

The Commission Newsletter

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ZHRC's ability to go 'where the angels fear to tread' impresses Speaker



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon Jacob Mudenda (seated second from right, front row) prepares to answer a question from a delegate during the ZHRC A' Status Accreditation Conference held in Harare, recently.

Former Speaker of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) Chairperson and

National Assembly, Honourable Jacob Mudenda has hailed the Commission for excelling in its

mandate despite financial constraints and limited human capital.

Speaking at a conference held to celebrate ZHRC's award of an 'A' status accreditation by the Global Alliance for

National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in the capital recently, Hon Mudenda said the

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Commissioner Hon Mudenda was particularly impressed by ZHRC's fearlessness in tackling human rights issues. He noted that the Commission goes 'where angels fear to tread', to investigate human rights abuses.

"To date, the Commission has excelled in its mandate despite constrained financial resources and limited human capital. That is why the ZHRC deserves the 'A' status which it must guard jealously," he remarked.

The former Chairperson commended the Commission for producing the 2016 Annual Report which 'fully complies with the Constitution in as far as outlining

its activities and operations carried out in 2016'.

He, however, reminded the ZHRC that follow-ups on all cases must be made. This includes suspected cases of human rights abuses referred to the Commissioner General of Police and any other relevant institution in terms of section 243 of the Constitution. On the other hand, the Commissioner General of Police must comply with any directive given to him by the Commission.

The conference, which was held under the theme, "*An effective National Human Rights Institution (NHRI): What does it entail?*" was attended by various stakeholders, among them Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations as well as representatives of Government Ministries.

The Commission has come a long way



ZHRC's first Chairperson, Prof Reg Austin (left) stresses a point during the interview.

The inaugural Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), Professor Reginald Austin has let the cat out of the bag, revealing why he quit the Commission in 2012 after more than three years in office.

Speaking in an interview with ZHRC recently, Prof Austin said the Commission encountered many challenges arising from the legal framework, in particular, section 12 of the ZHRC Act which curtailed the independence of the Commission.

Prof Austin reiterated his 26 December 2012 resignation

statement: "The word 'independence' was included in the final draft (of the ZHRC Act). However, this 'independence' was significantly curtailed by Section 12 (6) and (7) of the Act. This effectively grants the Executive (the Minister) a wide discretion, today and in the future, to silence the Commission 'on the grounds that' (its investigation of a complaint) 'may prejudice the defense, external relations, internal security or economic interests of the State'. "It is this discretionary power; to gag the ZHRC, to take away the

'whistle' of an institution whose effectiveness and credibility rests upon its transparency and 'whistle-blowing' role, which I found unacceptable. As a member of the Commission I would be obliged to obey and implement this law. I can imagine human rights scenarios in which I would find it impossible to obey such an order, and thus it was proper for me to resign." Although Prof Austin left, he is not shy of commending his peers at the Commission for taking the human rights body this far.

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Staff News

ZHRC values work-related learning

Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) will do whatever it takes to ensure that it affords university students the opportunity to experience the working environment as part of their learning.

The undertaking by the ZHRC conforms to its Internship Policy which states that,

“As part of its social responsibility, the Commission shall assist students from universities/colleges who require attachments. The attachments will cover the scope of the Commission’s work and they will be for a period of up

to 12 months.” The interns play an important role in complementing the understaffed secretariat. Currently, the Commission has the following students on attachment:

1. Rutendo	Ruzvidzo	(Ex-MSU)	- Programmes
2. Sandile	Ncube	(Bindura University)	- Programmes
3. Tanyaradzwa	Major (North West University, SA)		- Programmes
4. Samantha	Moyo	(NUST)	- Records
5. Promise	Njagu	(UNISA)	- Programmes
6. Timothy	Mawoko	(UNISA)	- Programmes
7. Nobukhosi	Lupahla	(Ex-UNISA)	- Programmes
8. Indra	Matongo	(MSU)	- Programmes
9. Wendy Best	Kambiri	(MSU)	- ICT

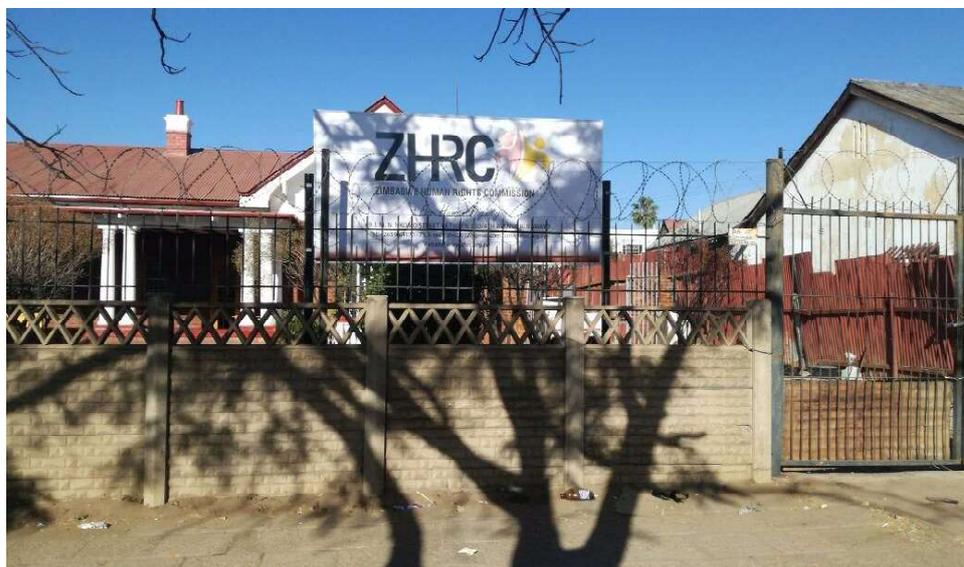


ZHRC Executive Secretary, Mrs Makanatsa Makonese (right) with interns, Sandile Moyo and Timothy Mawoko (left and centre, respectively), at a workshop held in Harare recently.

Southern Region Office relocates

The ZHRC Southern Region Office has moved.

With effect from 1 June 2017, the office is now at 49 J.N.Nkomo Street (between 3rd and 4th Avenue) in Bulawayo. Land line phone numbers remain unchanged ((09) 64170-73). The office is more accessible and spacious.



The new Bulawayo office is more spacious and conveniently located.

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ZHRC engages World Bank on albinism



Members of the Special Interests Thematic Working Group soon after the meeting with World Bank's Camille Lambart Nuamah (third from right).

In a move that is likely to be appreciated by people living with albinism, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), through the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Special Interest Groups recently engaged the World Bank in order to find ways of assisting them.

As part of the engagement process, a meeting was held between the ZHRC and the

World Bank on support for assistive technology for persons with albinism in Zimbabwe. The meeting came up with a number of measures to improve the living conditions of people with albinism. One of these measures was the immediate appointment of a Focal Person to look into issues of albinism at the World Bank Zimbabwe office. This will assist in speeding up the formulation of interventions pertaining to albinism.

Representatives from

World Bank went on to visit the Zimbabwe Albino Association to enquire more on the plight of people with albinism resulting in the global financial institution getting a deeper appreciation of challenges being faced by the albino community.

The World Bank also showed its willingness to attach some students with albinism to their structures as a way of reaching out to and raising awareness on the condition.

In Zimbabwe, people

with albinism face many challenges in their lives including discrimination on the basis of the pigmentation of their skin. This is a clear violation of their rights.

The other challenges are lack of sun screen lotions that protect their skin from adverse weather conditions and the inability to afford spectacles.

Paragraph 7 of the First Schedule of the ZHRC Act [Chapter 10:30] provides that the ZHRC establishes TWGs in order to

have specialized attention to promote and protect various rights. The Commission has established eight TWGs, among them, the Special Interest Groups TWG focusing on People with Disabilities, indigenous minorities, older persons and youths because of the vulnerability of these groups. Persons with albinism are one of the target groups for the Special Interest Groups.

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Increased visibility registered in Epworth ...as ZHRC is urged to scale up awareness campaigns

A random post-test evaluation in Epworth has shown encouraging signs of increased awareness of ZHRC and its activities.

The ZHRC embarked on Epworth roadshows on 27 and 29 June 2017 which were held at Munyuki and Overspill Shopping Centres, respectively.

At Overspill, the ZHRC received twenty complaints on alleged human rights violations for investigation in line with its mandate.

Other engagement meetings took place in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe, Lupane, Makonde and the high density suburbs Emphandeni, Mabutweni and Nketa in Bulawayo.

The Commission is using stakeholder engagements and exhibitions, where various promotional materials are distributed, as a strategy to reach out to the populace. Meanwhile, ZHRC must be commended for exhibiting at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in

Bulawayo this year, for the first time in its history.



ZHRC received 20 complaints at the Overspill Roadshow in Epworth on 29 June 2017.



Students from Nemakonde High School won various prizes for successfully answering questions at the ZHRC stand at ZITF in Bulawayo.

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The Commission in Pictures...



Above...Zimbabwe Peace Project Director, Jestina Mukoko addresses delegates at a workshop on monitoring the human rights situation.



Above...The Speaker of the National Assembly, Advocate Jacob Mudenda sharing notes with Commissioner Kwanele Muriel Jirira (right) and Commissioner Sheila Matindike (middle) after the 'A' Status Accreditation Conference in Harare.



Left...Children from SOS Children's Home in Bulawayo entertain the crowd on the belated Day of the African Child commemorations organised by ZHRC on 15 July 2017.



Staff members who attended the ZHRC-EU/GIZ partnership launch had the opportunity to pose for a photograph with the partners.

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For Human Dignity

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION (FAQ)

What is the ZHRC and what does it do?

Response

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission is the National Human Rights Institution for Zimbabwe that was initially created by section 100R of the former Constitution and is now established by Chapter 12 of the Constitution as one of the Independent Commissions supporting democracy in Zimbabwe. Its purpose is to promote, protect and enforce human rights and fundamental or basic freedoms provided for in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (in particular, in Chapter 4 known as the Declaration of Rights) and various international agreements on human rights which Zimbabwe has signed and ratified. It also protects people from abuse of power and maladministration by State institutions and State officials. In this regard, the Commission has taken over the work of the Public Protector's Office (previously known as the Ombudsman's Office) which was abolished in 2013 with

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the adoption of the current Constitution. Section 243 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Act outline the functions of the ZHRC.



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Tools for monitoring older persons' homes now in place

The places of Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) will soon begin visiting older persons' homes in line with section 243(k) (i) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which mandates it to monitor and inspect prisons, detention, refugee camps and related facilities, thanks to support from one of its Development Partners. The Constitution provides for the rights of older persons, over the age of 70 years. Section 51, in particular, provides for the right to human dignity which should be respected and protected.

ZHRC held an engagement meeting with various stakeholders on 7 June 2017, to develop tools for monitoring old people's homes. A total of 12 participants (six males and six females) including representatives from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, Legal and

Parliamentary Affairs and UNDP attended the meeting. The stakeholders assisted the ZHRC in capturing pertinent issues affecting older persons in homes, in the drafting of the tools. At the end of the meeting, ZHRC agreed to incorporate the contribution from stakeholders and to continue to collaborate following

monitoring missions to the old people's homes. The monitoring visits to older persons' homes by ZHRC were long overdue although the Commission has been to places of detention and mental health institutions as part of its constitutional monitoring mandate.