

Policy Brief: Advocacy for the Reduction of Passport Fees in Zimbabwe

Executive Summary

The high cost of passports in Zimbabwe has been identified as an impediment to freedom of movement and access to economic opportunities outside the country. It also fuels irregular migration. High passport fees were identified in the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) National Inquiry (NI) on Access to Documentation report as negatively impacting access to travel documentation. The NI report was adopted as a national document by the Parliament in 2020¹.

Currently passport fees are pegged at US\$170 for an ordinary 48page passport and US\$270 for an emergency passport. These passport fees are far higher than those charged by Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. Passports for children that are valid for five (5) years are also issued at the same fee as adults' passports. The situation is also worsened by the lack of pricing options, such as the provision of a cheaper passport with less than 48 pages, and lower passport fees for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and senior citizens. There is therefore a need for policies that ensure affordable passport fees, considering that access to civil documents in Zimbabwe is a fundamental human right.

1. Introduction

A passport is a vital civil document that enables individuals to travel, work, study, and access essential services outside the country. It is a fundamental right that all Zimbabwean citizens are entitled to as provided for in Section 35(3)(b), (c)², Section 66

¹ The Commission conducted the National Inquiry (NI) on Access to Documentation in Zimbabwe to unearth the challenges that people face accessing civil registry documents and find durable solutions. The National Inquiry report was formally submitted to the Government of Zimbabwe and to the Parliament of Zimbabwe in accordance with Section 323 (2) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the report was adopted as a national report in December 2020.

² All Zimbabwean citizens are entitled to the following rights and benefits, in addition to any others granted to them by law—(a) to the protection of the State wherever they may be; (b) to passports and other travel documents; and (c) to birth certificates and other identity documents issued by the State.

(1) (a)³ and 66 (1) (c)⁴ and 66 (2) (c)⁵ of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Despite the fact that a passport is a right in Zimbabwe, the high cost of the passport in the country is a barrier to access compared to other Southern African countries.

The ZHRC National Inquiry (NI) on Access to Documentation report adopted by the Parliament of Zimbabwe as a national document in December 2020 identified economic challenges as a barrier to accessing documents and revealed that administrative fees such as search fees and passport fees were unaffordable. At the time the ZHRC conducted the NI, Zimbabweans faced significant challenges in accessing passports due to long queues, delays in processes, corruption and a backlog of applications. However, with decentralisation, digitalisation and the introduction of the e-passport, the delays and inefficiency in the application processes at the Civil Registry Department (CRD) are a thing of the past. The ordinary passport is now being processed in seven (7) working days. Whilst this is commendable, this efficiency has come at a price that most Zimbabweans cannot afford.⁶

This policy brief advocates for a reduction of passport fees in general and widening of passport fee options based on the number of pages, duration of passport, pricing options for vulnerable groups and acceptance of fees in local currency as prevalent in other southern African countries.

2. Description of the Problem

- a) High Passport Fees:** Zimbabwe's passport fees are the highest in the region (see appendix 1), pegged at US\$170 for ordinary passport and US\$270 for emergency passport. A comparison of eight (8) countries in SADC region, excluding Zimbabwe, reveal an average price of US\$17.39 for an ordinary 32 page passport (see appendix 1). Zimbabwe only offers an ordinary passport with

³ Constitution of Zimbabwe Section 66 Freedom of movement and residence (1) Every Zimbabwean citizen has-- (a) the right to enter Zimbabwe;

⁴ Every Zimbabwean citizen has— (c) the right to a passport or other travel document

⁵ Every Zimbabwean citizen has the right to leave Zimbabwe

⁶ The Citizenship (Passport Fees) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024 (No. 1) on passport fees set the cost of obtaining an ordinary passport at US\$150 and an emergency passport at US\$250 with an additional US\$20 charged for every application for an electronically readable passport.

48 pages at a cost of US\$170, making the Zimbabwe's passport 877.74% more expensive than the average cost of obtaining a passport in the region. The 48 paged Zambian passport costs US\$18.21, the Eswatini passport costs US\$16.10 in Eswatini, and the Malawi passport costs US\$74.98.

- b) High levels of poverty:** According to the Zimbabwe Statistics Agency (ZIMSTATS), Mini Poverty Income Consumption and Expenditure Survey, the number of extremely poor people rose from 4.5 million in 2017 to 6 million during April–May 2019⁷. This translates to 36.8% of the population living in extreme poverty. This makes the current fee of the ordinary passport in Zimbabwe unaffordable and out of reach of the majority.
- c) Acceptance of passport fees in local currency:** Zimbabwe has a multi-currency system and most people including the civil servants receive their salaries in both local currency (ZWG), and foreign currency (USD). The same applies to farmers when they sell their agricultural produce. Service providers, government department and retailers also follow the multicurrency system enabling the public to make use of both local (as legal tender) and foreign currency. However, passports fees in Zimbabwe are paid for in foreign currency only with no option for applicants to pay using local currency (ZWG). This is contrary to Section 6 of Statutory Instrument 60 of 2024⁸, and section 25 of the Finance Act, 2024 which provides that “the tender of payment of ZiG notes and coins shall be legal tender in all transactions, alongside any other currency acceptable as legal tender as prescribed under section 44A”.
- d) Freedom of movement and Economic Opportunities:** Passport fees that are high relative to income are a barrier to citizens' freedom of movement and access to economic opportunities. High passport costs disproportionately affect low-income individuals, youths, and marginalized groups such as persons with

⁷ Mini Poverty Income Consumption and Expenditure Survey 2019,

⁸ Statutory Instrument 60 of 2024, Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) (Zimbabwe Gold Notes and Coins) Regulations, 2024

disability, limiting their ability to seek employment and business opportunities outside the country.

High passport fees fuel irregular migration that exposes citizens to a variety of risks like detention, financial loss, and physical risks such as assault. Affordable passports facilitate regular migration that contributes towards the inflows of diaspora remittances. These remittances play a critical role in terms of the country's economic stability, foreign currency reserves, and household incomes. The 2025 national budget revealed that diaspora remittances are a major driver of the country's current account surplus, with inflows expected to increase from US\$1.9 billion in the first nine months of 2024 to US\$2.49 billion in 2024 and further to US\$2.51 billion in 2025⁹. Hence, restrictive passport costs inhibit potential growth of diaspora contributions in the country.

e) Lack of pricing options: Zimbabwe only offers a 48 paged ordinary passport, while other countries in the region offer various options. Zambia, Eswatini, and Malawi have a provision for a 32 paged passport for a lower fee, and Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, and Mauritius offer lower fees for children's passports. In the case of Zimbabwe, the child's passport is valid for 5 years, the same as an adult's passport. Additionally, Mauritius also has lower passport fees for vulnerable groups specifically persons with a disability and senior citizens to promote equality and fairness in access to travel documents.

3. Research Methodology

The NI on Access to Documentation, 2020 revealed that out of 16.6% of the people who noted economic challenges as a barrier to accessing documents, 4.4% cited administration fees (such as search fees and passport fees which they indicated were unaffordable). At that time, in 2020, an ordinary passport cost US\$53 making the current cost of US\$170 very high in contrast with fees that are being charged by other countries

⁹ 2025 National Budget Statement <https://zimtreasury.co.zw/budget-document-2025/>

in the region. As a follow up on the implementation of recommendations from the NI on access to documentation, the ZHRC conducted a stakeholder workshop in Mutare where the Civil Registry Department and the Department of Immigration were engaged. Additionally, lived experiences of complainants received through community outreaches for example, Shamva 24-26 March 2025, Mwenezi 13 -16 May 2024, Hurungwe 2- 4 July 2024, and Rushinga 17-24 December 2024 provided valuable insights towards in the development of this policy brief.

4. Proposed Policy Measures

- i. Reduction of passport fees to affordable levels comparable to other countries in the SADC region. This will enable citizens to access opportunities abroad for essential rights, such as healthcare and education, as it removes a significant financial barrier to international travel, enabling people to seek specialized medical care, further education and skills development that may not be available domestically.
- ii. Acceptance of passport fees in local currency (ZWG) as is the case with all the other SADC countries. Rejection of ZWG payments for passport fees violates Section 6 of Statutory Instrument 60 of 2024 (Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) (Zimbabwe Gold Notes and Coins) Regulations, 2024).
- iii. Offer a 32 page ordinary passport with less pages at a reduced fee for those who do not travel frequently.
- iv. Special pricing option for vulnerable groups such as persons with disability and senior citizens.
- v. Lower prices for children's passports, considering that they are defendants, and that their passports are valid for only 5 years.

5. Policy Recommendations

Based on submissions made in this policy brief and the comparative analysis of the passport fees in the region, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission recommends the following,

Stakeholder	Recommendation/s
1. Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage (MoHACH) - CRD	a) To generally reduce the passport fees to align with the cost of passports charged by other SADC States. b) To offer the option of a passport with less than 48 pages for a lower fee to accommodate citizens who do not travel frequently. c) To set lower fees for vulnerable groups such as persons with disability and senior citizens. d) To lower fees for children's passports, considering that their passports are valid for 5 years.
2. Parliament of Zimbabwe	a) The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Defense, Home Affairs, and the Thematic Committee on Human Rights to deliberate on the reduction of passport fees.
3. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	a) Review of the passport production process to identify cost drivers and implement reforms that ensure a more efficient and economically viable process, aligning with regional standards. b) Implement a government subsidy to offset the cost of passport production. c) Increase budgetary support to the CRD to reduce reliance on passport fees for revenue.

6. Conclusion

This policy brief proffers recommendations for addressing the high cost of passport fees in Zimbabwe to ensure that all citizens, can access this essential document and participate fully in the global economy. By implementing these recommendations, the relevant Ministries and Government Departments (MDAs) can promote inclusivity, freedom of movement and economic growth using a human rights-based approach.

Appendix 1: SADC Countries Comparative Passport fees and Categories Table

COUNTRY	PASSPORT PRICING OPTIONS	VALIDITY	USD conversion
Zimbabwe ¹⁰	US\$170.00 48 pages ordinary adult passport US\$170.00 48 pages ordinary child passport US\$270.00 48 pages Emergency Passport	10 Years 10 Years 10 Years	USD 170.00 USD270.00
Zambia ¹¹	K320 32 pages ordinary adult passport K520 48 pages ordinary passport	10 Years 10 Years	USD11.20 USD18.21

¹⁰ Zimbabwe: Citizenship (Passport Fees) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024 (No.1)

¹¹ Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security - https://www.mohais.gov.zm/?page_id=1610

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Zambia ¹¹	K320 32 pages ordinary adult passport K520 48 pages ordinary passport <i>There is an additional fee of K200.00 for express service</i>	10 Years 10 Years	USD11.20 USD18.21 <i>1 USD = 28.55 Kwacha</i>
South Africa ¹²	R600.00 32 pages ordinary adult passport R1200.00 48 pages, Maxi Tourist passport R600.00 32 pages child passport	10 Years 10 Years 10 Years	USD 32.21 USD 64.41 <i>1USD = 18.63 Rands</i>
Botswana ¹³	BWP 260.00 32 pages ordinary passport (over 14years) BWP 100.00 48 pages Child passport under 14 years	10 Years 5 Years	USD 19.00 USD 7.37 <i>1 USD = 13.66 Pula</i>
Eswatini ¹⁴	Travel Document used within all Southern African Countries Sovereign States besides Angola E80.00 32 pages ordinary adult passport E300.00 48 pages ordinary adult passport E500.00 64 pages ordinary adult passport E172.00 <i>International Passport - traveling to other countries besides those within SADC Region.</i>	They are all valid for 10 Years regardless of the number of pages	USD 4.29 USD16.10 USD 26.83 USD 9.23 <i>1 USD = 18.63 Swaziland Emalangeni</i>
Lesotho ¹⁵	M 130. 00 32 pages regular passport M 300.00 64 pages regular passport M 130. 00 32 pages child passport (below 16yrs) M 500.00 32 pages official e-passport	10 Years 10 Years 5 Years	USD6.97 USD16.09 USD6.97 USD26.80 <i>1 USD = 18.65 Lesotho Loti</i>
Malawi ¹⁶	MWK 50 000 36 pages ordinary adult passport MWK 130 000 48 pages ordinary adult passport MWK 40 000 36 pages child passport (below 10 yrs)	10 Years 10 Years 5 Years (Production costs varies with number of pages)	USD28.84 USD74.98 USD23.07 <i>1 USD = 1,733.67 Malawian Kwacha</i>
Mauritius ¹⁷	Rs 700.00 34 pages ordinary adult passport	10 Years	USD14.78

¹⁰ Zimbabwe: Citizenship (Passport Fees) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024 (No.1)

¹¹ Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security - https://www.mohais.gov.zm/?page_id=1610

¹² Department of Home Affairs - <https://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/fees>

¹³ E-Passport Application | Government of Botswana - <https://www.gov.bw/immigration/e-passport-application>

¹⁴ Ministry of Home Affairs Eswatini - <https://www.gov.sz/index.php/services-sp-22242747/travel-documents-and-passports>

¹⁵ Ministry of Home Affairs - Lesotho - <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.ls/passports/> ;

<https://www.gov.ls/government/home-affairs-implements-new-passport-fees/>

¹⁶ Malawi e-passport system , Department of Immigration - https://epassport.gov.mw/passport_fee.html


¹⁷ Passport and Immigration Office - https://passport.govmu.org/passport/?page_id=773

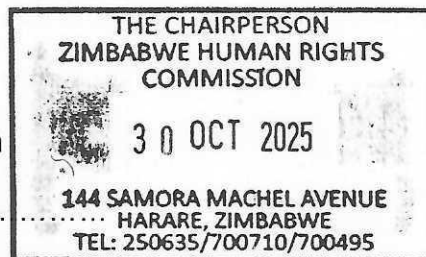
	Rs 400.00	36 pages Senior Citizen (55yrs+)	10 Years	USD8.55
	Rs 400.00	36 pages Child passport under 16 years	5 Years	USD8.55
	Rs 400.00	32 pages Disabled People	10 Years	USD8.55
				1 USD = 46.78 Mauritius Rupees (Rs)
Namibia¹⁸	N\$ 400.00	32 pages ordinary passport	10 Years	USD21.82
				1 USD = 18.33 NAD

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Exchange rates as at 27 March 2025 -

https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange_Rates/2025/March/RATES_03_MARCH_2025.pdf

Adopted by the Commission





MS J. F MAJOME (CHAIRPERSON)

DATE

30.10.2025

¹⁸ Ministry of Home Affairs Immigration Safety and Security - <https://mha.gov.na/application-fees>