

The Commission Newsletter 2025



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Chairperson's Message



It gives me pleasure to say a word or two in this newsletter put together by our vibrant, proficient and enthusiastic Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) team across our nation of Zimbabwe. The selection of articles is a small glimpse into the formidable work by volume, breadth, depth, and impact of the interventions by the ZHRC to promote human rights and administrative justice through the ZHRC's dual mandate of being both the National Human Rights Institution and the Public Protector (Ombuds Institution). I am simply proud to be part of this team.

The year 2025 has been a defining period for the ZHRC. It was marked by significant institutional transitions, a renewed strategic focus, and a sustained commitment to the promotion, protection, and enforcement of human rights, freedoms, and administrative justice in Zimbabwe. These steps contribute to making human rights and administrative justice household issues nationwide.

Recently the Commission welcomed the appointment of Commissioners Dr. Eng. M. Muduva and Mrs. A. Sibutha in December 2024 and February 2025, respectively. The five-year tenure of Commissioners Dr. D. Moyo (former Deputy Chairperson), Prof. A. Dziva, Dr. B. Penduka, Dr. A. Guvamombe, and Mrs. B. Kajesse came to an end in July 2025. I wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank these Commissioners for their service, dedication, and invaluable contribution to the advancement of human rights, administrative justice, and constitutionalism in Zimbabwe. Their work has left a lasting imprint on the Commission.

Following the departure of the former Executive Secretary, Dr. D. Mazambani, in March 2025, Mr. V. E. Mukutiri assumed the role of Acting Executive Secretary until the appointment of Mrs. K. Makumbe as the substantive Executive Secretary. Her appointment marks an important milestone in consolidating the Commission's leadership and operational stability. On behalf of the Commission, I extend my appreciation to all those who ensured continuity of service delivery during this transitional period and warmly welcome the Executive Secretary as we work together to strengthen the effectiveness, visibility, and impact of the Commission.

Beyond institutional developments, 2025 was a year of robust engagement and tangible impact. As reflected in this newsletter, the Commission deepened its national and international presence through active participation in regional and global human rights and administrative justice fora, strategic engagements with stakeholders, and advocacy initiatives that contributed to landmark achievements, including the pioneer recognition of Africa Human Rights Day. Domestically, the Commission intensified its monitoring, investigations, mediation, and community outreach efforts, addressing a wide range of human rights concerns affecting children, women, persons with disabilities, returnees, workers, and communities impacted by human rights violations and maladministration.

The Commission also invested in shaping its future, notably through strategic planning processes that set the direction for the 2026–2030 period. These efforts reaffirm our resolve to remain a responsive, independent, and people-centred institution that places human dignity at the centre of national development.

As Chairperson, I remain deeply grateful to fellow Commission members, the Executive Secretary and the Secretariat team, government institutions, civil society organisations, development partners, the media, and the people of Zimbabwe for their continued cooperation and support. Together, we can

continue to build a culture of human rights, accountability, and administrative justice for the benefit of present and future generations.

I invite you to engage with the stories, reflections, and achievements captured in this newsletter, which collectively demonstrate the Commission's unwavering commitment to making human rights and administrative justice real and accessible for all.

Moreso, I invite you to report any human rights violations and maladministration and abuse of power by public officials to any of our contact details, as well as encouraging us all to respect the rights of others so that we all enjoy all human rights of all people all of the time.

Ms. Fungayi Jessie Majome

Chairperson

Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

Cover Page Pictures

Top Left Picture: ZHRC Chairperson Ms. F. J. Majome (second from left) with Commissioner Dr. M. Muduva visit stands at the Africa Unity Square exhibition during the Africa Human Rights Day accompanied by the Egyptian, Nigerian, Sudanese & South Sudanese diplomats and other stakeholders.

Top Right Picture: Gladys Mudadi Human Rights Officer for EPRA Mashonaland West Province interacting with the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Honourable Marian Chombo, during her visit to the ZHRC exhibition booth at Chief Msampakaruma Homestead during the Culture month.

Bottom Picture: The Chairperson of the ZHRC Ms. F. J. Majome (in red jacket) with the Chinese Ambassador Zhou Ding (on her left) pose for a photo with ZHRC Secretariat and Officers of the Chinese Embassy after an engagement meeting at the Chinese Embassy.

Message from the Executive Secretary



As we conclude the year 2025, it is both an honour and a privilege to address you as the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the ZHRC. Having joined the Commission in 2014 as Director heading the investigations portfolio for our human rights and administrative justice mandate, I remain deeply committed to advancing the promotion, protection, and enforcement of human rights, freedoms, and administrative justice for all Zimbabweans.

The year 2025 has proven to be a particularly significant and impactful one for the Commission, marked by important leadership transitions and continued dedication to our mandate. Early in the year, in February 2025, my predecessor, Dr. D. Mazambani, concluded her tenure, leaving behind a legacy of notable achievements and institutional progress. Following Dr. Mazambani's departure, Mr. V. E. Mukutiri stepped in as Acting Executive Secretary, providing steady leadership, and ensuring the continuity of the Commission's operations during this transitional period. I was honoured to assume the role of Executive Secretary in September 2025, bringing with me a renewed vision and commitment to advancing the Commission's work in promoting, protecting, and enforcing human rights and administrative justice across Zimbabwe.

The Commission has celebrated key human rights days, produced advocacy papers on critical human rights issues, issued press statements relating to commemorative events and topical human rights issues, held high level stakeholder engagements, continued our training of the security sector amongst a range of activities conducted throughout the year. Our current strategic plan has come to an end and the Commission's Strategic Planning Workshop for the 2026–2030 period marked a critical step in positioning the ZHRC to respond proactively to emerging human rights and administrative justice challenges. This strategic direction aligns our work with national development aspirations and reinforces the central role of human rights and administrative justice in creating an inclusive and equitable society.

Our sustained focus has yielded tangible outcomes, particularly in improving service delivery by public institutions, facilitating access to civil documentation, and human rights and administrative justice disputes remediation through use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. We have also continued to advance environmental rights, disability inclusion, and fair employment practices, recognising these as essential to human dignity and sustainable development.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Commission and its Secretariat, stakeholders, and partners whose dedication and collaboration continue to drive the work of the ZHRC. Upholding human rights and administrative justice is a shared responsibility, and our collective efforts remain vital to achieving transparency, accountability, and justice for all.

Together, let us continue to strengthen the culture of human rights and administrative justice in Zimbabwe for the benefit of present and future generations.

Warm regards,

Kurai Makumbe
Executive Secretary
Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

Editor's Note

Welcome to this edition of the ZHRC Newsletter.



This issue serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to human rights, administrative justice, and community engagement across Zimbabwe. We highlight several milestones that underscore our core values of dignity, equality, and justice.

Key Highlights in This Issue:

- ❖ **Africa Human Rights Day:** Following successful lobbying at the ACHPR, the ZHRC proudly marked the inaugural celebration of this day, setting a new precedent for regional rights observance.
- ❖ **International Human Rights Day 2025:** Under the theme "*Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials*," our nationwide engagements from 9th–11th December 2025 brought human rights and administrative justice discourse directly to the people.
- ❖ **Regional Leadership:** As we transition leadership within the SADC Alliance of NHRIs and Ombudsman, we look forward to deeper regional collaboration.
- ❖ **Strategic Vision:** Our 2026–2030 strategic planning workshop ensures the Commission remains a proactive force for justice.

We also address critical grassroots issues including our ongoing advocacy for the promotion, protection and enforcement of human rights and freedoms and administrative justice in Zimbabwe. Central to this new chapter is the appointment of our new Executive Secretary, Mrs. Kurai Makumbe, whose leadership will be vital for the day-to-day operations of the Commission.

Human rights and freedoms and administrative justice are collective responsibilities. We invite you to explore our work and join us in our mission to build transparency and accountability through human rights-based processes in the public and private sectors of our country.

Enjoy the read.

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ZHRC Marks First-Ever Africa Human Rights Day After Successful Lobbying at ACHPR

By The Education Promotion, Research and Advocacy Department

It all began at the March 2025 Geneva Steering Committee meeting of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) where the Chairperson moved a motion for it to celebrate Africa Human Rights Day. It culminated at 83rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) held in Banjul, The Gambia, in May 2025. During the session, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) Chairperson, Ms. Fungayi Jessie Majome, successfully lobbied the African Commission to adopt a motion encouraging member States to invest in conspicuously celebrating and commemorating Africa Human Rights Day (AHRD).



ZHRC Chairperson Ms. F. J. Majome (to the right) being interviewed by George Msumba of StarFM during the AHRD celebrations.

This milestone paved the way for the ZHRC to host its first-ever Africa Human Rights Day commemorations on the 21st day of October 2025, encouraging the rest of the continent and the African diaspora to honour this significant day. AHRD is marked annually on 21 October to reflect the anniversary of the 1986 adoption of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and focus on Africa's unique human rights heritage and collective journey toward justice and dignity.

She is concerned about the lack of awareness by Africans, of their own AHRD, and is on a mission to have it celebrated as much as if not more than International Human Rights Day celebrated every 10 December.

This year's commemorations were held under the continental theme: "**Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations.**" The theme underscores the African Union's commitment to addressing historical injustices—including slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and systemic discrimination—and advancing conversations on reparative justice. AHRD also celebrates the uniqueness of African human rights principles, which are deeply rooted in African values and customs. These principles recognise not only individual rights but also collective rights, duties and responsibilities within communities.

In her keynote address, ZHRC Chairperson Ms. Majome reflected on the significance of the day, stating:

"This day invites us to remember not only our dark history of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and also the present neo-colonialism but for us to act and build mechanisms for accountability, restitution, healing and transformation."

She noted that the year's theme strongly resonates with Zimbabwe's own historical experiences, including colonisation, land dispossession, structural inequalities and contested economic outcomes. She underscored the need to seize the opportunity it presents to repatriate the remaining Zimbabwe bird sculpture from Cecil Rhodes' Groote Schuur Museum in Cape Town, as well the human remains of Zimbabweans killed in the 1800s for fighting against colonialism, which are reputed to be stored British archives. She urged all Zimbabweans to unite across status, gender, ethnicity and beliefs to pursue justice, healing and shared national progress.

In Harare, Africa Unity Square became a hub for civic dialogues, youth platforms, and interactive

rights-education sessions. The event was led by ZHRC Chairperson Ms. Majome alongside African diplomats and embassy representatives.

In Bulawayo, the Large City Hall Open Space hosted cultural storytelling and artistic performances, bringing human rights themes to life and demonstrating how cultural heritage can be a vehicle for advocacy.



ZHRC Chairperson Ms. F. J. Majome (second from left) interacting with stakeholders while Mr. Tafara Mahumbe the Protocol Officer (in blue jacket) looks on.

In Mutare, Meikles Park hosted a vibrant exhibition featuring community artwork, musical showcases, and educational materials. School children, families, and community groups interacted with ZHRC officers at information stands, gaining insights into the African Charter, national constitutional obligations, and accessible redress mechanisms.

In Masvingo, the Civic Centre facilitated provincial exhibitions and discussions focusing on reparations, youth empowerment, and community-level civic education.

In the two months leading to the event, the Commission executed a targeted social media campaign across Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram, highlighting the 2025 theme. Eighteen bespoke posts unpacked key provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, demonstrating the contemporary relevance of

reparations, while civil society organisations amplified the outreach through coordinated reposts, expanding reach and engagement.

A total of twenty-eight exhibitors participated nationwide, including Independent Commissions, disability-rights organisations, Civil Society Organisations, legal-aid institutions, faith-based organisations, children's-rights advocates, and media houses.

Notable participants included National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO), Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), Civil Registry Department (CRD), ZimRights, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), Adult Rape Clinic, Amnesty International, Nzeve Deaf Centre, Freedom to the Disabled, Star FM, and Hevoi FM. Exhibitors showcased rights education, civic empowerment, legal support, and community-strengthening initiatives.

Live broadcasts by Star FM and Hevoi FM, coupled with coverage by Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) News, Khulumani FM, Chronicle, ZiFM, and Daily News, ensured national visibility. The multimedia footprint amplified the message of justice, reparations, and African human rights principles, firmly embedding AHRD in public consciousness.



Mr. Fidelis Nyamukondwa Provincial Coordinator for Masvingo Province (to the right) with Dr A Pazvakavambwa Secretary for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Masvingo Province and His Worship Cllr Tabe (Mayor of the City of Masvingo) touring the ZHRC stand during the AHRD.

The ZHRC continues to advocate for making Africa Human Rights Day a nationally and regionally recognised observance, reinforcing the importance

of rights awareness, civic education, and reparative justice across Zimbabwe.

Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials: Zimbabwe Marks International Human Rights Day 2025 with Nationwide Engagements

By The Education Promotion, Research and Advocacy Department

Between 9th and 11th of December 2025, the ZHRC led the nation in commemorating International Human Rights Day (IHRD) under the global theme "Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials." This celebration marked the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. It served as a powerful reminder that human rights are not mere ideals but practical necessities that shape the dignity, security, and well-being of every individual.

Following the successful Africa Human Rights Day commemorations held in October 2025, the ZHRC adopted a decentralized, multi-province approach to ensure broad-based national participation. Events were hosted in high-traffic and community-centered venues throughout the country, including Harare's Epworth Overspill Shopping Centre, Bulawayo: City Hall Car Park, Masvingo: Civic Centre and Chivi Growth Point, Manicaland: Sakubva Beit Hall, Mutare, Matabeleland North: Lwendulu Village Hall, Hwange and Mashonaland West: Cooksey Hall, Chinhoyi. This strategy reinforced accessibility, inclusivity, and relevance, effectively taking human rights directly to the people.

The 2025 IHRD theme resonated strongly with communities across Zimbabwe. Through exhibitions, dialogues, and edutainment activities, the ZHRC and its partners demystified the UDHR and the Declaration of Rights in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. This engagement helped citizens connect human rights principles to everyday issues such as access to documentation, service delivery, personal security, labour rights, and children's welfare. The commemorations highlighted that rights are lived experiences, reflected in safe communities, fair treatment by authorities, access to basic services, and opportunities for participation in public life.

Interactive exhibitions and help desks were central to the commemorations. ZHRC officers and partner institutions provided human rights education, distributed Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, and received complaints and inquiries directly from the public. This two-way engagement not only enhanced awareness of the Commission's mandate but also generated valuable grassroots insights on prevailing human rights concerns.

Strong collaboration characterised the commemorations, involving Independent Commissions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), government ministries and departments, local authorities, community-based organizations, traditional leaders, and the media. Solidarity messages from partners enriched the discourse, reinforcing the principle that the promotion and protection of human rights is a collective responsibility.

Edutainment—featuring music, drama, poetry, dance, quizzes, and public addresses—created vibrant, welcoming spaces that attracted diverse audiences, including women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities. In provinces like Manicaland and Harare, the lively atmosphere drew large crowds, transforming the events into true community festivals of rights education and civic engagement.

The six provincial commemorations collectively recorded an attendance of 5,693 people, demonstrating strong public interest and engagement. Manicaland and Harare recorded the highest turnouts, underscoring the effectiveness of decentralized, community-based approaches. Over 24,000 IEC materials—including abridged Declarations of Rights, ZHRC mandate brochures, administrative justice leaflets, and materials on children's and migrants' rights—were distributed, significantly enhancing access to human rights and administrative justice information in multiple languages.

Media engagement greatly amplified the reach of the commemorations. National coverage on ZBC Television and Radio Zimbabwe, complemented by live broadcasts and interviews on provincial and community radio stations such Platinum FM, Hevoi FM and Diamond FM, ensured that human rights messages reached an estimated audience of over two million listeners nationwide. These platforms played a critical role in positioning human rights and administrative justice as everyday essentials and enhancing the visibility of the ZHRC.

Direct engagement with communities provided important insights into the lived human rights experiences of Zimbabweans. Public concerns included access to justice and civil documentation, violations of children's rights, labour disputes and non-payment of salaries, pension administration challenges and gaps in service delivery.

Participants also raised questions regarding the ZHRC's mandate, independence, and enforcement powers, highlighting the continued need for clear public education about National Human Rights Institutions and Public Protector function.

Concerns affecting vulnerable groups—including persons with disabilities, sex workers, and victims of cyberbullying—further reinforced the importance of inclusive, rights-based responses that leave no one behind.

The 2025 IHRD commemorations reaffirmed the value of exhibitions and public kiosks as effective tools for civic education and community intelligence gathering. Partnerships with community and local radio stations proved particularly impactful and will remain a strategic pillar of future outreach. The events underscored the need for early planning, adequate resourcing, and sustained civic education beyond annual commemorations.

The ZHRC remains committed to building on these gains by strengthening provincial coordination, expanding accessible and local-language IEC materials, and deepening collaboration with stakeholders. As Zimbabwe continues to advance a culture of human rights and administrative justice grounded in dignity, equality, and accountability, International Human Rights Day stands as a vital platform for reminding all citizens that human rights are not optional ideals—but our everyday essentials.

Through these nationwide commemorations, the Commission reaffirmed its constitutional mandate to promote, protect, and enforce human rights and freedoms and administrative justice, ensuring that every individual in Zimbabwe is empowered to know, claim, and enjoy their rights in daily life.

Chairperson Majome Attends GANHRI's Bureau, meeting, Assembly & Conference, and the Human Rights Council's 58th Sessions in Geneva, Switzerland

By Misheck Bulo and Tanyaradzwa Major

A Strong International Presence

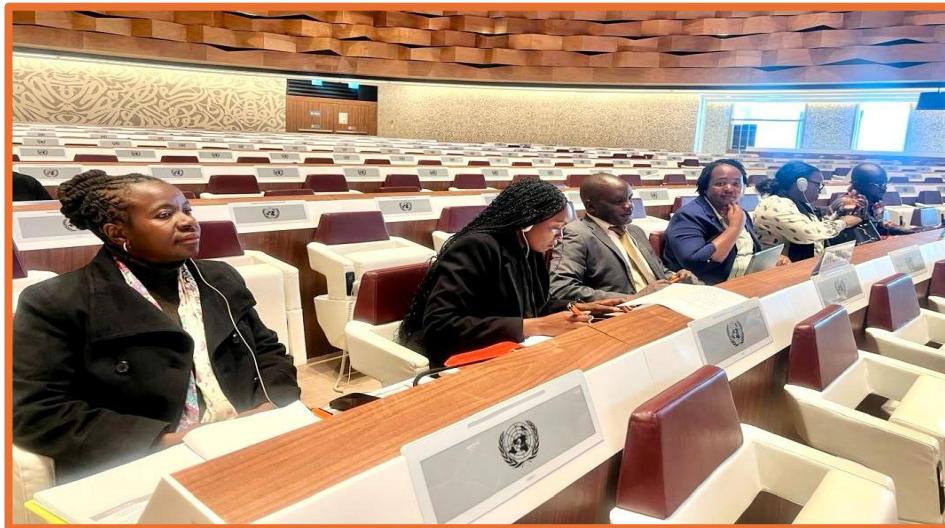
During the period 10th to 14th of March 2025, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), led by Chairperson Ms. Fungayi Jessie Majome, participated in the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)'s Bureau meeting, Assembly and Conference and the 58th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, Switzerland. These engagements provided a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing good practices, and strengthening human rights institutions while promoting Zimbabwe's human rights agenda on the international stage.

Attendance at GANHRI Bureau Meeting

Chairperson Majome also participated in the GANHRI Bureau meeting, composed of sixteen members representing regional networks which was held on the 10th of March 2025. She was elected to represent Southern Africa. The Bureau oversees the implementation of General Assembly resolutions, organisational policies, programmes, and finances. The meeting provided an opportunity to review progress, address challenges, and discuss strategies for strengthening NHRIs worldwide.

Attendance at the GANHRI Assembly

Chairperson Majome attended the GANHRI Assembly Conference that was held on the 12th of March 2025. The GANHRI Conference themed "gender equality and the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in promoting and protecting women and girls' rights." The conference provided a platform for experience sharing and learning from good practices.



Chairperson of the ZHRC (far left) following the proceedings with members of the ZHRC Secretariat.

Participation in NANHRI Steering Committee Meeting

On 10th of March 2025, Chairperson Majome attended a meeting of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) steering committee as her predecessor Dr. E. Mugwadi is the immediate past chairperson of NANHRI. As one of GANHRI's four regional groupings, NANHRI promotes the establishment and strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) across Africa. The network facilitates cooperation, training, monitoring, and advocacy to enhance the protection of human rights throughout the continent.

Chairperson Majome also convened the 1st SADC NHRI Assembly on the 10th of March 2025. This led to the revitalization of the SADC NHRIs and culminated into a number of activities throughout the year.

Engagement at the UN Human Rights Council

Overview

The ZHRC delegation attended the 58th Session of the HRC at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The participation reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to advancing human rights nationally, regionally and internationally while strengthening its visibility and effectiveness as Zimbabwe's NHRIs. Key meetings and side events focused on debt relief and human rights, State intervention on

the right to food, and the rights of persons with disabilities, providing lessons to inform domestic monitoring, advocacy, and programming.

Disability Rights and Inclusion: Implementation of UNCRPD

On 11th of March 2025, Chairperson Majome presented on the "ZHRC Knowledge Exchange of

Good Practices on Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Shared Approach and Experience." The presentation highlighted Zimbabwe's National Disability Policy and the Persons With Disabilities Act [Chapter 17:01]. Her presentation highlighted the importance of the submission of alternative reports to regional and international bodies to support advocacy and policy change.

ZHRC also attended an HRC meeting on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), focusing on the domestication of the UNCRPD by States. Key takeaways included submitting NHRIs alternative reports on disability rights, collecting comprehensive data on persons with disabilities and establishing robust monitoring systems for CRPD implementation.

Discussions stressed the importance of accessibility, non-discrimination, equality, and empowerment, underscoring the vital role of NHRIs in monitoring implementation and engaging with international mechanisms. The session reinforced that accessibility and inclusion are fundamental to equality and dignity.

Protecting the Right to Food

On 12 March 2025, the HRC considered State intervention in the realisation of the right to food, with discussions centred on food insecurity, climate change, and sustainable agriculture. Zimbabwe highlighted national interventions including drought mitigation programmes, harmonised social cash transfers, agricultural input schemes, the *Pfumvudza*¹ Programme, rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure, and nationwide children feeding initiatives.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food highlighted climate-resilient agriculture, strengthened food distribution systems, and expanded social protection for vulnerable groups. The ZHRC's participation highlights that monitoring food distribution and social protection programmes is central to safeguarding the right to food in Zimbabwe.

Debt Relief: A Human Rights Imperative

On 13th of March 2025, the HRC deliberated on the impact of external debt on the enjoyment of human rights, guided by the Guiding Principles on Foreign Debt and Human Rights. Zimbabwe presented its statement on how debt constraints limit the provision of essential public services and undermine economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly education, healthcare, food, water, and sanitation.

Calls were made for accelerated debt relief, increased official development assistance, and enhanced international cooperation to unlock fiscal space for social investment and sustainable development. The session reinforced that debt relief is not only an economic matter but a human rights imperative, directly affecting access to essential services.

Strengthening Ties with the Zimbabwe Permanent Mission

While in Geneva, ZHRC paid a courtesy call to the Zimbabwe Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other International Organisations on 13th of March 2025. The Mission highlighted the importance of ZHRC's participation in UN human rights monitoring, reporting, and review mechanisms. Chairperson Majome briefed the Mission on ZHRC's participation in GANHRI and HRC sessions, noting that sustained presence is essential to counter misinformation and strengthen Zimbabwe's human rights narrative.

Mission officials committed to facilitating ZHRC's participation in all relevant UN sessions. The visit affirmed ZHRC's central role in advocating for and protecting human rights and administrative justice in Zimbabwe.

Looking Ahead

ZHRC's attendance provided valuable insights into global human rights developments while amplifying Zimbabwe's perspectives. The ZHRC also attended the 59th session of the Human Rights Council that Chairperson Majome addressed virtually from 20 – 30 June 2025. Engagements on disability rights, food security, and debt relief highlighted pressing socio-economic challenges and reaffirmed the critical role of NHRIs.

The lessons drawn will inform ZHRC's future monitoring, advocacy, reporting, and advisory work. The Geneva trip strengthened international partnerships, enhanced ZHRC's visibility as Zimbabwe's NHRI, and affirmed the country's commitment to promoting, protecting, and enforcing human rights and administrative justice on the global stage.

Did You Know?

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission has a dual mandate:

1. It is the National Human Rights Institution for Zimbabwe with the mandate to protect, promote and enforce human rights.
2. It is the Public Protector or Ombudsman Institution for Zimbabwe.

¹ This is an initiative by the Government of Zimbabwe in which farmers are provided agricultural inputs as a way to ensure food security for the country.

Southern African Development Committee Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudsman Announces Leadership Transition from Zimbabwe (ZHRC) to South Africa

By Simbarashe Kaneunyenye

The End-of-Term Assembly of the SADC National Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRIs) and Ombudsman was held virtually on 10 November 2025, concluding the reporting period for October 2024–October 2025 and overseeing the transfer of Chairpersonship from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Representatives from SADC NHRIs, Ombudspersons, and NANHRI's Executive Director, Mr. Gilbert Sebihogo, attended.

Revitalisation and Leadership

Originally established in 2017 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among fourteen SADC Member States, the Alliance was inactive until it was animated in October 2024 with a renewed MoU. Zimbabwe, then holding the SADC Chairmanship, assumed leadership, with the Chairperson of the ZHRC, Ms. F. J. Majome, serving as the inaugural Chairperson of the revitalised Alliance. The membership expanded to fifteen Member States with the inclusion of Comoros.

Achievements Over the Term

During the reporting period, under the leadership of the inaugural Chairperson Ms. F.J. Majome Chairperson of ZHRC, significant progress included:

- i. Convening of the Inaugural Alliance.
- ii. the constitution of the inaugural Bureau by the Chairperson of ZHRC with her two deputies Mr. Chris Nissen and Mr. Seth Hassy Chairpersons of the South African and Madagascan Human Rights Commissions respectively.
- iii. the inaugural Assembly in Geneva on 11 March 2025 alongside the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Sessions.
- iv. The joining by the Comoros to the Alliance.
- v. Engagement with United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), GANHRI, and NANHRI.

- vi. Improved internal coordination through dedicated online communication platforms.
- vii. Identification of priority human rights concerns, such as the situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.
- viii. Commitment to develop regional research, particularly on land rights and access to socio-economic entitlements.

The outgoing Bureau also developed an action plan to establish stronger institutional frameworks and pursue observer status within formal SADC structures. However, the absence of a permanent Secretariat impeded administrative continuity and timely engagement with regional political offices.



SADC Alliance of NHRIs Inaugural Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland

Transition of Chairpersonship

In accordance with rotational arrangements, leadership was scheduled to pass to Madagascar, but due to political upheavals, the Assembly unanimously agreed to transfer the Chairpersonship to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). The handover was conducted from Ms. Majome to Rev. Chris Nissen, with Eswatini confirmed as First Deputy Chairperson. The acting Second Deputy Chairperson is to be confirmed following the NANHRI Biennial Conference in early 2026.

Forward Priorities

Key recommendations to the incoming Bureau include:

- i. Establishment of a permanent Secretariat.
- ii. Support for remaining NHRIs to attain minimum B-Status accreditation.

- iii. Review and amendment of the MoU to strengthen functional capacity and operational clarity.

Conclusion

With the foundational structures restored, membership expanded, and leadership now

transitioning to South Africa, the Alliance is positioned to build on this progress and strengthen its role as a collaborative platform for human rights and administrative justice advancement and democratic cooperation in the SADC region.

ZHRC Charts the Future: Strategic Planning Workshop Sets Direction for 2026–2030

By The Human Resources Department

In a major stride toward strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights and administrative justice in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission convened a landmark Strategic Planning Workshop in Masvingo. The historic city provided a fitting backdrop for this important gathering, which marked the official start of the Commission's strategic planning process for the 2026–2030 cycle.

Echoing the timeless words of philosopher Benjamin Franklin, *“If you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail,”* the workshop brought together the Commission's leadership — the Chairperson, Commissioners, the Secretariat — and a wide array of stakeholders to reflect on past performance and map out a focused, future-ready strategy.

The workshop participants included representatives from key institutions such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS), the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, and civil society organisations including the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF). Their participation underscored the Commission's commitment to inclusive and collaborative planning.

The workshop provided space for identifying areas where the Commission can deepen its impact, adapt to emerging human rights and administrative justice challenges, and strengthen its operational efficiency through the transition from the National Development Strategy (NDS)1 to NDS2 which offers a pivotal moment for strategic alignment.

The discussions highlighted the need for enhanced collaboration, improved resource mobilisation, capacity building, and stronger communication frameworks to ensure better service delivery to the people of Zimbabwe.



The ZHRC Chairperson, Commissioners, Secretariat and Stakeholders attending the strategic workshop.

Stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to working closely with the ZHRC, highlighting the importance of coordinated efforts in human rights and administrative justice advocacy, monitoring, and institutional strengthening.

The workshop forms part of a broader initiative to ensure that the ZHRC is well-equipped to navigate the complexities of human rights and administrative justice promotion in Zimbabwe. Participants contributed valuable insights and proposals that will guide the development of a robust, actionable strategic plan. As the nation advances toward Vision 2030, the Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening human rights and freedoms and

administrative justice protection, promotion and enforcement. With renewed collaboration, clear strategic direction, and collective resolve, the

ZHRC is poised to enhance its effectiveness and continue serving as a beacon of hope for a more just, equitable, and rights-respecting Zimbabwe.

ZHRC Appoints Mrs. Kurai Makumbe as Executive Secretary

By The Human Resources Department

The ZHRC is pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs. Kurai Makumbe as the new Executive Secretary, effective 11th of September 2025. Her appointment was made in accordance with Section 6(1)(a) of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Act [Chapter 10:30], which mandates the Commission to appoint an Executive Secretary responsible for implementing Commission decisions, managing the day-to-day administration of the institution and overseeing the affairs, staff and property of the Commission. In this capacity, the Executive Secretary also serves as the custodian of all Commission records and attends all Commission meetings, though without voting rights.

In a statement, the Commission said:

“The Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Ms. Fungayi Jessie Majome, Commissioners and Secretariat would like to congratulate Mrs. Kurai Makumbe on her appointment as Executive Secretary of the Commission.”

Mrs. Makumbe brings to the role a strong academic and professional background. She holds a Master of Business Administration in Leadership and Management (MBALM) from the Africa Leadership and Management Academy (ALMA) in collaboration with the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), as well as LLB degree from the University of Pretoria.

Mrs. Makumbe joined the ZHRC on 1st of September 2014 as a Chief Human Rights Officer and the title eventually retitled Director Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative

Justice, a position she held prior to this appointment.



Mrs. Kurai Makumbe – ZHRC Executive Secretary

Her wealth of experience in human rights protection, administrative justice, and institutional management positions her well to lead the Commission’s Secretariat. Mrs. Makumbe becomes the fourth substantive Executive Secretary since the Commission’s establishment. She takes over from Dr. Delis Mazambani, whose five-year term ended in February 2025.

The ZHRC family extends its warmest congratulations to Mrs. Makumbe and wishes her a successful and impactful tenure as she assumes this critical leadership role in advancing the Commission’s mandate to promote, protect, and enforce human rights and freedoms and administrative justice in Zimbabwe.

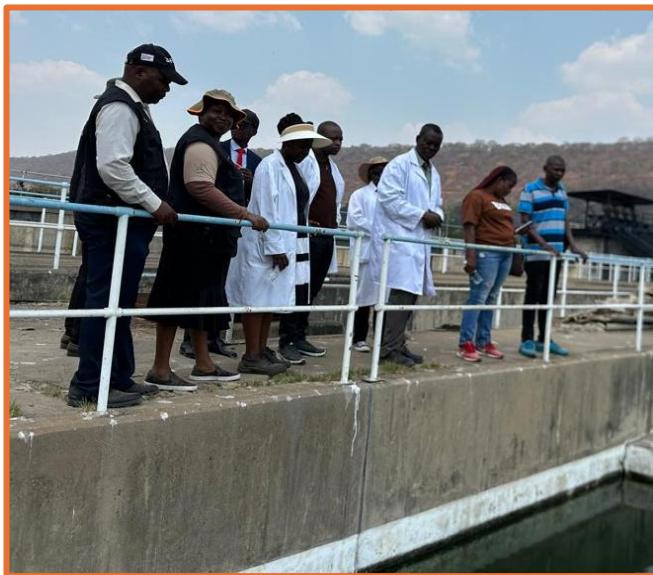
Upholding the Right to Water, Sanitation, and Safe Working Conditions: ZHRC Visits Harare Water and Sewage Treatment Plants

By The Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative Justice Department

On the 8th of October 2025, the ZHRC conducted a follow-up fact-finding visit to the Firle Sewage

Treatment Plant and the Morton Jaffray Water Treatment Plant in Harare. Led by Chairperson Ms.

Fungayi Jessie Majome, the mission included media representatives and was part of the Commission's ongoing investigation into cholera outbreaks, as well as the infestation of Harre's water source Lake Chivero with toxic *cyanobacteria*. It aimed to assess human rights and administrative justice concerns related to water, sanitation, occupational safety, environmental health, and administrative justice. The visit aimed to verify the implementation of prior ZHRC recommendations and evaluate the City of Harare's capacity to provide safe drinking water and effective sewage treatment from a human rights perspective.



The ZHRC Chairperson Ms. F. J. Majome (in white dustcoat and sun hat) accompanied by the ZHRC Secretariat, City of Harare and members of the media as they toured around Morton Jaffray Water Treatment Plant.

At the Firle Sewage Treatment Plant, the Commission found that operations remain far below the design capacity of one hundred and forty-four (140) mega litres per day, treating only fifty (50) to sixty (60) mega litres daily. Challenges

identified during the visit included outdated infrastructure, frequent shutdowns due to sand and solid waste blockages, and vandalism, including theft of manhole covers. Workers face significant occupational hazards, such as inadequate personal protective equipment (PPE), insufficient gas detection systems, and unsafe confined-space procedures. Upgrading the plant is estimated to require US\$6–7 million.

At the Morton Jaffray Water Treatment Plant, which draws water from the Manyame Dam and Lake Chivero, the Commission observed ongoing efforts to improve efficiency, including experiments with alternative treatment chemicals. Nevertheless, the plant faces persistent challenges, including erratic chemical supplies, aging equipment, incomplete pump installations, frequent power outages, and low revenue collection. The facility's output of approximately two hundred and ninety (290) mega litres per day falls well short of its design capacity of seven hundred and four (704) mega litres per day and the city's daily demand of one thousand two hundred (1200) mega litres per day, contributing to widespread water rationing. Long-term expansion projects, such as the Kunzvi and Musami dams, remain stalled due to financial constraints, while high water losses and water bills arrears further strain the system.

The ZHRC indicated that access to clean, safe water and adequate sanitation are fundamental human rights protected under the Constitution of Zimbabwe, as well as regional and international human rights law. The Commission will continue engaging with the City of Harare and relevant stakeholders to promote accountability, strengthen service delivery, and safeguard the rights to water, sanitation, health, environmental protection, and safe working condition.

Restoring Administrative Justice: How the ZHRC Empowered a Mother and Secured Child Maintenance

By Tapiwa D. Dete (Masvingo Province)

Access to justice is a fundamental right—but for many Zimbabweans, administrative delays and procedural errors can stand in the way of realising that right. This was the experience of a mother of two from Zaka (name withheld to protect her

identity), who approached the ZHRC seeking help after months of frustration.

Following her separation from the father of her children, the Complainant approached the Zaka Magistrates' court to apply for child maintenance. However, because the original proceedings began

in Gutu, she needed her court file transferred to Zaka Magistrates Court to continue the process. Weeks passed, then months, with no progress. Each inquiry to the local Clerk of Court yielded the same response: *“We are still looking for the file.”* Realising that something was amiss, she brought her complaint to the ZHRC.

During its intervention, the Commission discovered that the file had been mistakenly dispatched to Masvingo, instead of Zaka - a simple administrative error that led to significant hardship for the Complainant. The ZHRC immediately engaged all offices involved, facilitating communication between the courts and ensuring the correct transfer of records.

Strengthening Access to Documentation: ZHRC Conducts High-Level Multistakeholder Engagements Nationwide

By The Monitoring and Inspections Department

In a continued effort to promote access to documentation and strengthen administrative justice across the country, the ZHRC conducted high-level multistakeholder engagements in Manicaland, Bulawayo and Midlands Provinces. Complementing these were several district-level engagements held nationwide.

The purpose of the engagements was to monitor progress made since the ZHRC’s national inquiry on access to documentation in 2020 and to gather feedback on implementation efforts. The engagements provided a platform to identify gaps and persisting challenges encountered by duty bearers, to assess the effectiveness of measures adopted by government departments and partners and foster collaboration among stakeholders to ensure a coordinated approach. These dialogues form part of a systematic follow-up mechanism aimed at ensuring accountability and the effective implementation of recommendations issued by the Commission. The engagements reflect the Commission’s commitment to ensuring that its recommendations translate into meaningful change for vulnerable groups.

The high-level engagements brought together influential actors in policy and service delivery, including Honourable Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, the ZHRC leadership, Mayors from local authorities and traditional leaders, including chiefs from various

Once the file reached Zaka Magistrates Court, the Complainant was finally able to submit her maintenance application. The court granted an order in her favour, directing that maintenance for her two children be garnished directly from the father’s salary - providing her family with financial stability and predictability.

This case demonstrates the critical role of the ZHRC in unblocking administrative barriers, safeguarding the rights of women and children, and ensuring that justice is not delayed or denied because of procedural inefficiencies.

communities. Representatives of the Civil Registry Department (CRD), Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), Department of Social Development and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) attended the engagements. The diversity of participants and stakeholders ensured that discussions were rich, constructive, and grounded in lived realities from across different provinces.

Despite notable efforts from stakeholders, several recurring challenges were highlighted. Resource constraints, especially at district and provincial levels were noted. Slow implementation of legal and policy reforms, particularly those requiring high-level government action remained a challenge.

Bureaucratic procedures, resulting in delays in service delivery and follow-through, capacity gaps within some institutions and limited outreach to remote and disadvantaged communities were noted. These persistent barriers continue to affect vulnerable populations, particularly those in marginalised rural areas, persons with disabilities, orphaned children, and communities affected by forced displacement.

One of the most encouraging outcomes of the engagements was the strengthening of collaboration between government ministries, local authorities, traditional leaders, and the civil society. Stakeholders collectively reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that every Zimbabwean

enjoys the right to identity and legal recognition, as enshrined in the Constitution.

By establishing open dialogue platforms, the ZHRC is helping to create a shared vision for improving access to documentation — a key enabler of social services, citizenship rights, and development opportunities. The ZHRC will continue to monitor progress and support

stakeholders in accelerating the implementation of recommendations. Through sustained engagement, improved coordination, and responsive policy action, the Commission remains dedicated to ensuring that no one is left behind in accessing fundamental documentation and related services.

ZHRC Mediation Brings Resolution to Sabi Star Mine Property Rights Dispute in Buhera

By Tendai Mupudzi (Manicaland Province)

The ZHRC investigated the Sabi Star Mine property rights dispute in Buhera District, Manicaland Province during the period 15th to 19th September 2025. The ZHRC utilized Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) powers, as provided under the ZHRC Regulations (S.I. 77 of 2016). These powers allow the Commission to resolve complaints through negotiation, conciliation, or mediation, offering an effective and community-focused alternative to lengthy court proceedings. The dispute arose after twenty-three (23) families, relocated by the Sabi Star Mine in 2023 to Murambinda Growth Point, discovered discrepancies in the size of residential stands they were allocated when they were relocated by the Sabi Star Mine. It was alleged that some of the stands were significantly smaller than the agreed four hundred and fifty (450) square metres. Attempts to resolve the matter with the mining company and local authority proved unsuccessful, leading the families to seek the ZHRC's intervention in June 2025.

Through a series of engagements and mediation sessions with the Buhera Rural District Council and the mining company, the ZHRC successfully facilitated a resolution. The affected families were allocated six consolidated stands to compensate for the shortfalls. They collectively decided to sell the stands and share the proceeds, demonstrating a community-driven and constructive approach to dispute resolution.

This case underscores the importance of ZHRC mediation, particularly in property rights and community disputes, where flexible, informal, and inclusive processes often lead to fairer outcomes. By promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and accountability, the ZHRC ensures that affected communities are adequately compensated and their rights upheld.

The ZHRC continues to monitor the situation and remains committed to advocating for transparent and fair processes in all relocation and property rights cases, empowering communities to actively participate in resolving disputes while reinforcing the rule of law.

Protecting Returnees' Rights Remains Zimbabwe's Responsibility- ZHRC

By The Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative Justice Department

The ZHRC in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), conducted MHRCS across five districts from 17–21 November 2025. The districts visited included Mberengwa (Midlands), Mwenezi (Masvingo), Beitbridge (Matabeleland South), and Bubi and Hwange (Matabeleland North).

These MHRCS provided human-rights-based reintegration support, promoted peaceful

reintegration, improved access to justice for Zimbabwe Exemption Permit (ZEP) affected individuals, and documented emerging human rights challenges in the districts.

Many Zimbabweans returning from South Africa face significant hardships, including xenophobia, insecurity, and limited access to essential services such as healthcare and sanitation. These challenges, compounded by socio-economic

instability in Zimbabwe—including hyperinflation, high unemployment, inadequate social services, corruption, and ongoing human rights violations—have made reintegration particularly difficult.



Ms. Sandra Moyo of the ZHRC delivering an MHRC session on the rights of returnees at Matabo High School, Ward 32, Mberengwa in Midlands Province.

During the MHRCs, returnees and host communities highlighted pressing concerns faced by communities. Lack of essential documentation,

such as travel documents, birth certificates, and identity documents for children of returnees or parents born abroad was indicated to be a growing challenge. Social reintegration challenges, including stigma, difficulties in acceptance, and fractured family units leading to early child marriages and increased divorces were documented. Economic vulnerability, with limited opportunities for sustainable livelihoods affected the communities.

Communities indicated the need for greater flexibility from the Civil Registry Department, creation of income-generating projects, and coordinated support to facilitate successful reintegration.

The ZHRC and partners remain committed to advocating for policy reforms grounded in human rights and administrative justice, ensuring that returnees' rights are protected, dignity is upheld, and constitutional rights enshrined in Chapter 4 of the Zimbabwe Constitution are respected, protected and promoted. Through these efforts, the Commission reinforces that protecting the rights of returnees is not just a statutory duty but a shared national responsibility.

Children's Rights Upheld: ZHRC Secures Reunification in Mutare

By Tendai Mupudzi (Manicaland Province)

On the 27th of May 2024, the ZHRC received a complaint concerning alleged violations of children's rights. The Complainant (name withheld to protect the identity of the children) reported that in October 2022, he was awarded custody of his biological sons, who are aged 10 and 8, by the Chipinge Magistrates Court. Despite the court ruling, the children's mother refused to return them after school holidays. Efforts to resolve the matter through negotiation and police intervention were unsuccessful, and the children were eventually placed in the custody of Chipinge District Department of Social Development (DSD) at Tamba Village of Orphans.

However, no investigation was conducted by DSD from August 2023 to May 2024, leaving the children in the orphanage for over eight months despite their father holding a valid court order. Frustrated, the Complainant sought the ZHRC's assistance to ensure either the return of his

children or that the pending investigation be conducted.

In line with its mandate under section 242(1)(d) of the Constitution and guided by section 81 on children's rights and section 68 on administrative justice, the ZHRC intervened. Initial engagements with the DSD Officer yielded no results, prompting escalation to the Provincial Social Development Officer for Manicaland Province.

The investigation revealed that Tamba Village of Orphans was illegally holding the children, as no court order had been obtained within the legally required timeframe under sections 14 and 17 of the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06]. The children were not even registered in the provincial system and had not received social welfare provisions.

Following the ZHRC's intervention, the provincial officer expedited the investigation, confirming that the children's mother was unfit to care for them due to her lifestyle and drug abuse. The children expressed a preference to stay with their father. Consequently, the children were successfully reunited with their father.

This case underscores the principle that children's rights are human rights and demonstrates the ZHRC's role in safeguarding children's welfare,

ensuring administrative accountability, and protecting families from maladministration by public institutions.

ZHRC Advancing the Right to Access Documentation in Zimbabwe

By Tanyarazwa Major (CHI Harare Head Office)

In 2025, the ZHRC undertook follow-up actions to improve access to essential documentation, building on findings and recommendations from its National Inquiry on Access to Documentation conducted in 2020.

Access to documentation is a fundamental human right and a gateway to the enjoyment of other rights. Section 35 (1) (3) (b) and (c) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees citizens the right to essential documents such as birth certificates and travel documents, which enable individuals to work, access healthcare, education, social benefits, inherit property, travel, vote, and participate fully in society.

For children, a birth certificate is especially crucial. It forms the foundation of their identity and nationality. Without it, children face significant barriers to education, healthcare, and social protection, leaving them vulnerable to exclusion and undermining their overall development and well-being.

Despite ongoing efforts, many Zimbabweans still encounter significant obstacles in obtaining essential documents. The ZHRC continues to receive complaints highlighting bureaucratic delays, complex processes, social and cultural barriers, and limited access to services in rural and remote areas. Poor implementation of existing

laws and policies further compounds these challenges.

A notable case involved a child under the care of a paternal grandmother in Mount Darwin, Mashonaland Central Province, where the mother's whereabouts were initially unknown. The ZHRC, upon locating the mother, she refused to register her child or obtain a birth certificate, citing cultural practices such as compensation ("kuripwa") before registration. Despite the ZHRC's efforts to educate her on the importance of documentation, she remained unwilling to act. After concerted efforts of the ZHRC, the child was issued with birth a certificate.

This case underscores the tension between cultural norms and legal obligations. While cultural practices are respected, the best interests of the child must take precedence. Legal recognition and access to essential services should not be delayed or denied due to traditions that are irrelevant to a child's rights.

The ZHRC remains committed to removing barriers to documentation, engaging with communities to promote awareness, and collaborating with relevant authorities to ensure all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, can access essential documents without delay or discrimination.

Building the Case for Justice: ZHRC's Strategic Journey to Establish a Litigation Unit

By Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative Justice Department

The ZHRC is embarking on a transformative initiative to strengthen its ability to ensure and secure redress for complainants against human rights and administrative justice violations. In a strategic and carefully planned process, the Commission is laying the groundwork to establish a dedicated litigation Unit, aimed at bridging the gap between investigative findings and tangible legal redress for victims of human rights and

freedoms and administrative justice violations. This unit will enable the ZHRC to not only investigate abuses but also represent victims directly in court whenever the Commission deems it necessary, ensuring enforceable remedies rather than merely persuasive recommendations.

This initiative responds to a longstanding gap in Zimbabwe's human rights and administrative justice framework. While the ZHRC has relied on investigation, mediation, and recommendations, these mechanisms are limited in their

enforceability. Section 243(1)(g) of the Constitution empowers the Commission to “secure appropriate redress,” and the proposed Litigation Unit is designed to fully realize this mandate. By representing marginalized communities and individuals directly in court, the unit will tackle strategic and public interest cases involving powerful State and non-State actors, including those where other legal avenues may be constrained.



The Chairperson of the ZHRC (seated second from left) pose for a group photo with ZHRC Secretariat and Mr. Saurombe (seated far left) during the ZHRC litigation workshop at Skyview in Mutare.

Historically, cases requiring litigation were referred to external partners such as the Legal Aid Directorate or other Non-Governmental Organisations. While useful, these referrals can face delays, capacity limitations, and reluctance to pursue claims against the State. The future Litigation Unit will operate as a strategic, complementary force, taking on high-impact cases and ensuring that no human rights violation goes unaddressed.

Significant progress has already been made. In November 2025, the ZHRC hosted a workshop on the Development of Tools and Manuals for the Litigation Unit in Mutare. This hands-on session involved ZHRC Chairperson, Secretariat and legal

experts drafting the foundational documents, including manuals on Public Interest Litigation, Strategic Impact Litigation, and Standard Operating Procedures for case management. These efforts ensure that, when operational, the unit will be robust, professional, and strategically focused, ready to handle complex legal cases from day one.

Establishing the Unit requires careful attention to regulatory, operational, and resource considerations. The ZHRC is engaging closely with

the Law Society of Zimbabwe (LSZ) to address issues such as the unit’s operational independence, classification of legal staff, and adherence to ethical and financial standards. The Commission is simultaneously developing the necessary policy frameworks and resource strategies to ensure sustainability.

The Mutare workshop marked a pivotal step in

the project, moving it from concept to concrete planning. Draft manuals on Anti-Impunity Litigation, Human Rights Defenders, and Case Observation Protocols now provide a clear blueprint for operations. Meanwhile, ongoing discussions with the LSZ aim to secure regulatory approval. The ZHRC will continue capacity-building, policy development, and resource mobilization to ensure the unit is fully prepared.

The establishment of a Litigation Unit represents a marathon, not a sprint. By taking a deliberate, methodical approach, the ZHRC is ensuring that the future Unit is built on integrity, professionalism, and strategic clarity. This initiative demonstrates the Commission’s unwavering commitment to strengthening justice, constitutionalism, and the protection of human rights in Zimbabwe, one carefully laid brick at a time.

ZHRC Chairperson Majome calls for improved human rights between Chinese businesses and Zimbabweans



The Chairperson of the ZHRC Ms. F. J. Majome (in red jacket) with the Chinese Ambassador Zhou Ding (on her left) pose for a photo with ZHRC Secretariat and Officers of the Chinese Embassy after a meeting at the Chinese Embassy.

By Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative Justice Department

The ZHRC held a productive meeting with His Excellency Zhou Ding, the Chinese Ambassador to Zimbabwe, to address allegations of human rights violations involving Chinese-owned mining companies operating in the country. The Commission's visit to the Chinese Embassy was prompted by numerous complaints concerning the activities of Chinese nationals. The Commission had issued a press statement in response to a fatal shooting incident by a Chinese business person, announcing it would engage the Chinese Ambassador. The ZHRC is gratified that the Embassy showed a positive attitude and reached out first hence the meeting was arranged. Chairperson Majome highlighted concerns regarding non-compliance with regulations, particularly relating to ablution facilities, environmental issues, and labour considerations.

"In our monitoring work and the complaints received, we have encountered disconcerting issues that pertain to Chinese nationals running businesses," Chairperson Majome explained during the meeting. At Kunyu mine, specific labour issues and reports of gender-based violations were cited. The ZHRC's investigations into these allegations uphold its legal duty to uphold rights such as the right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment, as enshrined in section 73 of the Constitution, as well as labour rights outlined in section 65.

ZHRC Chairperson Majome pointed out the necessity of protecting the rights of both Zimbabwean citizens and Chinese nationals. She called for improved understanding and collaboration between businesses and the community to foster a harmonious relationship.

"Our concern is that many of the recommendations we have issued as a Commission have not been complied with. At times, we have not received responses. Those recommendations are intended to resolve existing problems," she noted, highlighting the primary complaints related to environmental and labour rights violations.

In response to these allegations, Ambassador Zhou expressed his willingness to collaborate with the Commission and support Zimbabwean nationals. He stated that China does not condone human rights abuses, stressing a commitment to addressing these issues.

The Ambassador acknowledged that his office might sometimes be unaware of the operations of Chinese companies and suggested that there are individuals trying to tarnish the image of Chinese businesses. He agreed with the Commission that companies should work with government agencies to ensure compliance with human rights and freedoms and administrative justice standards. Ambassador Zhou invited the ZHRC to bring specific cases involving Chinese businesspeople to the embassy to and assured the ZHRC of his help to safeguard and promote human rights.

During their discussions, the Commission and the Embassy identified a potential avenue for cooperation. Ambassador Zhou Ding invited the ZHRC to engage with the China Chamber of Commerce's education and interaction sessions where, together with the Department of Immigration, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, and the Zimbabwe Republic Police, they proposed providing educational lectures for Chinese officials on immigration laws, human rights, tax compliance, and law enforcement. This training would extend to Chinese-owned companies to improve their operations and compliance with local laws.

To conclude the meeting, Chairperson Majome asked Ambassador Zhou to ensure the implicated mining companies respond to the Commission's allegations, highlighting the importance of due

process in addressing these concerns and handed over a dossier of complaints against respective mining companies over the years. The Embassy took positive steps to address the issues with the specific companies, and within a few days the ZHRC received long outstanding responses from companies complained against.

Through this engagement, the ZHRC aims to facilitate a constructive dialogue that enhances respect for human rights and freedoms and administrative justice and fosters better relationships between various stakeholders involved in Zimbabwe's mining and general business sectors.

'Protecting Environmental Rights: A Shared Responsibility for Zimbabwe's Future' - ZHRC

By Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative Justice Department

Environmental rights are more than a legal guarantee—they are a shared responsibility for every individual, community, and institution in Zimbabwe. Section 73 of the Constitution affirms that every person has the right to *"an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being"* and to have *"the environment protected for present and future generations."* This constitutional protection empowers communities to hold mining companies, local authorities, and government agencies accountable whenever environmental harm threatens health, livelihoods, or future prospects. In line with this mandate, the ZHRC conducted Mobile Human Rights Clinics (MHRCs) across the country in 2025. These MHRCs focused on the intersection of environmental rights, business practices, and human rights in communities affected by mining in Bindura, Buhera, Bikita, Hurungwe, and Hwange, among other communities. While mining operations provide economic opportunities, they also pose significant social and environmental challenges for nearby residents.



Ms. Tanyaradzwa Major delivering a session during the MHRC on environmental rights at Kasimure Ward 6, Hurungwe District, Mashonaland West Province.

Communities raised pressing environmental concerns, including frequent veld fires destroying grazing land and threatening biodiversity, poor waste disposal practices causing water contamination and health hazards, unregulated gold panning leading to river siltation, land degradation, and flooding risk. Failure of companies to uphold corporate social responsibility commitments was noted. These issues directly impact health, livelihoods, and quality of life, underscoring the need for coordinated action by local authorities, environmental agencies like the EMA, and other stakeholders.

The MHRCs also documented human rights and administrative justice violations linked to business operations, including displacement, loss of access to natural resources, and inadequate community consultation. Many affected individuals reported insufficient engagement with companies and a lack of accessible mechanisms for redress. The ZHRC investigates all the reported cases that fall within its mandate in order to secure appropriate redress for the affected communities.

The ZHRC indicated the importance of integrating respect for environmental and human rights standards in business activities. Key recommendations include strengthening environmental regulations, enhancing corporate accountability. Expanding community participation in decision-making and supporting environmental defenders and impacted communities was noted. These clinics reaffirm the urgent need for ongoing advocacy, monitoring, and community support to mitigate the effects of extractive industries on both the environment and local populations. The ZHRC remains committed to promoting sustainable development that balances economic growth with the protection of human rights and freedoms and administrative justice, fostering responsible and accountable mining practices across Zimbabwe.

ZHRC Strengthening Accountability and Human Rights Protection Through Monitoring Activities

By The Monitoring and Inspections Department

Throughout 2025, the ZHRC undertook a series of monitoring missions across the country, focusing on elections, displacement, detention facilities, public health institutions, and legislative developments. These activities form part of the Commission's constitutional mandate to promote, protect, and enforce human rights and administrative justice in Zimbabwe.

Elections Monitoring

The ZHRC monitored several by-elections held during the year, including Ward 3 of Chegutu Rural District Council in Mashonaland West Province, Gutu East Constituency by-election in Masvingo Province and Insiza North Constituency in Matabeleland South Province.

Across all three locations, the elections were generally peaceful, orderly, and conducted in accordance with constitutional standards. The Commission observed respect for key civil and political rights, including freedom of expression, association, and participation. While minor logistical challenges were noted, they did not materially affect the peaceful conduct of the polls.

Monitoring of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) – Goromonzi District

In April 2025, the ZHRC carried out a monitoring mission to assess the human rights situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) evicted from Cloverdale Farm in Goromonzi District.

Findings revealed serious human rights concerns, including arbitrary evictions carried out without adequate notice or due process and violations of the principles of equality and non-discrimination. These activities have severe impact on children, many of whom lost shelter and were forced out of school. Vulnerable groups—including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and women—were sleeping in open spaces under harsh weather conditions. The Commission raised these issues with relevant authorities, indicating the urgent need for humane, lawful, and rights-based responses.

Harare Remand Prison Monitoring

On 29 April 2025, the Chairperson led a monitoring and inspections mission at Harare Remand Prison, out of concern for the increasing trend of prolonged

pre- trial detention of accused persons in cases of political interest, against the widely observed constitutional right of arrested persons to be released on bail unless there are compelling circumstances. The visit focused particularly on the detention of journalist Blessed Mhlanga and ninety-four (94) others arrested for allegedly participating in public protests.

The mission examined conditions of detention, due process concerns and allegations of politically motivated pre-trial detention. During the visit, detainees raised concerns about police conduct, misleading media reports, and repeated bail denials.

The ZHRC also documented poor detention conditions, including crowding, deteriorating sanitation, and inadequate facilities, all of which undermine the rights and dignity of inmates. The chairperson's intervention secured immediate redress for detainees who were injured by torture during arrest, but had not received medical attention, the repair of the prison's telephone line to facilitate inmates' communication with their lawyers and families, bullying by fellow inmates, and facilitating a channel of complaints to the officer in charge.

Public Health Institutions Monitoring

As part of its health rights oversight, the ZHRC conducted monitoring missions across several provinces, visiting:

- **Masvingo Province:** Chingombe Rural, Gutu Mission, and Gutu Rural Hospitals
- **Midlands Province:** Midlands Provincial Hospital and Shurugwi District Hospital
- **Mashonaland West:** Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital
- **Manicaland Province:** Nyanga District Hospital, Bonda, Mutambara, and Rusitu Mission Hospitals
- **Matabeleland North Province:** Tsholotsho District Hospital and St. Lukes Hospital in Lupane

The missions assessed observance of human rights standards in healthcare delivery, patient care conditions, working conditions of medical staff and availability of essential resources.

Findings made by the ZHRC highlighted several challenges including deteriorating infrastructure and outdated or inadequate medical equipment,

unreliable electricity and water supply in several facilities, severe staff shortages exacerbated by continued brain drain and limited funding, affecting medicine procurement and maintenance of equipment. These issues continue to threaten the right to health and require urgent multi-sectoral intervention.

Monitoring of Bills and Statutory Instruments

In line with its mandate to promote human rights-compliant laws and policies, the ZHRC analysed various Bills and Statutory Instruments during the reporting period. In February 2025, the Commission participated in a public hearing on the State Pensions Bill, convened by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare. It also analysed the Mines and Minerals Bill that is before Parliament for the sake of greater environmental rights protection for affected communities.

The ZHRC provided input to ensure that the Bill aligns with constitutional, regional and international human rights standards. The ZHRC remains committed to promoting accountability, protecting vulnerable groups, and ensuring that all institutions of the State uphold the rights and dignity of every person in Zimbabwe.

Legislative Monitoring

As part of its mandate to promote constitutionalism, good governance, and human rights-compliant legislation, the ZHRC analysed several Statutory Instruments gazetted in 2025. The assessments focused on the extent to which the instruments uphold or impact fundamental human rights and freedoms and administrative justice guaranteed in the Constitution and regional and international human rights frameworks.

Analysis of S.I. 62 of 2025 – Harmful Liquids Act (Amendment of Schedule to Act)

The Commission reviewed S.I. 62 of 2025, which prohibits the production, distribution, and sale of *musombodhiya*, an illicit and highly toxic alcoholic brew known to cause severe health complications and loss of life.

The ZHRC welcomed the measure as a positive step toward safeguarding the rights to health and life, particularly within low-income and vulnerable communities where the consumption of unsafe home-brewed alcohol is prevalent. However, the

Commission highlighted the need to balance public interest with individual rights, ensuring that enforcement strategies do not violate due process or contribute to arbitrary arrests.

Analysis of S.I. 76 of 2025 – Deeds Registries Act [Chapter 20:05]

Statutory Instrument 76 of 2025 introduces a major reform in the property registration system by replacing traditional title deeds with new "securitised deeds." The reform seeks to curb rampant fraud involving title deed manipulation, strengthen the integrity of land and property administration and address long-standing vulnerabilities involving legal practitioners, Deeds Office officials, and government employees.

The ZHRC noted that, while the securitised deeds system presents an important step toward protecting property rights, it must be implemented with transparency, public awareness, and administrative justice safeguards to prevent exclusion or unintended rights violations.

Analysis of S.I. 83 of 2025 – UMP Zvataida RDC (Environmental and Natural Resources Conservation) By-laws

The Commission analysed Statutory Instrument 83 of 2025, enacted by Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe (UMP) Zvataida Rural District Council, focusing on environmental and natural resources conservation. The analysis examined consistency of the by-laws with constitutional environmental rights, the human rights implications of regulatory measures and potential impacts on access to land, livelihoods, and community participation.

The ZHRC indicated the need for the by-laws to be implemented in a manner that promotes sustainable development while protecting the rights of communities that depend on natural resources for survival.

Analysis of S.I. 121 of 2025 – Masvingo Anti-Litter By-laws

The City of Masvingo's S.I. 121 of 2025, enacted under the Urban Councils Act, aims to improve waste management, curb littering, and enhance environmental health. The ZHRC found that the by-laws align with section 73 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well-being, demonstrate strong compliance with regional and international

environmental standards and promote public participation and civic responsibility. The Commission commended the by-laws as a progressive regulatory framework, provided implementation remains fair, non-discriminatory, and community-based.

Analysis of S.I. 118 of 2025 – Masvingo Hawkers and Vendors By-laws

The City of Masvingo also gazetted S.I. 118 of 2025, aimed at regulating informal trading. Key elements of the by-laws include licensing requirements, market and stall regulation and public health and hygiene standards. The ZHRC acknowledged that informal trading is a primary livelihood source for many Zimbabweans, especially women, youth, and persons with disabilities. As such, regulating the sector must balance order with socio-economic rights.

While many provisions promote accountability and health standards, the Commission flagged concerns relating to potential barriers to accessing trading licenses, risk of arbitrary confiscation of goods and insufficient safeguards for vulnerable traders. These issues raise human rights and administrative justice concerns, prompting the ZHRC to recommend rights-based revisions and inclusive implementation practices.

Through these legislative analyses, the ZHRC continues to champion a human right-centred approach to lawmaking, ensuring that laws strengthen—not hinder—Zimbabwe's progress toward justice, equality, and good governance.

Court Judgement Analysis

As part of its mandate to promote and protect human rights and administrative justice, the ZHRC continued to monitor court decisions with potential implications for the protection of constitutional rights. In 2025, the Commission conducted legal analyses of key judgments to assess compliance with human rights standards and to inform future advocacy and engagement with justice sector institutions.

State v Necious Ndlovu 123/24: ZWBHC

In this case, the accused was charged with rape as defined under section 65 of the Criminal Law

(Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]. Upon review of the proceedings, the ZHRC noted serious concerns relating to the fairness of the trial. The Commission observed *prima facie* violations of the right to a fair hearing, particularly regarding the *audi alteram partem* principle. Records showed that the accused was not properly afforded the opportunity to choose a language of his preference during trial proceedings—an essential safeguard for ensuring meaningful participation, comprehension, and the integrity of the court process.

Such procedural irregularities not only undermine the fairness of the trial but may also compromise the administration of justice. The Commission indicated the need for continuous training of justice actors on language rights, fair trial guarantees, and constitutional obligations under section 69 of the Constitution.

Muganhiri v Harare High School & Ors (2024)

This landmark judgment arose after Harare High School refused to enrol pupils from the Muganhiri family on the grounds that they had not attained the school's entry requirement of twelve units or below in their Grade 7 examinations. Feeling aggrieved, the parent filed an urgent application arguing that the school's decision violated the children's constitutional right to education as guaranteed under section 75 of the Constitution. The High Court ruled in favour of the Applicant, compelling the school to admit the children.

The ruling set an important precedent by affirming that admission criteria must not be applied in a discriminatory manner. Moreso, public schools, as providers of a fundamental social service, must ensure their policies align with constitutional rights and children cannot be unfairly excluded from schooling based on administrative criteria that do not consider their rights and circumstances.

The ZHRC commended the judgment as a crucial reinforcement of the right to education, non-discrimination, and equal access to public services, especially for children from marginalised communities. The Commission will continue to use such precedents to strengthen human rights advocacy within the education sector.

Confronting the Adverse Impacts of Extractive Mining in Host Communities - ZHRC

By The Education Promotion, Research and Advocacy Department

Mining is often celebrated as a pillar of Zimbabwe's economic development. However, for many host communities, the lived reality is far grimmer. Findings from ZHRC research visits in August and October 2025 reveal widespread environmental destruction, social disruption, governance challenges, and human rights and freedoms and administrative justice violations that profoundly affect the host communities.

The research revealed that mining has left deep, unrehabilitated pits, posing daily dangers to people and animals. In Shurugwi, a tragic incident in March 2025, where a Honda Fit motor vehicle plunged into a disused chrome pit, killing five people, symbolizing the deadly risks of unmanaged mining. Vegetation that once supported local livelihoods has been stripped away, rivers are polluted with mercury, cyanide, and caustic soda, and traditional sources of food and medicine have vanished.

Infrastructure has also been damaged, with homes cracked due to blasting, ZESA poles destroyed, and roads damaged by heavy mining trucks. Iconic tourist sites like Boterekwa (Wolfshall Pass) and the Wanderer Mountains have deteriorated, undermining local tourism and economic potential. The ZHRC observed extensive clearing of vegetation for gold heap leaching beds, often hidden from main roads.

Social and Economic Challenges

Communities face escalating social problems. Violence, theft, and gang conflicts are common in artisanal mining compounds, while aggressive security practices by some mining companies restrict access and foster secrecy. Prostitution, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, and school dropouts have surged around mining sites, with girls bearing the brunt of this social crisis.

Displacement adds another layer of harm. Families near Bikita Minerals were relocated without consultation, compensation, or sustainable resettlement plans, increasing school travel distances and destabilising family structures.

While mining promises job creation, economic benefits for locals remain limited. Recruitment

processes are often marred by corruption, underpayment, dismissals without due process, and opaque contracts written in foreign languages. Reports of intimidation, abuse, and exploitative conditions highlight a breakdown in labour rights enforcement.

Public Health Implications

Respiratory diseases such as silicosis and tuberculosis are on the rise due to dust exposure, often compounded by lack of protective equipment. Mining camps frequently lack clean water and sanitation, creating conditions conducive to diarrhoeal diseases and cholera. Displacement has increased distances to healthcare facilities, while mining companies rarely provide medical services for workers or communities. Sexually transmitted infections, including resistant strains, are reportedly spreading in mining areas.

Governance and Accountability Challenges

A governance and enforcement crisis underpins many of these issues. Regulatory institutions such as EMA, Ministry of Mines and Mineral Development and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) face outdated laws, weak penalties, resource constraints, and corruption. Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) are often superficial, manipulated, or ignored, while political interference and fear of reprisal hinder enforcement against powerful mining companies.

Community Recommendations

Communities called for transparent grievance mechanisms, meaningful participation in ESIAs, and enforceable corporate social responsibility obligations. Local leaders and government representatives highlighted the need for coordinated policies, stronger oversight, inter-ministerial collaboration, and digitalised mining cadastres to reduce disputes and corruption.

Conclusion

The ZHRC's findings challenge the narrative that mining automatically drives development. Without rights-based governance, real accountability, and community-centred planning, mining can strip

communities of dignity, safety, and long-term wellbeing. As Zimbabwe modernises and expands its mining sector, the voices of the communities must take centre stage. True development is measured not just by minerals extracted, but by the

extent to which people's human rights and freedoms and administrative justice, health, and environments are protected, promoted and respected.

Upholding Administrative Justice: ZHRC Ensures Recognition of Social Work Degrees

By Simbarashe Muposhi (Harare Head Office)

For many young Zimbabweans, education is a pathway to opportunities. But when administrative gaps occur, those dreams can be jeopardized. This was the concern of a social work student at the Women's University in Africa (WUA), who reported that he and his classmates were unable to register as social workers because they were not recognized by the Council of Social Work.

Despite raising the issue with university administrators, students reportedly received no clear updates, leaving them anxious about their future careers and ability to practice professionally upon graduation.

Seeking clarity and accountability the matter was brought to the ZHRC for its intervention.

The Commission promptly engaged both institutions. During a phone discussion mediated

by the ZHRC, it became clear that the university had already resolved the recognition matter with the Council of Social Work; however, students had not been informed due to administrative delays in communication.

The Council confirmed that WUA's Social Work degree is officially recognised, and that graduates were free to register and practice as social workers in Zimbabwe. The Complainant later verified that he and his colleagues were successfully registered.

This intervention highlights the ZHRC's commitment to ensure transparency within the academic sector, strengthening accountability in administrative communication, and protecting students from the consequences of institutional delays.

Client Service Charter Assessments & Local Authorities' Assessments: ZHRC Strengthening Service Delivery Across Zimbabwe

By The Administrative Justice Unit

In 2025, the ZHRC intensified its nationwide assessments of Client Service Charters (CSCs) and Local Authorities' service delivery assessments to promote transparency, accountability, and improved service delivery. Through a combination of client service charter assessments, local authorities service delivery assessments, and public officials' seminars, the Commission engaged local authorities, residents, and public officials in a collaborative effort to advance administrative justice and the protection of human rights. Below is a highlight of key findings from missions conducted between May and September 2025.

Binga Rural District Council CSC Assessment

The ZHRC assessed the Client Service Charter of Binga Rural District Council (BRDC), focusing on governance structures and service delivery outputs. While BRDC operates through several departments—Social Services, Human Resources, Finance and Land Management—the assessment revealed that the Council provides minimal services due to a constrained budget.

BRDC does not supply water, which falls under the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), and the absence of a dedicated health department limits effective health service provision in this rural district. The Commission recommended strengthening interdepartmental collaboration, introducing clear service benchmarks, and improving community awareness of CSC commitments. A notable concern was that both employees and community members lacked knowledge of the CSC's contents.

Sanyati Rural District Council CSC Assessment (12–16 May 2025)

The ZHRC received a complaint on the poor service delivery that is offered by the Sanyati RDC to residents of Ward 18, Sanyati District. The ZHRC conducted an investigative mission to Sanyati RDC and evaluated how the Council's CSC was developed, promoted, and integrated into service delivery. Although the CSC exists, its implementation remains weak due to limited public awareness of service standards. The Commission highlighted the need for improved marketing of the CSC and strengthened complaint-handling mechanisms to ensure accountability.

During the investigation, the ZHRC facilitated dialogue between the SRDC, the residents and business community of Sanyati Growth Point. The dialogue resulted in the improvement in service delivery including improvement in the provision of water to the residents, collection and management of solid waste and the construction of a septic tank for the public toilets at the Growth Point.

As a follow up to the investigation, the ZHRC assessed the service delivery standards of the SRDC during the period 23 to 26 June 2025. The assessment highlighted persistent challenges in water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, and infrastructure. Water supply remains inconsistent, especially in high ground areas, and wastewater treatment facilities are not functioning optimally. Despite these challenges, the RDC has engagement mechanisms for residents and has taken steps to implement council resolutions aimed at addressing community priorities.

The ZHRC also conducted a capacity-building workshop for Sanyati RDC staff. The seminar covered administrative justice, the dual mandate of the ZHRC, ethical public administration, and constitutional provisions guiding civil service conduct. The SRDC was encouraged to improve communication, strengthen complaint-handling mechanisms, and embrace transparency as a pillar of service delivery.

Bikita RDC CSC Review and Local Authority Assessment (26–30 May 2025)

The ZHRC's assessment of Bikita RDC examined water, sanitation, waste management, and community development services. While the Council showed commendable efforts in solid

waste collection and road maintenance, critical gaps persisted—particularly in water supply and wastewater management.

These shortcomings raise concerns about potential human rights violations linked to inadequate access to clean water and safe sanitation. Recommendations made by the ZHRC included:

- Greater community participation in planning and decision-making.
- Collaboration with environmental agencies on waste management.
- Prioritisation of road rehabilitation.
- Exploring partnerships for infrastructure development and
- Establishing feedback systems to strengthen accountability.

The recommendations of the ZHRC are at different stages of being implemented.

Mutasa RDC CSC Assessment and Local Authority Assessment (19–23 May 2025)

The ZHRC assessed Mutasa RDC's service delivery commitments under its CSC and found several operational challenges. The Council purchases bulk water from the City of Mutare to supply Tsvingwe and Penalonga, while ZINWA serves the rest of the district. Non-payment of water fees by residents has created significant debt, affecting the Council's financial sustainability. Refuse collection remains inconsistent due to the availability of only one refuse compactor for the entire district. As in other districts, both staff and the public lacked awareness of the CSC's provisions, undermining efforts to promote transparency and service efficiency.

To strengthen administrative justice, the ZHRC held a seminar for Mutasa RDC staff focusing on constitutional obligations under section 68 of the Constitution. The training addressed principles of public administration, ethical conduct, maladministration, and the importance of effective complaint-handling systems.

Recommendations made by the ZHRC included regular refresher trainings for employees on their role in administrative justice, improved communication in service delivery, and standardisation of complaints procedures. Increased awareness of the CSC through proper marketing strategies must be heightened.

Kariba Municipality CSC Assessment, Local Authority Assessment, and Public Officials' Seminar (July–August 2025)

From 28 July to 1 August 2025, the ZHRC assessed Kariba Municipality's CSC and overall service delivery. Consultations with officials and stakeholders highlighted key concerns, including:

- Longstanding delays in completing the Kasese Housing Project in which the ZHRC observed that residents' structures in the housing scheme were being demolished by the Municipality.
- Hazardous living conditions in Mahombokombe, where houses are situated under a 330kV power line.
- Late payment of employee salaries

Despite these challenges, Kariba Municipality recorded several achievements, such as consistent 24-hour water supply, consistent refuse collection, well-maintained tarred roads, and functional water treatment systems.

The challenges of the Kasese Housing Project and the Mahombokombe residents require comprehensive attention from all the stakeholders to ensure that the rights and freedoms of the affected communities are protected.

Beitbridge Municipality CSC Assessment, Local Authority Assessment and Public Officials' Seminar (August 2025)

In Beitbridge, the ZHRC assessed service delivery practices, CSC implementation, and administrative justice standards for Beitbridge Municipality. Strengths included enhanced citizen engagement and partnerships with civil society organisations on waste management. However, the ZHRC identified gaps in responsiveness to complaints, infrastructure development, and resource management.

The assessment created a platform for dialogue among residents, officials, and CSOs, promoting

rights awareness and participation in local governance. The ZHRC made recommendations for the Municipality to increase capacity-building initiatives on administrative justice and conduct policy reforms to improve service delivery across the municipality.

Gutu RDC CSC Assessment, Local Authority Assessment and Public Officials' Seminar (15–19 September 2025)

At Gutu RDC, the ZHRC undertook a combined CSC review, service delivery assessment, and public officials' seminar. The assessment examined the knowledge of the Client Service Charter, the reach and quality of services, and staff compliance with administrative justice standards. The seminar equipped officials with knowledge on their constitutional obligations and the need for transparent, citizen-focused service delivery.

Conclusion

The ZHRC's 2025 Client Service Charter assessments and Local Authorities' Assessments highlight both commendable progress and persistent service delivery challenges across districts. Key cross-cutting issues include:

- Insufficient public awareness of CSCs.
- Limited financial resources affecting core services.
- Infrastructure deficits in water, sanitation, and waste management.
- Need for stronger complaint-handling systems.
- Gaps in staff understanding of administrative justice.

As the Commission continues its oversight work, these assessments will guide targeted interventions aimed at strengthening human rights protection, enhancing public administration, and promoting a culture of accountability in Zimbabwe's local governance system.

Promoting Administrative Justice: ZHRC Advocates for Disability Inclusion and Fair Employment

Comfort Magunje (Bulawayo Province)

Equality and non-discrimination lie at the heart of human rights protection. For the Complainant (name withheld), a skilled tradesman living with a physical disability, these principles came into question when he was excluded from a

construction project at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST).

The Complainant had responded to a call for contractors for a three-month building project, confident in his ability to perform the required tasks. However, he was surprised and deeply

discouraged when he was informed that he would not be engaged because his walking impairment was “not compatible with the physical demands of the job.” At no point was he consulted, assessed, or allowed to explain how he intended to carry out the work.

Feeling discriminated against, he lodged a complaint with the ZHRC.

After reviewing the matter, the Commission advised the Complainant to initiate dialogue through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, giving NUST the opportunity to reconsider the decision and remedy the discrimination internally. Through this facilitation,

NUST acknowledged the oversight and subsequently offered the Complainant the full three-month contract he had initially been denied.

The case stands as a powerful example of the ZHRC’s role in advocating for disability inclusion, ensuring fair labour practices, and promoting administrative justice through non-discriminatory decision-making.

NUST’s corrective action also highlights the importance of institutions listening to and engaging with people living with disabilities, enabling them to participate fully in economic and social life.

Binga District Spotlight: Investigation into Maladministration by Chief Kavula (Lubimbi)

By Tacilicako Michael Muleya, Royce Midzi and Comfort Magunje (Matabeleland North Province)

In 2025, the ZHRC undertook a significant investigation in Lubimbi, Binga District, following a complaint lodged by a widow alleging maladministration and discriminatory treatment by local traditional leadership.

The Complainant (name withheld) approached the ZHRC after facing continuous harassment and threats from her stepsons following the death of her husband in late 2019. According to the Complainant, her stepsons prohibited her from entering new romantic relationships and warned that she would be evicted from the homestead should she attempt to do so. Their conduct created a hostile and intimidating environment that infringed on her dignity, autonomy, and right to security.

Engagement with the Traditional Court

Seeking mediation, the widow escalated the matter to Chief Kavula’s traditional court. Instead of receiving a fair hearing, she reported that the Chief sided with her stepsons. In his ruling, the Chief prohibited her from allowing any suitor at her homestead and further imposed a fine of US\$70 for taking the matter to the formal courts.

Dissatisfied with the ruling and fearing for her safety, the complainant sought assistance from the Zimbabwe Republic Police, who subsequently

advised her to be issued with a protection order against her stepsons.

Retaliation and Further Harassment

Following the protection order, the widow faced renewed retaliation within the community. She was ordered to pay additional fines, threatened with eviction, denied access to water points within the community, affecting her basic livelihood as she was forced to drink water used by domestic and wild animals and further intimidated for exercising her legal rights.

In one incident, her suitor was summoned before the Chief, and his bicycle was confiscated until he paid a fine involving livestock — a measure perceived as punitive and disproportionate.

Findings of the ZHRC Investigation

The Commission’s investigation revealed several serious administrative flaws and rights violations:

- The Complainant had previously paid US\$25 to resolve the matter, but this only led to additional unregulated fines.
- Traditional court processes were applied inconsistently and outside the bounds of administrative justice.
- Decisions appeared to discriminate against the widow based on marital status and gender.
- The Chief’s office was allegedly conducting inquiries into individuals’ HIV status to

determine penalties — a practice that violates the right to privacy, dignity, and equality before the law.

- The swift intervention of the ZHRC resulted in the restoration of access to water.

Implications and Human Rights Concerns

The findings highlight deep-rooted governance challenges within some traditional leadership structures, particularly concerning:

- Abuse of authority,
- Gender-based discrimination,
- Violation of privacy and bodily autonomy,
- Lack of procedural fairness in dispute resolution, and

- Barriers to accessing justice for vulnerable groups.

The case underscores the importance of strengthening administrative justice frameworks within traditional courts, promoting awareness of constitutional rights, and enhancing oversight of community-level governance systems.

The Commission remains committed to protecting vulnerable individuals across Zimbabwe and ensuring that traditional leadership structures operate within the confines of the Constitution, uphold human dignity, and promote fair, transparent, and accountable governance.

Drugs and substance abuse leads to CUT Health Expo by ZHRC & partners

By Gladys Mudadi (Mashonaland West Province)

The ZHRC in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council, and Chinhoyi University of Technology, is conducting an initiative to educate students on their right to health and the impact of drug and substance abuse.

The initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of mental and physical health while also addressing the detrimental effects that drug and substance abuse can have on individuals and communities. Through workshops and interactive sessions, students will be empowered to make informed choices and advocate for their rights to a healthy lifestyle.



Ms. Gladys Mudadi ZHRC EPRA Mashonaland West Officer presenting on the mandate and functions of the Commission during the health expo.

The Legal Corner

Securing the Future: The Role of Family Trusts in Zimbabwe

By Ishmael Salanje

The ZHRC has noted with concern emerging practices that undermine constitutionally guaranteed rights, particularly the right to freedom of association and the right to the protection and benefit of the law. Of particular concern is the unlawful conduct by some offices within the Deeds Registries, which have reportedly refused to register trust deeds unless prior “permission” is obtained from the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Such conduct has no basis

in law and constitutes a clear instance of maladministration.

This practice appears to stem from the expansive and draconian effects of the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Act [Chapter 17:05], which seeks to extend regulatory control over *universitas* — including entities formed through trusts — by subjecting them to registration, oversight, or approval mechanisms not contemplated under existing trust law. Any attempt to censor, control, or prohibit lawful associations through

administrative fiat undermines constitutional protections and erodes the rule of law.

The Commission reiterates that a trust is not created by registration at the Registrar of Deeds. Rather, a trust comes into existence upon the execution and attestation of a trust deed before a Notary Public. Registration at the Deeds Registry is not a legal requirement for the formation or validity of a trust; it is merely an administrative practice that some choose to follow for convenience or evidentiary purposes. There is therefore no legal imperative compelling registration, nor any lawful basis for refusing to recognize a trust on the grounds that it lacks ministerial approval.

The public must be clearly informed of this legal position, as confusion around trust formation exposes individuals and families to unnecessary barriers, delays, and violations of their rights. The refusal to process or recognise lawfully executed trust deeds constitutes maladministration and an infringement of the constitutional right to lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair administrative conduct.

In the heart of Zimbabwe, families are increasingly turning to family trusts as innovative and lawful mechanisms to protect their legacies, promote intergenerational harmony, and manage assets responsibly. Family trusts have gained prominence not only as estate-planning tools but also as instruments that promote stability, accountability, and unity within families.

Judicial precedent has reinforced the legitimacy and value of trusts in Zimbabwe. In *Nashe Family Trust v Charles Chiwara & 2 Others HH 476/18*, the High Court affirmed that property held in trust is distinct from the personal property of trustees or beneficiaries, and is therefore protected from their individual liabilities. This landmark ruling strengthened public confidence in trusts as effective mechanisms for asset protection and continuity.

The benefits of family trusts are well established. They safeguard assets against loss, reduce the risk of inheritance disputes, and may offer estate-planning efficiencies, including protection from estate duty where applicable. Trusts also promote accountability, as trustees are legally bound to act in good faith, impartially, and in the best interests of beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, trusts must be properly administered. Challenges may arise where trustees act improperly, exclude beneficiaries, or mismanage trust property, potentially leading to disputes and litigation. These risks underscore the importance of transparency, sound governance, and professional legal guidance.

For families considering establishing a trust, the process begins with drafting a trust deed with the assistance of a qualified legal practitioner or notary public. The deed should clearly define the trust's objectives, identify trustees and beneficiaries, and outline how assets are to be managed. Once executed before a Notary Public, the trust is legally constituted. Registration with the Registrar of Deeds remains optional and does not determine the validity of the trust.

The Commission emphasises that administrative authorities must act within the confines of the law and refrain from imposing unlawful requirements that infringe constitutional rights. Respect for freedom of association, legal certainty, and administrative justice is essential to maintaining public confidence in State institutions.

Family trusts remain a powerful and legitimate tool for Zimbabwean families seeking to secure their futures while fostering cohesion across generations. By understanding both their advantages and their legal foundations, families can make informed choices that protect their assets, uphold their rights, and promote lasting unity.

Other ZHRC activities in pictures



Chairperson Fungayi Jessie Majome greets his Excellency, President Emmerson Mnangagwa at the Launch of the National Culture Month in Chiredzi on 22 May 2025.

Chairperson Fungayi Jessie Majome receives the Commission's 'A' Status accreditation certificate following the Commission's re-assessment by the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions in 2024.



Acting Provincial Coordinator Mashonaland West Mr. Museva, handing over IEC materials to visitors at the ZHRC stand at Chief Msampakaruma's homestead during the Culture Month Launch.

Ms. Tsitsi Maunga the Provincial Coordinator for Manicaland Province (standing) delivering the public officials' seminar at Mutasa RDC during the Mutasa RDC Client Service Charter and Local Authorities' Assessment.



Mr. T. Kanyimo Deputy Director Administrative Justice delivering a session during the Kariba Municipality Assessment.

The Mahombekombe houses which are now under the 330kv powerline in Kariba.

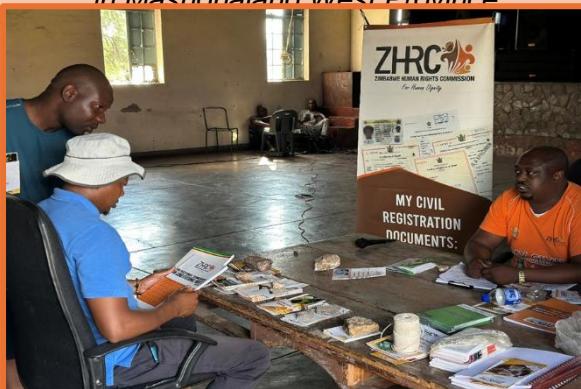


2025 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY IN PICTURES



Stage and Spirit Society Crew performing a drama on Gender-Based Violence at the ZHRC Exhibition Stand in Mutare, Manicaland.

Human Rights Officer –Education Promotion Research and Advocacy Ms. Gladys Z Mudadi during an interview with Platinum FM in Mashonaland West Province



Visitors at the ZHRC Kiosk collecting IEC materials being assisted by Provincial Coordinator Mr. Muleya in Hwange during the IHRD celebrations.



Masvingo Town Clerk Eng. Edward Mukaratirwa (in red tie) Acting Mayor of Masvingo Councillor Sheron Marombedze, Masvingo City Councillors took time to pause for a photo with the ZHRC Secretariat and stakeholders during the IHRD celebrations in Masvingo.

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