

2021 CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX: ZIMBABWE'S TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Country Regresses in the Annual Global Corruption Perception Index.

By Dakarayi Matanga.

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index confirms that Zimbabwe is not making progress in the fight against corruption. This is in spite of various measures instituted to address the problem, such as the creation of a dedicated anti-corruption agency and designating specialised courts to prosecute cases. This and other concerning issues were discussed in Harare recently, in a meeting for stakeholders to review the country's performance in the annual scorecard for assessing countries' performance in tackling corruption.

On 25 January 2022, Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Z) joined Transparency International and its chapters worldwide in launching results of the 2021 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) at Cresta Lodge in Harare. Participants included representatives of key anti-corruption agencies namely Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Agency (ZACC) and the National Prosecution Authority (NPA), the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), the Criminal Investigations

Department (CID), Parliament of Zimbabwe, the Attorney General's Office, the private sector, civil society, development partners and the media.

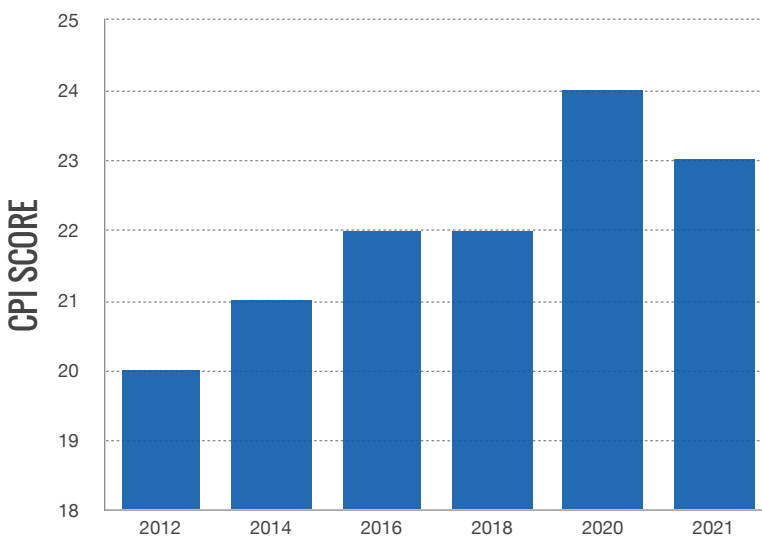
The CPI is a global study done by Transparency International. It ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The inputs into the creation of the CPI come from country experts and businesspeople. The 2021 report was released with the theme **"Corruption, human rights and democracy"**.



TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

TI Z advised the meeting that the 2021 CPI report scored Zimbabwe 23 out of 100, with a ranking of 157 out of 180 countries. This is below the regional average of 33/100. A key feature that stands out is the fact that the country has regressed, whilst the regional average score has improved from 32/100 in 2020. When these results are viewed over time, it means that Zimbabwe has stagnated in its progress towards fighting public sector corruption according to this measure. This is despite a gradual increase

ZIMBABWE CPI INDEX SCORES SINCE 2012



from a score of 20 in 2012 to 24 in 2020.

On the back of these concerning results for Zimbabwe, Transparency International also decried the fact that “154 countries have either declined or made no significant progress in tackling corruption in the last decade, and 27 countries are at historic lows in their score.” Any good results posted in Sub Saharan Africa specifically were overshadowed by the fact that the whole region performed poorly, with 44 out of 49 countries scoring below 50 in the CPI.

CHANGING THE LENS; A NEW METHODOLOGY TO MEASURE CORRUPTION

The methodology of the CPI came into sharp focus at the launch. The ZACC Deputy Chairperson, Kuziva Murapa announced that the Commission was at an advanced stage in launching its own corruption perception index. Clarifying that it was not meant to counter Transparency International’s methodology, Commissioner Murapa reiterated that ZACC would introduce indicators comparable to the global lobby’s, to gather the collective views of citizens across sectors over time. He said that ZACC was at an advanced stage in this process having completed data collection, and collation and that the analysis was underway.

TI Z Executive Director, Tafadzwa Chikumbu emphasised that what matters most in the index is the country’s score, rather than the rank which simply enabled comparison between countries. In



ZACC Deputy Chairperson Kuziva Murapa announced that ZACC was formulating a localised version of the CPI to complement existing measures.

Seasoned economist, businessman and former Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Investment Authority (ZIA), Nigel Chanakira called for a collaborative effort in measuring levels of corruption, notwithstanding the need for an additional index. To illustrate, his point, he highlighted that part of Transparency International's source data comes from other institutions like the World Bank, so the global lobby does not 'go it alone' in its research. As a

Giving the private sector reaction to the 2021 score, Dr. Chanakira drew important parallels between the CPI and other indexes such as the World Bank's Ease of doing Business Index. He said that information on corruption is vital when multinationals decide on entering the Zimbabwean economy. He said investors consider macro reports and corruption measures to decide whether to invest or not. Zimbabwe therefore does itself a great disservice by performing poorly on the CPI. He added that multilateral development and aid institutions, as well as companies willing to assist the government through corporate social investment (CSI) initiatives tend to 'go it alone' when they think that their resources are not in 'good hands' where implementation is the prerogative of government.

He also revealed that several studies demonstrate a strong positive correlation between levels of corruption as measured by Transparency



(From left) Tafadzwa Chikumbu, Josephine Chiname, Rutendo Mawere and Dr. Nigel Chanakira

result, there is congruence between the CPI and other indexes by other institutions globally. He also recommended that the proposed CPI be independent to avoid perception of bias. "You cannot mark your own assignment," he said. Having said that however, he encouraged stakeholders to engage in critical thinking by 'questioning' how global indexes are constructed.

COUNTING THE COST OF A LOW CPI SCORE

Over and above the impacts of corruption on the full enjoyment of human rights as highlighted in the 2021 report's theme, there are other far-reaching implications on Zimbabwe when stakeholders view the consistently poor scores from a macroeconomic and investment perspective.



Nigel Chanakira said that Zimbabwe does itself a great disservice due to perceptions of high levels of corruption.

International and the World Bank, and other measurable factors such as economic growth, freedom of expression, barriers to trade and levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) to name a few.

CONCEPTUALISING CORRUPTION AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

The theme for the 2021 CPI report highlights the fact that corruption levels have stagnated worldwide at a time when human rights and democracy are also under attack.

Reflecting on this, Tafadzwa Chikumbu highlighted how corruption constrains a country's ability to deliver on civil, political, social, and economic rights. The TI Z Board Chairperson Isheanesu Chirisa also weighed in, condemning the crackdown by government authorities on anti-corruption activists who would have blown the whistle on high level cases or raised alarm over endemic corruption in the country. She reminded the government to adhere to its own commitments on anti-corruption and human rights provisions as espoused in the constitution, national plans, and strategies; as well as global and regional conventions and protocols which Zimbabwe is a signatory to. To put the issue of shrinking civic and democratic space into perspective, she reminded the meeting that Zimbabwe's human rights situation was currently under the spotlight at the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review working group meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

Concerns over the state of democracy in Zimbabwe includes the operating environment for the media in the country. Media practitioner, Rutendo Mawere reminded stakeholders to fight for a free media as part of their campaigns against corruption as the media assists citizens to understand government processes which are normally hidden from public view. A free press

was therefore necessary to support the work of anti-corruption institutions. She therefore called for a legislative framework which safeguards the work of journalists and protects them from reprisals for conducting investigative journalism.

Linked to the issue of human rights, the TI Z Chairperson also revealed how corruption levels and the deteriorating human rights situation increased globally during the time of the global Covid 19 pandemic. She described corruption and emergencies as 'evil twins' as they feed off each other. "Covid has made it more difficult to combat corruption than any other time." she said.

IN SEARCH OF PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Making the keynote address at the launch, Commissioner Murapa emphasised the need to discuss the report with a view to crafting lasting solutions. Citing clear examples such as the lack of follow up on successive damning Auditor General reports, speakers at the meeting also demanded that practical solutions be found to avoid turning the forum into a talk shop. Such sentiments are hardly surprising on the backdrop of perceived lack of progress in delivering on the mantra 'zero tolerance to corruption.' In relation to that, a topical issue in the public eye is the perceived slow progress in prosecuting cases brought forward by ZACC, and apparent impunity of some actors on the country's social and political landscape. The issue certainly made an interesting discussion point at the CPI launch.

The ZACC Deputy Chairperson advised the meeting that stakeholders confused the roles of arrest and prosecution in relation to ZACC's work. He said the Commission's mandate ends at arresting only not prosecution, which means that investigations it completes are handed over to the NPA.



ZACC Commissioner, John Makamure (standing), highlighted the importance of stakeholder collaboration for implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy

Contributing on the topic, the Acting National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) Deputy Prosecutor-General Michael Reza said that there is political will to fight corruption. He said that high profile cases have been brought forward by ZACC and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), and these have been prosecuted by his department without any interference. He also explained various technicalities involved at the NPA and in collaboration with other agencies, which need to be in place so that cases result in convictions. Making her recommendations on this issue, Josephine Chiname of the Environmental Law Association (ZELA) urged the authorities to share adequate information with the public on the state of play regarding corruption cases to counter the prevailing strong perception of

impunity because they are not aware of the intricacies involved. Janet Zhou, Director of the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) called for a deliberate review process to establish areas of weakness and bottlenecks along the corruption chain.

The need for practical solutions for tackling increasing corruption levels measured by the CPI becomes starker when one considers that the basic frameworks are in place, with coordination or effective implementation seemingly a challenge. "We have a good legal framework but is that good enough?" inquired Isheanesu Chirisa commenting on the issue. Satisfied with existing frameworks was Cliff Gondo, the Director (Capacity Building) for PRAZ. He asserted that public procurement legislation in Zimbabwe is particularly good, such that public procurement agencies from other countries are actually consulting and benchmarking against Zimbabwe. This however did not cancel out the need for reviewing the policies and regulations which was an ongoing process.

Public procurement, in particular, has proved to be fertile ground for public sector corruption since government is the biggest buyer of goods and services in most countries. The procurement of COVID-19 goods and services showed that systems in Zimbabwe and other countries are vulnerable to corruption, as large-scale emergency programmes were launched to deal with the pandemic.

COLLABORATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NACS

The multistakeholder collaboration needed to implement measures for tackling corruption was also discussed. ZACC Commissioner John Makamure spoke on the issue of collaboration between multiple stakeholders for the achievement of milestones in the National Anti-

In authoritarian contexts where control rests with a few, social movements are the last remaining check on power.

Daniel Eriksson
CEO, Transparency International



Corruption Strategy (NACS).

Whilst appreciating the need for collaboration, civil society is however concerned that the current social and political context is not conducive for citizens to input into this collaborative process. Chikumbu, Chirisa, Chiname and Mawere all highlighted the importance of government opening up civic



Human rights are not simply a nice-to-have in the fight against corruption. Authoritarianism makes anti-corruption efforts dependent on the whims of an elite.

Delia Ferreira Rubio
Chair, Transparency International



space for citizens to effectively contribute to fighting corruption.

Chanakira also highlighted the need for collaboration by the entire society, to collectively achieve goals of accelerated reduction in corruption because it is now in the entire society's 'DNA.' He asserted that government alone cannot be perceived to be corrupt, because the phenomenon involves other players such as the private sector who bribe public officials. "We should all aim to go above a score of 50 in the CPI. We need to enter the realm of the top 100 ranked least corrupt countries so that we can become one of Africa's top economies," he said.

REFOCUSING ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

In view of the country's performance in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index, TIZ recommends the following to the government of Zimbabwe.

Restore and strengthen institutional checks on power - Public oversight and enforcement agencies such as the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, National Prosecuting Authority and the Auditor General's Office need to be independent, well-resourced, and empowered to detect and sanction wrongdoing. The Parliament of Zimbabwe and the courts should also be vigilant in preventing executive overreach.

Whistle-blower Protection -The government of Zimbabwe should expedite the enactment of the

whistle-blower protection legislation to ensure the protection of those who make reports in line with United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

Uphold the right to information in government spending -The governments must fulfil its commitments to national, regional, and international frameworks including constitutional provisions on parliamentary oversight on public spending and the June 2021 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) to include anti-corruption safeguards in public procurement. Maximum transparency in public spending protects lives and livelihoods.

ABOUT TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ZIMBABWE (TI Z)

Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Z) is a non-profit, non-partisan, systems-oriented local chapter of the international movement against corruption. Its broad mandate is to fight corruption and related vices through networks of integrity in line with the Global Strategy. TI Z believes corruption can only be sufficiently tackled by all citizens including people at grass root level.

VISION

A Zimbabwean society free from all forms of corruption and malpractices.

MISSION

We exist to be a knowledge-driven and evidence-based anti-corruption civil society organisation that practices and promotes transparency, accountability, and integrity in all sectors to achieve good governance.



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