivalries. There is also competition for space as some CSOs try to outdo each other to impress funding partners and potentially attract funding. Differing approaches reportedly contribute to competition. One key informant remarked:

70 Interview on 10/24/20
Relationships are based on mutual identity as a sector working on the same agenda. But the approaches are now different—e.g., in November 2017, some were saying ‘let us give the new government a chance’ and others were adamant that ‘we should not let our guard down because the so-called new government could not be trusted’…you now hear CSOs saying that some organizations have been captured by the State through infiltration and co-optation and some have been co-opted by the opposition—this has led to rivalries and disdain between such groups (internal polarization within the sector).

The AT noted that Zimbabwean CSOs have rarely worked collectively but, in the last few years, there has been more collective action and engagement among civic groups, which has helped to influence positive changes. For instance, during the 2018 elections, CSOs managed to collectively work together in mobilizing citizens to register to vote under the GoZimbabwe campaign and the result was an increase in the number of people who registered to vote. CSOs also worked collectively to campaign against the government’s recent attempts to amend the Constitution and the result was that many people who attended parliament’s public hearings on the Constitution Amendment Bill spoke out against the Bill.

The AT noted that CSOs are finding benefits in collective action in and between sectors. While CSOs have mostly clustered in accordance with sectors to push for policy change in their respective areas, as a result of NANGO, this is changing and there is cross-cluster information sharing and division of labor based on the expertise required. For example, if the nature of the advocacy work is community mobilization vs. analyzing contracts vs. reviewing draft legislation, an agreement is reached on which group(s) should be devoted to the task. The Publish What You Pay campaign consists of more than 80 organizations working together, sharing information to lobby and divide tasks based on expertise to make progress on policy reform in the extractive sector. CNRG is very good at citizen mobilization and public campaigns, while ZELA is skilled at policy analysis—this trend cuts across sectors. By working to achieve goals that cut across sectors, CSOs have learned to know which organization the State will listen to on a particular topic, and they have achieved greater success.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

There is a fairly strong perspective among CSOs interviewed for the assessment that internal governance systems within most organizations have improved over the last five years and an equally candid acceptance that there are still glaring gaps in internal governance systems in the same organizations. The AT observed that most organizations now have clearly defined financial management systems in place that guide internal funds disbursements and expenditures; fair and transparent procurement and tendering procedures; diligent internal and external financial reporting mechanisms; well-defined fraud prevention, detection, and reporting mechanisms; investments towards financial management software; improved adherence to funder requirements; and segregated responsibilities in managing finances. They also boast qualified persons responsible for day-to-day financial management. The organizations also have oversight mechanisms—i.e., management and boards—that monitor and review financial management periodically. Levels of conflict within organizations related to the management of organizational financial resources were also reported to have decreased over the last five years, and the same applied to reduced reports.

71 Interview on 11/13/20
of organizations being stripped of their funding because of weak internal systems.\textsuperscript{72} There have been relatively healthy turnovers of executive directors of CSOs and, in most cases, they were replaced by senior staff from the organizations. This is said to be an indication that there was a respectable level of leadership succession, but it is difficult to claim that the CSOs have well-resourced succession plans in place.

Though most CSOs have internal governance systems in place, there is still a wide gap between having such systems and adhering to them at all times. Several challenges or weaknesses related to adhering to internal governance persist in most organizations. At the top of the list is the lack of adequate funding to enable the organizations to adhere to high standards of internal governance:

Most CSOs do not receive funding to operationalize and strengthen their internal governance; we do receive funding to engage consultants who help us develop very good financial management and corporate governance policies, but it ends there. We are not given funding to regularly train our boards, to hold regular board meetings and annual general meetings, or to carry out other corporate governance functions that are not directly related to managing a specific grant we are implementing. Succession in most organizations is ‘accidental’ because we do not invest in it—we do not train middle-level staff to prepare to take over executive management roles in the event that the director leaves.\textsuperscript{73}

Some of the CSOs interviewed also indicated that most organizations fail to attract high-caliber individuals to join their boards because, “unlike in the private sector where Board members are remunerated, most CSOs do not have funds earmarked to support and remunerate boards to carry out their fiduciary functions with diligence. The fact is that, at most, the board members will be donating their time and this means the quality of skills and competencies you get is low and the commitment can also be low.”\textsuperscript{74}

The challenge of “corporate incest,” a situation where one individual can sit on several CSO boards while some directors of the same CSOs are on the board of the same individual, still persists within the sector. The respondents differed on the reasons why corporate incest persists in the rights CSO sector. On the one hand, there is a perception that human rights advocacy work poses high security risks and it is possible that State security agents can infiltrate rights CSOs if “unknown” people join the boards of organizations. In that case, most CSOs prefer appointing known activists or CSO leaders to their boards and, in the end, those people can be found on several boards. Another related reason was that there are fewer well-trained and competent individuals among activists who can be appointed to boards so they are invited to join several boards within the same sector. On the other hand, there is also a perception that corporate incest is a direct result of nepotism: “in some organizations, board members are not chosen on the basis of their competency but on the basis of personal relationships and alliances. In some cases, the secretariat wields too much power up to a level of handpicking those who sit on the board, especially when the executive director is the founder member of the CSO.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Interview on 10/26/20
\textsuperscript{73} Interview on 11/4/20
\textsuperscript{74} Interview on 11/21/20
\textsuperscript{75} Interview on 11/30/20
Also, an agreed-upon regulatory framework for CSOs does not exist that binds CSOs to follow specific standards in constituting boards. For instance, there are no rules that bar CSO leaders from sitting on the boards of more than 1 or 2 CSOs and, as a result, in some cases, networks of friends/colleagues sit on several boards. The lack of term limits for board membership has also resulted in situations where some board members have sat on boards for a lifetime.76

Additional weaknesses in CSO internal governance were listed as follows:

- Abuse of financial and other organizational resources by senior leadership.
- Nepotism (employing relatives and friends into the secretariat).
- Lack of adherence to, or violation of, internal democratic systems for selecting leadership.
- “Founder mentality syndrome” of people who founded and have led organizations for a long time; such people cannot be challenged, opposed, or replaced and they usually determine who is appointed to their boards.
- Lack of capacity to enforce internal governance policies because “CSOs are not employing the right people for the job—there is no transparency in employment processes—even someone without a degree can be employed as a research officer.”77

5. ASSESSING CIVIL SOCIETY AND GESI

This section reviews the extent to which CSOs have been able to promote GESI. In particular, it seeks to understand the power dynamics within civil society (organizations and culture) that may be inhibiting or preventing women, youth, ethnic minorities, and PWD from fully participating in their agency.

Promoting gender equality means providing equal opportunities, achieving equal rights, and sharing responsibilities between all genders. Social inclusion is the process through which socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged groups and individuals within a society can improve their ability, opportunity, and dignity regardless of their identity. The GESI approach supports more inclusive policies and mindsets while increasing the voice and influence of all, particularly the segments of the population considered at risk of vulnerability. In the present study, women, youth, and PWD are considered vulnerable groups at risk of being socially excluded. According to recent data from Zimbabwe’s National Statistics Agency78, women represent 52 percent of Zimbabwe’s population, and about 40 percent are under the age of 15. PWD are estimated to constitute around 9 percent of the population.

GESI should not be seen only as a fundamental aspect of human rights and social justice, but also as a precondition for democratic governance and sustainable development by putting social concerns at the core of any intervention. It is widely acknowledged that States and societies underpinned by inclusive institutions tend to be more democratic, legitimate, resilient, and peaceful. Extensive research shows that

76 Interview on 10/22/20
77 Interview on 20 October 2020, Harare
inclusiveness is necessary to avoid conflict in any peaceful political process. Therefore, GESI should be part of the mission, vision, and objectives of any CSO and any work toward enhancing human rights, transparency, and accountability of public institutions; in other words, DRG organizations.

**CURRENT SITUATION OF GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE CSOS LANDSCAPE—STATE OF PLAY**

GESI CSOs have been a powerful driving force in lobbying the GoZ to adopt measures to recognize and protect some of their rights. Women’s groups, youth, and organizations representing PWD have successfully lobbied the government to ratify international conventions and transpose them into national laws. It was generally agreed among the interviewees that there has been considerable cooperation among CSOs representing these groups to get these conventions signed. Today, these CSOs are widely acknowledged as the champions in representing the interests of these vulnerable groups and promoting their rights and they are likely the most compliant with international conventions related to GESI within the sector. In fact, they seem to be considered by other CSOs as responsible for ensuring and promoting GESI and, in turn, the sole organizations responsible for progressing gender equality and social inclusion in Zimbabwe’s society.

However, levels of participation and access to civic space differ between these groups. Among the well over 1,000 organizations that are believed to exist in Zimbabwe, women’s groups and youth organizations are among the most relevant and active of the DRG CSOs organizations overall, while PWD and organizations working for gender diversity represent a minority. There are two main reasons for this. First, women and youth groups tend to represent the two largest proportions of the population within Zimbabwe society, while the population size of PWD is much smaller and the size of the LGBTQI community is unknown. Second, a combination of legal, cultural, and physical barriers that will be further discussed in this section can undermine the voices of CSOs representing those minority groups. As one of the organizations representing people with disabilities said, “people fear people with disabilities as they are believed to be the result of infidelity, sorcery, or that disability is contagious.” While women’s and youth organizations are enjoying more acceptance within society and more opportunities for policy influence, the PWD and LGBTQI communities are struggling to be recognized.

**GESI AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL**

The assessment of GESI mainstreaming at the organizational level focuses on understanding the existing internal and external forces that influence CSOs’ governance policies, implementation instruments, and mechanisms to promote GESI within their organizations. In general terms, the team noticed that the existence of certain levels of GESI awareness within the CSOs interviewed had, in some cases, been translated into the adoption of specific policies and strategies to address GESI issues. Actually, there is a

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79 For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, into domestic laws and in the constitution; African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance; gender quota in Parliament; Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

80 For example, gender issues are seen as the jurisdiction of women’s rights organizations, or women themselves claim this space.


82 LGBTQI and others.

83 Through this research, it was stated that about 9 CSOs, including the umbrella organization.
general perception that systematic incorporation or “mainstreaming” of a GESI perspective has increasingly been observed within CSOs although, as a leader of women’s organization stated, “they have not fully institutionalized gender issues within their organizations.”

Participants in this study widely noted that mainstream civil society was male-dominated, especially the political space occupied by DRG organizations. These organizations, which are more confrontational with the State, are not as open to diversity as one might expect. Even though women and LGBTQI activists are present within these spaces and are as strong-willed as other DRG organizations in defending human rights, the space remains male-dominated and, as such, governed by patriarchal and cultural norms systematically excluding women, youth, and PWD and other gender diversities. The situation is further heightened by religion and other cultural and traditional norms that stigmatize these groups.

Positive trends were attributed mainly to GESI becoming a requirement for those delivering large-scale development programs, including the provision of both technical and financial assistance to ensure GESI mainstreaming at the organizational level. According to women’s organizations, “most CSOs integrate gender in programming because it usually comes as a donor funding condition” and not because they are really committed to it. However, there is a risk that once the project is finalized and funding stops, CSOs will not continue with the implementation of their internal GESI policies. Where they are implemented, most of these policies only partially address GESI issues, with a strong bias toward women’s empowerment. They mainly focus on gender equality policies solely aimed at increasing the presence of women and youth in the workplace to some extent. Limited organizations such as the WCoZ, Centre for Gender and Community Development in Zimbabwe (CGCDZ), or Nzeve Deaf Centre have adopted more holistic and inclusive strategies that not only target women’s participation and representation, but also the inclusion of other gender diversity, PWD, and youth. These are mainly women’s organizations, youth, or PWD attempting to implement more holistic GESI strategies, not only targeting women but also youth, PWD, and (in rare cases) the LGBTQI community and other gender differences, taking into account intersectionality.

Therefore, existing GESI policies or strategies cannot be considered transformative instruments necessary to drive more democratic and inclusive governance structures within CSOs. Rather, they are ad hoc tools that enhance the visibility of CSOs before development partners and citizens at large co-existing with organizational governance.

As the GESI concept involves different target groups with different interests, formal and informal institutions that shape the power relationships within organizations and determine the levels of inclusion of these groups and the impact of the GESI-related policies are also different. Thus, it was considered pertinent to assess the participation of these groups within CSOs separately.

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION WITHIN CSOS

Generally, the presence of CSOs can be observed mainly in women’s rights organizations and social and humanitarian CSOs (e.g., health or education), with low participation in DRG organizations. The presence of women in these two areas is likely because they are considered the most representative of their own group of interest, and because most beneficiaries of basic services are women. Therefore, CSOs in social and humanitarian sectors need women to ensure effective provision of services. Within DRG organizations that are not women’s groups, CSOs are predominantly led by men. There might be a few
women in the forefront of other DRG organizations, but they are not very representative or significant enough to determine any positive trend in terms of gender equality.

Despite most CSOs integrating gender mainstreaming in programming, they have not been able to institutionalize gender issues within their organizations. Most organizations are still male-dominated and, according to the WCoZ, women represent a very small percentage of staff, mostly occupying low-ranking positions within organizations such as administrative or project assistant positions. The opportunities for advancement and promotion are generally limited. When gender policies are in place, the men play a dominant role in limiting women’s advancement in the form of promoting their inferiority and undermining their worth and capacity. Another GESI-oriented CSO mentioned that, if women want to take up leadership positions or be part of decision-making bodies, they have to work their way through the male-dominated spaces with many prejudices and doubts about their own capabilities.

The same organization pointed out that, in other cases, positions for women are believed to be earmarked; candidates seem to be informally pre-selected based on relationships, kinship, or loyalties. They know they will not be challenged by other women since competition among them is not socially acceptable. There is a certain generalized impression among GESI organizations that when some women are promoted, it is often not based on merit but considerations of gender that are influenced by patriarchal innuendos. Traditional thinking within society tends to accuse successful women and female leaders of “sleeping one’s way to the top.” This is a social belief that is a result of sexual harassment within CSOs. Indeed, workplace sexual harassment was stated as common within the so-called mainstream DRG organizations, where women are often exposed to different forms of abuse and harassment (physical, emotional, economic, and sexual). It is believed that many of these women are experiencing incidents of sexual harassment from blatant statements, under the promise of being promoted. Usually, these women are in a powerless position in relation to the harasser and tend to deal with it privately, afraid of not being believed or being socially stigmatized. Most CSOs do not have codes of conduct in place to deal with sexual harassment and, where they exist, conflict of interests combined with male-gendered solidarity undermines its application.

Within this context, many women are hesitant to take up leadership positions or hold themselves back from competing for a seat in decision-making bodies. As one key informant from a GESI-oriented organization states: “Women often feel it is not worth it to put on the ‘boxing gloves’ to claim a space in a ‘male-dominated’ and ‘politically toxic’ arena.”

Sustainability issues of DRG organizations combined with political dynamics within the sector further affect the low representation of women within mainstream DRG organizations. Most lack instruments for gender mainstreaming at the organizational level and, when they do exist, they tend to be donor-driven with their implementation supported by aid projects. Once the support ends, organizations face many difficulties continuing with their execution as they stop receiving technical and financial support to

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84 Women leaders are regarded as more emotional while men are deemed to be logical; women are requested to fulfill more conditions in order to be promoted or have higher targets/objectives to be achieved.

85 Following the declarations of Self-Help Development Fund Interview on 10/27/20

86 For example, it is the decision of the director, who is often the person perpetuating sexual harassment, whether to apply the code of conduct.

87 Interview on 10/27
complete implementation. This is closely linked to the fact that donors do not provide incentives while supporting these organizations in becoming more gender-sensitive. Gender equality performance is not attached to any type of sanction or reward and gender progress is sometimes not even monitored, leading to a loss of an opportunity to challenge the existing unequal structures and practices. Besides patriarchal rules dominating society, the practice of men taking leadership positions in more than one organization further undermines the presence of women in leadership positions.

Given that mainstream DRG organizations failed to implement gender equality agendas, DRG organizations that are exclusively women’s groups felt that their messages could only be delivered by the gender they represented. Within this context, the Sexual Rights Center indicated that women’s organizations have adopted extreme positions to protect their spaces by coming out strongly against involving men in their governance structures, particularly in their leadership. According to this organization, they fear that if men are employed within the CSO, they often occupy driver or messenger positions. However, this does not mean that women leading these DRG organizations are not exempt from facing sexual harassment when seeking access to funding or favors that benefit the organization, or as a result of their activism as members of human rights-based organizations. In fact, the CGCDZ analyzed State repression through a gender lens and highlighted that the violence and State repression towards DRG organizations take a gender-specific form, ranging from sexist verbal abuse to sexual harassment and rape when they are arrested.

**OTHER GENDER DIVERSITIES’ PARTICIPATION WITHIN CSOS**

Participation of LGBTQI people is still low and, even if institutions are open to them, these communities know that they are exposed to certain risks of social stigmatization and institutionalized homophobia.

The main obstacles to mainstreaming issues of LGBTQI in organizations are the cultural, traditional, and religious structures that stand against and criminalize same-sex relationships. When it comes to organizations representing other gender diversities, the country still maintains a restrictive legal environment, as the constitution criminalizes marriage between people of the same sex. At the State level, Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) is concerned that homophobia is institutionalized and “carries some political currency.” Homosexuality is punished, and there is a limited opportunity for litigation. Within the current shrinking space for CSOs, these organizations, part of the DRG community, are the ones that suffer the most State violence and repression. Defending the rights of a socially unaccepted minority means they are exposed to threats of arrest or corrective rape if they are too visible. They are therefore required to be strategic in how they push their agenda by focusing on, according to the same organizations, more politically “accepted” issues, where their contribution is key to ensure the government’s success (i.e., in “the fight against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases”).

At the DRG sector level, despite the focus on human rights of DRG organizations, they have not adequately recognized LGBTQI groups. Strong religious faith combined with limited access to information often means that misconceptions about LGBTQI people remain within the DRG mainstream organizations and, in turn, are perpetuated through their actions. As per an LGBTQI leader, they would constitute an obstacle for themselves. Therefore, gender equality policies within DRG organizations are strongly biased toward addressing women’s issues, neglecting the needs of other gender diversities such as the LGBTQI

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88 Despite some of these being human rights organizations.
groups. Limited organizations, mainly women’s and youth groups, have integrated LGBTQI into their gender equality diversity policies, but their relationships with these organizations remain complex and competitive.

Nevertheless, the main inclusiveness threat to these organizations comes from inside themselves. Two LGTBQI organizations asserted that it cannot be assumed that, simply because an organization is representing LGBTQI communities, they are able to prioritize gender. Besides capacity issues in doing so, gender identities are often contested or completely misunderstood within the same community, which undermines any attempts to deal with intersectionality.89

**YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL**

Jointly with women’s groups, youth organizations are among the most active groups within the DRG sector in defending the interests of their population and protecting their rights against State abuse and social injustices. Youth might be experiencing similar issues to women’s organizations in terms of their involvement and representation within DRG organizations, but, in this case, linked to a lack of transformative leadership within the CSOs’ mainstream. According to the CGCDZ, most of these organizations, including youth organizations, are suffering the so-called “founder-member syndrome,” where the founder in their 40s or 50s is still the leader of the organization. These leaders tend to consider themselves indispensable to the survival of the organization, leaving no opportunity for youth to be promoted and inciting misconceptions and stigmatization of youth and their capacities. Mutasa Youth Forum indicated that youth are often seen as “disruptive, with no one to vouch for their trustworthiness or good behavior.” Further, many mainstream DRG organizations accused them of not being sufficiently interested in or committed to human rights and governance-related issues, which further undermines any consideration for a generational transition. This perception might be partly explained by the fact that many youths are not interested in activism as a result of the existing State repression combined with the priority to fulfill basic needs in the context of chronic economic crises.

Cases of bullying were not mentioned, but issues related to unequal treatment and working conditions of youth compared to their more senior peers were highlighted. Sexual harassment among young women is also common for those who attempt to be promoted within the organization or just retain their work contracts, which are usually renewed on an annual basis.

Once again, it was observed that organizations paying attention to youth mainstreaming at the organizational level were those working on GESI, mainly women’s groups, LGBTQI, and PWD organizations. Nonetheless, a small number of youths have taken up positions of responsibility within their organizations or influence the policies and practices to a limited extent. Access has been possible because they have had the financial and technical resources to break through into some civil society spaces, including links with donors. Tokenism and kinship also seem to be determinants for youth being promoted to managerial and decision-making positions by being directly selected by those who control the organization.

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

89 For example, a member of the LGBTQI community with a disability, females, or youth.
If there is a vulnerable group that is the most left out of the CSOs spectrum, it is PWD, due to the lack of an enabling environment that supports their meaningful involvement and participation in decision-making and programming. Weak legal and policy frameworks are unable to break cultural and traditional beliefs that stigmatize PWD, and infrastructural and technological barriers hinder or limit their physical capabilities to navigate the environment. A general lack of capacities and awareness within CSOs makes it impossible to address PWD needs with their interventions. Within this group, women and youth are the most marginalized segment of the population.

Unlike women and youth, PWD organizations maintain a very low profile and have a limited capacity to influence policy and society at large, but they are the most active in dealing with intersectionality issues. Concerns in the way these organizations are working were also raised, as most of them are headed by able-bodied individuals doing things on behalf of PWD, creating dependency rather than empowering these groups.

GESEI AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

At the project level, the interviewees noted some improvement in GESI. This positive trend was attributed to GESI becoming a prerequisite to be included in the grant applications and assessed as part of grant-awarding processes. Along with the funding, there has been an increase in technical assistance and capacity development opportunities for CSOs to apply GESI effectively. Last but not least, it is important to highlight that DRG organizations working on GESI-related issues represent an important segment of CSOs in the sector, with women’s and youth’s groups among the most active and influential. There, GESI is part of the vision and mission of these organizations.

Still, DRG mainstream organizations face great challenges in mainstreaming GESI at the project implementation level, as this is considered a peripheral element or is implemented on an ad hoc basis. Within this context, they held the view that GESI is not sufficiently taken into consideration, but just to “tick the box” of donors’ requirements.

When asking organizations about the implementation of GESI mainstreaming at the project level, the vast majority of organizations stated it ensured the participation of women in project design and project implementation. Some of them also mentioned youth, but rarely LGTBQI and PWD. Evidence of this is in the findings of a social value evaluation carried out by Nzeve, one of the organizations that represent PWD. It revealed that families with a member with a disability did not identify any organization helping them to improve their lives, while families without disabilities from the same communities indicated between three and seven CSOs that helped improve their lives. Involvement of LGBTQI is even more difficult, as they are almost impossible to identify, due to fears of being stigmatized and rejected at the community level. Nzeve also acknowledged that “women’s organizations have been very successful in involving women from rural/urban areas, with different educational backgrounds and economic status,” but they have not applied an intersectionality framework and are thus targeting “women with disabilities or other gender diversities,” giving the impression that gender equality organizations are themselves discriminatory.

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90 E.g., only if it is a donor’s requirement.
Hence, it can be concluded that most of them are only partially applying GESI mainstreaming, based on a bias toward women and to some extent youth, leading to the paradox of excluding the groups at higher risk of vulnerability among vulnerable groups (PWD and other gender diversities) while trying to be more inclusive.

Despite some CSOs having made some efforts to mainstream GESI in a more comprehensive and integrative manner, the team observed that they are not sufficiently aware of the transformative power of GESI mainstreaming and its implications. In the case of PWD and youth, organizations have not been able to provide an enabling environment that facilitates the participation of these groups by providing the necessary tools and mechanisms to ensure their engagement. In the case of women’s participation, it was noticed that most CSOs involved women in the design and implementation, to some extent, in their projects. Many women were involved in participatory processes, attending community consultations and even speaking out for some communities. Organizations such as the Institute for Young Women in Development negotiated the space for women’s participation with the local authorities. However, they also noted that the way women engage is limited to ensure their presence and voice in certain levels of project implementation, assuming that by ensuring women’s participation as individuals in a given development process, gender equality is promoted. These practices do not seem to be challenging the unequal gender relations and roles that systematically subordinate women and, therefore, are not addressing the basis for women’s exclusion through the empowerment necessary to achieve gender equality.

GALZ stated that contemporary debate is about ‘where do we place gender identities that are completely left out’ because gender is only defined by sex (men or women), while gender identifies beyond men and women have been historically and institutionally invisible. These are not mentioned in the National Gender Strategy, so the LGBTQI community is systematically left out of the system and, in turn, in a position of vulnerability. Finally, the capacity of GESI mainstreaming does not include a sufficiently broad gender lens to include the different gender identities.

6. ASSESSING CSO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

This section unpacks some challenges and opportunities for civil society capacity development in Zimbabwe at the national and sub-national levels by looking at how these needs were addressed in the past by international donors in an attempt to understand which capacity-building efforts were effective and which were ineffective. Special focus is placed on whether capacity development for women, youth, PWD, and ethnic and gender minorities who are active in civil society have different capacity development needs and requirements.

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91 E.g., accessible accommodation; American Sign Language services, including budget implications for PWD; access to information; resources to cover the costs of youth involved; etc.
CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING APPROACHES

The approach used to address the capacity-strengthening needs of the CSOs varies by development partner. Most CSOs interviewed for this assessment indicated that funding partners usually provide capacity-building through generic training on specific subject matters such as M&E, gender mainstreaming, and project and financial management. The trainings are not usually customized to the specific needs of each respective CSO based on its line of work, type of members, and priority needs, but instead to fulfill donors' requirements to provide capacity. Moreover, large-scale trainings have their place but, if they are not followed up on with mentorship, they are less directly applicable to most CSO needs.

One-size-fits-all capacity development is problematic because it does not address the gaps facing a particular organization nor does this approach contribute to sustainability as they are aimed at addressing very specific issues. Often, capacity development is provided by International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) with a presence in Zimbabwe. While development partners seek to increase the reach of CSOs through supporting larger INGOs and, in turn, the absorption capacity, this approach tends to perpetuate donor-recipient relationships within the civil society sector, affecting the empowerment of local CSOs.

Economic and financial sustainability remains the major challenge in terms of sustaining organizational capacity, given the high aid dependency of organizations. Lack of adequate funding in the sector drives competition among CSOs. This challenge becomes even more difficult in shrinking spaces for CSOs' participation and non-enabling and problematic legal framework that regulates the sector. In the case of Zimbabwe, the fact that an important number of CSOs do not have core funding or direct access to funding (i.e., registered as a trust) but must access them through other organizations undermines the capacity of CSOs to become more sustainable and resilient. This might also be affecting the effectiveness of aid due to the high transaction costs of transferring funds through many organizations.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR GESI

The team observed no significant differences across mainstream CSOs in terms of GESI. The capacity levels are more or less the same, which is weak or very weak, with some exceptions within CSOs that cite GESI as a mission (e.g., youth or women’s organizations). In fact, CSOs representing GESI groups are the best performers in terms of inclusiveness. During the first year of the CEADZ program, the greatest contributors were women-focused organizations; however, in year three, the youth organizations were the best performers. Nevertheless, GESI remains a great challenge for CSOs. Among the main issues, there is the biased understanding of GESI and what GESI involves. The team noticed that most CSOs believe that GESI is about making sure that youth and women participate in their activities. PWD and LGBTIQI are systematically left out of the activities due to a mix of cultural beliefs and lack of capacity to reach and assess the needs of these groups as well as plan accordingly for their participation. In cases where CSOs have tried to involve these groups, planning issues and budgeting for it were raised, showing a great lack of capacity to plan activities and budgets from an inclusive perspective (e.g., to budget for sign language assistance).

Support provided by Pact has included the development of internal policies, child policies, and gender equality policies. It also monitors the implementation of these policies and whether they are being used, part of which is monitored through the OPI. This is complemented with specific actions taken by the Zimbabwe WcoZ, which is mentoring voluntary organizations to become more GESI-capable. Given the
lack of awareness and capacity, sufficient focus on developing GESI capacities might not occur since not all partners and sub-grantees are equally targeted. On the other hand, they noticed that capacity development might not be sufficient to make CSOs more GESI-enabled. Most GESI organizations complained that, despite the efforts in setting GESI policies, the vast majority of CSOs have not been able to implement and thus institutionalize GESI through integrating GESI within the overall governance structure of the organizations. Instead, GESI is often seen and integrated as an ad hoc element to the organization. The lack of or weak institutionalization of GESI was attributed to a lack of resources, as one interviewee stated: “The funding that we get is project-based and we have struggled with institutional support.” Nonetheless, the main challenge is the lack of commitment by the leaders within the organizations influenced by cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs.

WHICH CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS FOR CSOS HAVE PROVEN EFFECTIVE?

The majority of CSOs supported by USAID acknowledged that the Pact-led capacity development differed from other donors’ capacity-building approaches. Pact’s ITOCA methodology allowed civil society partners to self-assess and then tailor their capacity development over time based on the priority needs of the organization. One CEADZ grantee noted that Pact’s approach to capacity development “...was a very structured process and helps us to appreciate where our gaps were.” Although all identified gaps could not be addressed, the organization is aware of them and there is a roadmap for addressing them.

Through investment in capacity development approaches that emphasize institutional growth such as ITOCA and OPI, USAID support—through CEADZ and CSSP—has gone a long way in ensuring the strengthening of internal systems, processes, and practices. This has seen nascent organizations receiving USAID funding improving their systems and protocols and increasing their potential to achieve greater project results, which has enhanced organizational sustainability and adoption of gender equality policies or measures. These capacities have been developed using a combination of a wide range of tools and methodologies that proved to be effective. Beyond capacity needs assessment and training, networking meetings, mentoring, and coaching activities were also appreciated as ways to develop and consolidate capacities. Mentorship provided reference points for CSOs in the event that they faced challenges and, thus, a rapid response to issues that, on other occasions, could lead to mismanagement. Team-building activities and peer reviews encouraged the development of capacities as sharing problems with peers encouraged deeper analysis.

Elements that have helped this approach to be successful include a wide range of areas for capacity development from sustainability to communication, risk management, and M&E, as well as a stage or process to prepare the ground for effective capacity development. This involved facilitation to ensure sufficient time and buy-in from CSOs, which was considered as important as the capacity development process itself. Indeed, according to an interviewee, “getting buy-in for a capacity-building initiative is as important as conducting the capacity-building activity itself.”92 Staying open to organizations’ problems as well as raising awareness within the organizations to realize that capacity represents a strong asset for building the institution also contributed to the success of Pact’s capacity development approach. The use of the ITOCA methodology to self-assess organizational capacity was very welcome since the assessment

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92 Interview on 10/24/20
itself is a learning process. The fact that it is participatory promotes engagement and openness to capacity development. It also favors buy-in, as the assessment relies on the motivation of organizations themselves.

Despite the positive feedback the team received on PACT’s approach, methodology, and activities toward capacity development, challenges remain in terms of methodology and operational context. The ITOCA methodology might not be found equally useful for all the organizations as the target organizations (grantees and sub-grantees) have different structures, budgets, focuses, and sizes. For example, a large established NGO has a different governance structure than a youth organization or, in the case of Zimbabwe, the differences between trusts and associations/NGOs. Moreover, ITOCA is based on a subjective assessment of organizations’ needs and gaps. While this approach might help trigger the buy-in and interests of organizations, a more objective and external assessment of their capacities would be necessary to track hidden gaps and needs as well as the political economy of capacity development.

Although time was taken to prepare the ground for capacity development, buy-in from organizations has been difficult to attract due to the priorities imposed by the context where they operate. Most youth-focused organizations are still very small and seem to have capacity issues in the first months but, with Pact’s support, issues of capacity have been addressed. Most youth groups were less interested in democratic governance issues because they were afraid of being targeted by the government. Pact demystified the issue and designed a strategy to engage with them while the widespread use of digital platforms for communication among urban residents made it easy to engage urban communities via these digital platforms during the COVID-19 lockdown.

ADDRESSING CAPACITY SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS

At the sub-national level, capacity development efforts can encounter political interference because the government has more control over almost every aspect of the lives of the rural population. Additionally, the digital divide would also be undermining engagement at the community level due to lower internet connectivity and a greater reliance on going through government structures.

Geographical targeting has also been considered a positive element supporting effective and inclusive capacity development. Capacity-building approaches have been tailor-made to the needs of the target groups, resulting mainly in a distinction between rural and urban organizations and their level of intervention. At the design level, the methodology includes a selection of issues for engagement in order to take into consideration the differences in cultural values, attitudes, and perceptions as well as priorities between the two groups. At the implementation level of the internal capacity-building, the approach involves identifying capacity gaps and then drawing up a capacity development plan and executing it. This, for example, has resulted in greater mentorship throughout activities such as activity-based support rather than training. Grants administration support is also being provided so that they are compliant with funding partner requirements and avoid disruption of activities within the community.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a set of recommendations based on the AT’s analysis of KII’s responses and experience of the types of investments in civil society that are most likely to be locally driven, effective, relevant, and sustainable.
WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS CAN YOU PROVIDE TO ENSURE CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE RELATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY?

• Protect the reforms that have been made to the extent possible by leveraging the relationships in government and with politicians that have been established. Continue to support work around constitutional advocacy—CSOs need to defend the constitution from unnecessary amendments, advocate for its implementation, and popularize it as a basis of citizens claiming their rights; civic education is also a priority for empowering communities to stand up for their rights and demand service delivery.

• Revisit a policy of support for supply-side governance. Invest in technical assistance to government actors and agencies that demonstrate a political will to meet the demand being built into civil society. Pilot projects that involve local authorities and CSOs/CBOs working together to solve discreet problems. Provide necessary capacity-building for select government officials where there is evidence of their clear political will to engage on issues that the citizens demand. The AT acknowledges that there are instances of cooperation between CSOs and constitutional bodies (e.g., ZHRC, NPRC) at the national level; there is likely to be more cooperation with government actors and institutions to solve problems at the sub-national level.

• Leverage “soft” social welfare issues to push harder DRG issues. Focus on how corruption reduces the quantity and quality of basic services both at the national and local levels.

• Fund electoral reforms and voter education ahead of elections in the next two years; support the deepening of citizen movement, and social movement-building; support work around legislative reforms; nurture a broader alliance—there is a need to support CSO coalitions.

• Identify the lead civil society organization for each major issue to coordinate a collective action campaign. To a certain degree, this is already happening; to further the impact, invest in coalitions that are already in place and making progress but require financial and technical support.

• Engage the informal sector. The structure of civil society is shifting; the main actors are now the informal sector (e.g., vendors, miners, transporters, emerging religious organizations, and community groups). Funding priorities should also follow these shifts. Emerging CSOs and unions working with informal sector groups require additional capacity and skills to understand and interpret laws (i.e., by-laws, national laws, and constitutional provisions). This way, the unions or social movements can harness the collective mass power of their large membership base.

• Encourage civil society to praise or “fame” government actions when possible rather than always shaming government—this can contribute to reducing the stigma that civil society is only associated with the opposition.

• Support the implementation of the Office of Auditor General’s (OAG) recommendations. The OAG’s audit reports such as the land audit, audit of the use of COVID-19 funds, and other audit reports contain recommendations that are not being acted upon. Assistance to the OAG and enforcement agencies can help to show that the government is willing to take action against corrupt officials and their cohorts outside the government.
WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS CAN YOU PROVIDE FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE OF USAID’S SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY?

• Promote the co-creation and implementation of projects between Harare-based NGOs and rural CBOs. The current engagements are mostly informal and top-down, whereby Harare- and Bulawayo-based CSOs implement activities in communities together with CBOs on a one-off and ad hoc basis.

• Continue investing in urgent social and economic issues via social accountability mechanisms; funding cannot be one-off—it must be linked to ongoing reform efforts (e.g., social accountability of public education at the community level, etc.).

• Support an integrated approach that focuses on addressing livelihoods and social and economic rights. This recommendation is linked to support “soft issues” above.

• Encourage programmatic experimentation so CSOs can take risks with innovation without the fear of a loss of funding. Funding can be based on the theory of change hypothesis, not on expected results; in PEA speak, it is the use of “small bets” to see what types of interventions are the most effective for the particular context.

• Foster linkages between U.S.-based universities specializing in civil society development, anti-corruption, democracy and governance, and Zimbabwean CSOs to support rigorous research that can be applied to improve their performance. This type of partnership is common between civil society groups in the health sector.

• Explore opportunities to sensitize security sector agencies to improve relationships with civil society groups to build consensus for democratic governance and to demilitarize the State; Silveira House experimented with a program that could be reimagined on a broader scale. They entered into an MoU with the police in which they were training the Community Relations departments of the police on human rights and community peacebuilding in areas where there were high numbers of political violence cases.

• Provide core (not activity-based) funding for CSOs that are already working with communities on DRG issues. To ensure sustainability and transformational impact, the CSOs must demonstrate local legitimacy—a long relationship with the target communities should be a prerequisite for core support.

• Develop an emergency/contingency fund and protocol for action to support CSO and social movements during political/economic crises. Use in-kind grants to fund social movements and other unregistered organizations or provide individual activists with fellowships. Or consider funding social movements through the Zimbabwe Alliance. They are setting up a fund to extend financial support to social movements.

• Engage in dialogue with LGBTQI and PWD groups about the extent to which USAID can support their respective agendas. There is a need to support efforts to increase awareness, strengthen communities, and strengthen the movement, using litigation so that the community can defend the current space it occupies.
**WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS CAN YOU PROVIDE FOR STRENGTHENING INTERNAL CSO GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS?**

- Ensure that sufficient funding for the implementation of internal governance reforms is in place. Organizations tend to maintain best practices on paper but lack funding to implement internal governance reforms (e.g., ITOCA recommendations can be costly, and therefore not be implemented). Once external funding ends, internal governance reforms often do as well.

- Link internal governance issues to incentives that trigger organizations to change; for example, procurement reform and hiring practices.

- Integrate GESI into internal governance reforms and thus to be integrated into the governance reforms process and support. Performance in GESI capacity development should be monitored and a reward program launched for best performers.

- Demonstrate how the adoption of GESI behaviors contribute to organizational growth and success through research and exchanges with peer organizations from other countries in Africa or other continents.

- Promote/support the adoption of a code of conduct for CSOs to adhere to; it should include GESI principles.

**WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS CAN YOU PROVIDE ABOUT PROMOTING GESI WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY?**

- Strengthen capacity through coaching and mentorship with qualified GESI specialists that would be provided to all grant beneficiaries—both GESI CSOs and the rest of DRG organizations. Capacity development should include clarifications of GESI concept, GESI analysis, and GESI mainstreaming across the project, including the use of GESI-sensitive language and GESI budgeting.

- Promote GESI through research and capitalization of good practices that can prove the added value of being an inclusive organization in terms of institutional effectiveness and efficiency (e.g., better allocation of resources, improved visibility and constituency support, economic terms, etc.). This type of support can contribute to the transformation of the broader society to move the patriarchy to understand the benefits of a more inclusive role for women, youth, and other marginalized groups in governance.

- Conduct gender audits based on a statistically significant number of CSOs. This is necessary to make a full assessment of the state of play of GESI within CSOs and to understand the main obstacles in both formal and informal institutions so that adequate measures can be taken.

- Carry out and promote GESI analysis at the design stage of the project or as part of the baseline study of any USAID program or project. GESI analysis should then be used to design or review projects from a GESI perspective and thus be mainstreamed into projects.

- Use the data emanating from the research (see bullet point above) for awareness-raising about the importance of GESI to expand civil society understanding of GESI and its implications for capacity development.
• Train women in executive leadership and build the skills they need to be executive directors or board members. It is important to support executive leadership for women so they are prepared to take up executive positions and also deliver at a higher level. Executive leadership coaching and mentorship should also target women who are already occupying these positions.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS CAN YOU PROVIDE ABOUT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY?

• Encourage Harare-based CSO-local CBO co-creation of design and implementation of USAID activities. Require civil society partners to have legitimate access to communities in need. The CSO must show linkages to these constituencies; if they do not have these deep relationships, the local CBO should be a partner in the design and implementation.

• Strengthen critical analytical skills of CSOs and CBOs to think and work politically and to increase their chances to make a more sustainable impact. This entails equipping CSOs with skills and tools to improve their understanding of the political economy and power dynamics at both the local and national levels, increase their understanding of the specific and priority needs of the constituencies they serve, strengthen competencies to trace and understand social and political shifts at the local and national levels, increase capacity to analyze power dynamics within institutions (local and national) and to identify entry points for advocacy and opportunities for influencing positive change at all levels, and impart skills to strategically engage power holders to effect change while not undermining their power (i.e., without unwittingly creating disincentives for change).

• Reimagine M&E for DRG—build capacity for storytelling, outcome harvesting, etc. to capitalize on results and their impacts to better understand shifts in political culture. Adopt a benchmarking framework for M&E to promote a paradigm change regarding the measurement of reform processes. Reforms are incremental and often cannot be anticipated because of the changing political context; thus, changes need to be benchmarked and recognized as “results” in a reform process (e.g., meeting with a general or high-ranking officer who becomes a key change agent and begins a new communication channel to solution holders).

• Promote coalition-building beyond the usual partners that favors a composition of coalitions based on diversity and bridges the different subgroups of CSOs within the DRG sectors (e.g., human rights organizations with PWD organizations) and beyond (e.g., human rights organizations with health organizations, movements with CSOs, etc.) and with research and academia.