

Zimbabwe: Routes to Progress

**Commonwealth Organisations' Committee on
Zimbabwe, Report on Activities 2010-2011**

October 2011

Published by The Commonwealth Organisations' Committee
on Zimbabwe (COCZ).

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1 Summary

The Commonwealth Organisations Committee on Zimbabwe (COCZ), now in its third year, works through its member organisations and relevant Zimbabwe counterparts to facilitate regular democratic, economic, social and technical improvements within the country. As outlined in this report, progress has been made in economic and technical areas. However, the Committee notes with concern the lack of progress with constitutional reform, which is the essential prelude to a framework for future elections. As a result, there have been numerous violations of human rights which should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Committee encourages the Commonwealth Secretariat, in co-operation with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to engage with the Government of Zimbabwe to identify those areas in which it can use its expertise to assist with technical and relevant electoral advice to help secure satisfactorily conducted elections, in the context of the Harare Declaration, which could make Zimbabwe's return to the Commonwealth possible.

2 Introduction

The Commonwealth Organisations Committee on Zimbabwe was founded in London at the outset of the process now known as the Global Political Agreement (GPA). Its purpose was to bring together organisations including, but not exclusively, civil society with a background of work within Zimbabwe, who wished to assist with the rebuilding of the Zimbabwean economy and democratic structures in a climate where a degree of political consensus had been achieved.

On establishment, it was agreed to work in a low key but proactive manner. The first major step forward was a Commonwealth Round

Table on Zimbabwe, supported by the Commonwealth Foundation and CORE, South Africa, held in Johannesburg in July 2009, and which brought together interested participants from within Zimbabwe to meet with participants in COCZ. The event attracted representatives from a wide range of organisations working within Zimbabwe, members of the Zimbabwe Diaspora from other parts of Africa and wider afield, and persons active in all of Zimbabwe's main political parties. Dialogue throughout was conducted in a constructive manner, despite recognition of individual differences. A report was issued at the end of the meeting, which identified areas where constructive activity, encouraged by Commonwealth Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Commonwealth associated agencies, might prove helpful.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Trinidad in November 2009, it was stated in paragraph 21 of the Communiqué that 'Heads of Government welcomed the Global Political Agreement on power-sharing in Zimbabwe, and expressed the hope that this would be implemented faithfully and effectively. They looked forward to the conditions being created for the return of Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth.' After that CHOGM, COCZ was reconstituted and has since held its meetings at Marlborough House. It has benefited from an interchange with the Secretary-General and his colleagues, has been involved in a number of activities which are reflected in this paper and continues to find ways through which Commonwealth organisations can support their counterparts in Zimbabwe civil society, pending the time when Zimbabwe will hopefully decide to rejoin the Commonwealth.

Zimbabwe has strong traditions of community action. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have played an important part in the struggle for free speech and basic human rights, and the membership list of the Zimbabwe National Association of NGOS (NANGO) is impressive.

Currently they need all the support they can obtain for since the formation of the inclusive government, NGOs have noted a significant drop in the levels of donor funding received.

The increased poverty of many of these organisations makes them more dependent than is desirable on wealthier international counterparts. Such partnerships are valuable and, for many, are the means through which vital programmes are sustained. However, distortions do result from over-reliance on international partners as it creates suspicions in Government and elsewhere that international NGOs are calling the tune. The payment of internationally based salaries by overseas aid organisations and some NGOs inevitably causes conflicts of interest with locally employed staff. There is a need for understanding by international NGOs of the importance of demonstrating that they are sensitive to the need to build capacity within Zimbabwean organisations, many of whom have found themselves competing with one another for a diminishing pool of funds.

Much community action is mobilised through churches and other faith-based organisations, but there are also professional organisations, trade unions and other voluntary groups prepared to provide relevant development assistance. Commonwealth organisations are being urged to re-engage with counterparts in Zimbabwe and individual civil society organisations, community and faith-based groups at local level in Commonwealth countries to forge links and exchanges with schools, hospitals, local authorities and other organisations in Zimbabwe.

The Commonwealth Professional Fellowships are an important support mechanism which has provided useful opportunities for those from Zimbabwe who have come to the UK to participate in the scheme. These have been very much appreciated by those involved.

3 Recommendations to Commonwealth Governments

1. Welcome the interest that has been shown in the Zimbabwe situation by a large number of Commonwealth organisations since the last CHOGM in Trinidad in 2009 and the practical engagement that is taking place between Commonwealth organisations and their counterparts in Zimbabwe in the education, health, local government, legal and parliamentary sectors.
2. Note the lack of progress that is being made in Zimbabwe on the reform of the constitution through the Constitution Parliamentary Affairs Select Committee (COPAC) and the concerns of the SADC troika at the rise in levels of violence and intimidation in Zimbabwe.
3. Encourage the Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation to engage with the Government of Zimbabwe, the parties to the GPA and relevant governments in the region to identify and promote those aspects of the GPA process which serve the welfare and security of the people of Zimbabwe. These are relevant to Zimbabwe's full compliance with the principles of the Harare Declaration, leading to the re-establishment of the conditions necessary to enable Zimbabwe to resume full membership of the Commonwealth.
4. Urge sustained support for NGOs in the run up to elections, as civil society has shown in other countries in Africa that it can play a critical role in areas such as monitoring, documenting and mitigating the effects of political violence, especially in voter education, which is so important in longer term efforts to heal and rebuild.

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5. Forge a partnership through which the Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation can join with COCZ to identify and prioritise areas where the Commonwealth has specific expertise which can be offered to the Zimbabwe Government, to the parties to the GPA and to Zimbabwean organisations with the capacity to engage in the process, so as to fill technical and skills shortages in operations relevant to the restoration of favourable political, economic, and social conditions in Zimbabwe.
 6. Be ready, through the Commonwealth Secretariat, to assist with advice and assistance in the electoral process, including the restoration of transparent and credible electoral rolls, and observing all phases of the electoral campaign and pre-campaign activities, as well as arrangements for polling and counting stations and the timing of the announcement of results.
 7. Recognise the vital role played by the Diaspora in terms of remittances and the skills and potential they have to offer, and promote their links with Commonwealth Organisations.
 8. Continue and enhance funding of Commonwealth Fellowships, which have been of such great assistance to the work of COCZ and to those Zimbabweans who have been able to participate.

4 Electoral Reform

The GPA will have reached its third anniversary in September 2011. Although considerable progress has been made, the process has been slow, with the most difficult issues coming towards the end. Improvements have occurred in the economic, rather than the political, sector but setbacks in the context of constitutional reform are frequent, with

an increase in incidents of political violence and intimidation, reported by Zimbabwe human rights organisations, but rarely reflected in the international media.

The seventh session of the Zimbabwe Parliament is in session, but little legislation is being passed, with only a handful of bills becoming law. The reasons for this are not difficult to understand because proposed legislation covers many of the political areas that are under negotiation, including areas affecting the criminal law, national security, public order, human rights and electoral reform.

Constitutional reform is a prerequisite to credible elections being held. With that in place, there have to be satisfactory electoral procedures that ensure a valid and open electoral role that stands up to local and international observer scrutiny. Added to that is an electoral commission that is seen to be well composed and impartial, which can put in place sound polling day procedures, which all parties participating in elections can have confidence in. These must cover conduct of campaigns from six months before the election, procedures at polling stations, transparent counting of ballots and verifiable announcement of results.

To be internationally recognised as credible, systems must be seen to be in place to enable independent civil society monitors and election observers to view the process from beginning to end. Elections should be open to observers from the Commonwealth, as well as SADC and participating parties in the election, who should be guaranteed right of access, safety, and rights to report freely at all polling and counting stations. It seems some organisations are trying to put systems in place to comment on the evolving situation, but more practical action on the ground is required. The Commonwealth Secretariat, associated agencies, and CSOs have the necessary information at their disposal to enable perceived gaps to be filled, which with support from Governments could make a significant contribution.

5 Economy

Economic conditions have undoubtedly improved since the 'dollarisation' of the Zimbabwe economy which took place at the same time as the GPA. The abandonment of the Zimbabwe dollar has removed the perverse effects of exchange arbitrage and hyper-inflation from the economy. The utilisation of manufacturing capacity, which was at very low levels, has allowed economic growth to resume at similar levels to those of neighbouring countries. Inflation remains higher than the regional average and is much higher than is usual in dollar areas.

The resultant higher local dollar costs have the threefold effect of continuing to impoverish large sectors of the population, reducing employment opportunities and making exports of Zimbabwean agricultural products uncompetitive. In addition, high employment costs have severely impacted the proportion of government budgets being spent on public service remuneration, leaving slender resources for new initiatives of any kind. It is clear that improved commercial governance of the newly found diamond deposits in the Eastern Districts is required.

6 Human Rights, Parliament, Judiciary and Media

Article XIX of the Global Political Agreement recognises the importance of the right to freedom of expression and the role of the media in a multi-party democracy. In that vein, parties to the Agreement undertook to expedite the 'immediate processing' of all applications for re-registration and registration in terms of both the Broadcasting Services Act and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

Commendably, in May 2010, the Zimbabwe Media Corporation (ZMC) took the necessary steps to fulfil its constitutional obligations as the

licensing authority for print media organisations. More than 20 new media publications, including the *Daily News*, were issued with licences to start operations. Of those that were licensed only *Newsday*, the *Daily News* and the *Mail* have started publishing, while others are still to come on stream.

The licensing of more than 20 new print media players by the ZMC is a commendable development that will enhance citizens' right to access to alternative sources of information. Of concern though is the fact that ZMC was born out of the restrictive AIPPA, whose provisions have since been declared undemocratic and in contravention of the *African Charter* and the *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa*.

Developments on the print media front should also be viewed against the fact that the government is still to comply with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Ruling of 2009 that sections 78 and 79 of AIPPA are incompatible with Article 9 of the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* and should be repealed.

As regards the broadcasting sector, listeners and viewers in Zimbabwe are not well served by the state broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), which consistently supports Zanu PF and fails to offer appropriate coverage of the other main political players.

By 2010, links between the Commonwealth media organisations and Zimbabwe had largely lapsed, as the organisations are membership based and Zimbabwe was no longer a member of the Commonwealth. However, matters were greatly improved by the arrival in London in 2010 of Tabani Moyo, Advocacy Officer of the Zimbabwe Branch of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). Hosted by the Commonwealth Media Group (CMG), he received a bursary from the Commonwealth Foundation to spend two weeks in London and greatly extended Commonwealth Media contacts with Zimbabwe.

For the future, a continuation and extension of such bursaries would put the Commonwealth organisations in a good position to act quickly to help towards a free media in Zimbabwe, should circumstances in Zimbabwe improve. Other needed measures include:

- Urgent reconstitution of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) and licensing of aspiring private broadcasters and community radio, and reconstitution of the ZBC governance board to ensure the broadcaster fulfils its public-service mandate.
- Resuscitation and adequate resourcing of the Mass Media Trust to insulate Zimbabwe newspapers from political interference.
- Urgent repeal or extensive amendment of laws that impinge on freedom of expression and media freedom, and citizens' right to access to information, notably AIPPA, Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA), the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and the Interception of Communications Act.
- Arrests and prosecution of any individuals implicated in any forms of extra-legal media freedom violations.

Human Rights

The human rights situation in Zimbabwe remains fragile despite the signing of the Global Political Agreement and the subsequent creation of the Unity Government in February 2009, which came about after elections and run-off elections in 2008 characterised by political violence. The GPA has stabilised the civil and political environment but has not bought peace and justice.

There are growing concerns over the failure of the Inclusive Government to abide by the provisions of the GPA and its apparent inability to address the social, political and economic crisis still facing the country.

Of particular concern towards the end of 2010 were the increasing reports that people are being mobilised in a manner similar to the run-up to the 2008 elections. The harassment of human rights defenders and the infrastructure of violence that remains intact, as well as the lack of action to reform state institutions, remain a concern, as does the amount of repressive legislation to curtail civil liberties. During 2011 there has been an upsurge in cases of political violence, which has spread throughout the country with impunity. The environment for human rights defenders is hostile, with routine harassment. Citizens are arrested, and subjected to repression or violence for speaking out against rights violations. The nation continues to be polarised, with freedom of association and assembly curtailed. The law is flouted for political gain.

What is needed for the future is for the Government of Zimbabwe to show political will in implementing domestic laws and regional and international instruments to which Zimbabwe is a signatory. There is a need to reform state institutions, which have become partisan and partial in the discharge of their duties.

Law

There are continued reports of inappropriate and partisan conduct by the police and the prosecution authorities, as evidenced by arrests and prosecution on serious criminal charges of persons simply exercising their constitutional rights.

The independence of the judiciary remains severely compromised and in the small number of cases where the judges and magistrates have not always found in favour of the government they have suffered abuse in consequence

The international legal profession and the Commonwealth Lawyers

Association (CLA), in particular, have sought to maintain links with Zimbabwe and assist the Law Society of Zimbabwe (LSZ) and local lawyers in their efforts to uphold the rule of law. In particular, the LSZ is represented on the Council of the CLA and representatives from the LSZ are funded to participate in the Commonwealth Law Conferences, the most recent of which was held in Hyderabad, India, in February 2011. Additional support has been provided through advocacy and other training provided by law societies and bar associations in different Commonwealth countries.

It is recommended that further measures are taken to re-establish and strengthen the rule of law in Zimbabwe, including:

- Reform and training of the judiciary, including the introduction and enforcement of a Code of Conduct for judges and the protection of the independence of the magistracy;
- Training in advocacy and other practical aspects for practising lawyers;
- Training and additional resources for law schools, particularly in relation to materials, curriculum development and modernising teaching methods;
- The creation and/or strengthening of such institutions as the Judicial Services Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Electoral Commission.

These and other measures are designed to create an environment whereby respect for the rule of law in Zimbabwe will be strengthened, a key requirement for re-admission to the Commonwealth.

Parliament

Through its Fellowship Scheme, the CPA UK sponsored three Members of the UK Parliament representing the Zimbabwe All Party Parliamentary

Group to visit Zimbabwe in March 2011. The aim of the visit was to examine the role of parliamentarians in fostering open and accountable government through participatory and accessible parliamentary democracy. A report of the visit has been submitted to the CPA UK, which invited Members of the Zimbabwe Parliament to observe the 57th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in London in July 2011.

7 Infrastructure

General

The poor state of Zimbabwe's infrastructure has been one of the main obstacles to economic recovery. Deficiencies are most acute in the power, transport, telecommunications and water sectors. In the public sector, buildings and equipment have been allowed to deteriorate through lack of maintenance over a long period.

It is difficult to mobilise the necessary financial resources from the current budget to invest in the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure. The tax base has been eroded, and heavy commitments made to the armed forces, the police and public sector salaries. The overblown public payroll has left the Government with little room to manoeuvre and there has been a serious depletion in the technical capacity of the public services. Personnel have migrated or been lost to better paid employment within Zimbabwe. Where personnel have stayed in post, their moral and productivity has been low, reflecting poor remuneration, inadequate supervision and the lack of computer facilities, stationery, vehicles, electricity and telephones.

These deficiencies are having a serious impact on human development in Zimbabwe. Since independence, the country has been praised for the quality of its education and health services. The literacy rate of

Zimbabwe's adult population was until recently the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting high enrolment rates in primary and secondary education in past periods and a relatively well-qualified teaching force. The overall situation has changed drastically, with Zimbabwe last of 169 countries in the *Human Development Index 2010*. This represents an extraordinary turnaround from Zimbabwe's previous record and bodes ill for the future.

Health

Situation analysis

The challenging socio-economic conditions in the country have hampered health infrastructure and development. In 2002 the population of Zimbabwe was estimated at 11.6 million. The current demographic profile indicates a low total fertility rate of 3.8, as well as a markedly reduced life expectancy at birth, which has fallen from 60 in 1990 to 34 in 2009. Factoring in migration as well, the population growth rate declined from 3.5 per cent in 1990 to 1.4 per cent in 2005.

The brain drain in Zimbabwe has had devastating effects on the health system. Zimbabwe is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration, which established goals for maternal and child health. Towards achieving these ends, a 'Maternal and Newborn Health Road Map 2007–2015' was developed, highlighting challenges such as lack of tutors, tutor materials and equipment necessary to impart skills and to meet standards. A parallel study on maternal and newborn health highlighted the maternal mortality ratio in Zimbabwe, which is 725 per 100,000, unacceptably high compared to other countries in the region. Skilled attendance at delivery declined from 73 per cent in 1999 to 68 per cent in 2009.

Effective interventions to deal with these issues are necessary. It is important to ensure that those who provide maternity care have sound knowledge and skills to enhance women's and their infants' lives.

Commonwealth Response

To this end the Health Cluster is in the process of proposing to the COCZ the introduction of a robust programme of education and training that has potential for positive impact on maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity for women and their neonates. A hospital has been identified in the Masvingo region and the long-term plan is to roll out the training programme in other provinces, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare.

The objectives of this are to:

- Utilise appropriate knowledge and skills based on best evidence to enhance practice;
- Devise ways to respond and to plan care appropriately for child-bearing women, their partners and families when care requirements are more complex, including acute emergencies;
- Develop a sound knowledge of the obstetric, medical and social problems that can seriously complicate childbirth.

Key health workers will facilitate the training of others with continuous support and mentoring from the Health Cluster. The Cluster, although still in its embryonic stage, already consists of a professor of midwifery at a leading teaching hospital in UK, a senior midwife at NHS London, three senior midwives from a leading London teaching hospital and two consultant paediatricians.

Education

Situational analysis

Fifteen years ago Zimbabwe's education system was flourishing and regarded as one of the strongest in sub-Saharan Africa. But as the economy deteriorated, education suffered and morale among teachers and education administrators sagged. The ongoing economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe has left the education system severely weakened, especially by overt political interference such as making pupils and teachers attend political rallies and using schools as bases for youth militia. This has resulted in human rights violations and political harassment. Freedom of assembly and expression have been attacked in the tertiary sector, with heavy-handed responses to political demonstrations such as students being barred from finishing their courses. These situations have been recorded and reported on by organisations such as the Students Solidarity Trust.

Primary school pupil enrolment of 2.5m in 2009 represented a net enrolment ratio of around 80 per cent, well short of what would be required for Zimbabwe to achieve the millennium goal of universal primary enrolment by 2015. Many families find it difficult to pay government school fees, and despite various safety-net programmes operated by Government and donors, children are sent home from school because of non-payment.

The decline in the quality of education is graphically illustrated by the fall in the proportion of students passing the Grade 7 exam, from around 80 per cent in 2006 to 39 per cent in 2009. The physical infrastructure of the schools, including water and sanitation provision, is poor, and books and materials supplies have been insignificant. The secondary schools have been affected by teacher emigration, especially to neighbouring SADC countries, leading to a severe shortage of teachers,

especially in science and maths and technical subjects. The capacity and effectiveness of Ministry, provincial and district administration have been impaired by the lack of logistical support and effective management. Key posts remain unfilled, reflecting both a dearth of suitable candidates and recurrent lack of funding.

A start has been made in recovering the situation since the signing of the GPA. Economic stabilisation and 'dollarisation' has allowed teachers' monthly salaries to rise to \$170 per month, and this has gone some way to stem the exodus from the profession. A team of Principal Directors has been appointed to support the Permanent Secretary, and a National Education Advisory Board has been established to advise on policy. A committee of donors has been created to co-ordinate assistance from abroad, alongside the Programme of Support that assists orphans and vulnerable children with health and education. The new Education Transition Fund has funded a major programme of textbook provision, first in primary schools and now being followed up at secondary level on a one book per student basis.

Commonwealth Organisations' Response

The Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCfE), a grouping of two dozen Commonwealth professional organisations in education, is an active participant in Commonwealth initiatives. Working in association with one of its members, Link Community Development (LCD), it has undertaken an in-country process of consultation and analysis of what contribution it could best make to education recovery in Zimbabwe in the context of supplementing the larger programmes of engagement operated by multilateral and bilateral agencies.

In consultation with the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Culture (MoESAC) and its partners, it was agreed that CCfE and LCD should play

a catalytic role of arranging dialogues on strategic directions for education. The first of these was in Harare in July 2010, when a hundred participants from Government and local civil society subjected development plans to critical scrutiny and suggested modifications. The second took place in London, when revised proposals were presented to an international audience of educationalists from official and voluntary sectors. The Minister and his officials were able to hold discussions with the Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation; to address Commonwealth gatherings in Parliament and at Marlborough House; and to have significant exposure in the media. This was undertaken with financial support from the Commonwealth Foundation. Commenting on the programme, the Minister wrote that it was this intervention that had enabled MoESAC to conclude the strategic plan with a broad consensus within the Ministry and to its endorsement by Cabinet.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) has been maintaining contact with the half dozen universities in Zimbabwe that have remained in membership. They have participated regularly in ACU Executive Heads Conferences at which other Zimbabwean universities have also been present as observers. Zimbabweans are expected to be among the beneficiaries of a new network to support refugee academics launched by ACU in partnership with the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA). ACU members will be approached during the latter part of 2011 to become members and to assist with the placement of refugee academics who are escaping persecution in their own country. CARA has also launched a programme to support Zimbabwean universities and their academic staff, in country and in the Diaspora, through a Nuffield-funded Grant and Fellowship Programme and various capacity-building initiatives.

Opportunities and prospects

The CCfE and its members will maintain contact with the Ministry of Education and its main development partners. There has already been a report-back on the 2010 seminar programme to meetings of the Education Trust Fund, where the Ministry of Education and donors meet. The London Seminar generated many expressions of interest among UK schools and other agencies in co-operating with Zimbabwe, and it was suggested to the Zimbabwean authorities that it could be useful to disaggregate the overall investment programme into discrete packages that would be within the capacity of modest-sized NGOs for other Commonwealth countries to support. Another initiative 'kick-started' by the London Seminar is a series of seminar-workshops for schools and other institutions engaged in (or interested in starting) partnerships with counterparts in Zimbabwe.

Culture

Cultural practitioners and commentators both in Zimbabwe and the Diaspora perceive culture and the arts in Zimbabwe to be under threat as never before. Intimidation is rife. Artists and performers are being harassed, as is attested by the trial of visual artist Owen Maseko and the arrest of actors in mid-performance at the Book Café cultural centre. Lack of funding and a consequent lack of conservation materials and equipment threaten the physical state of museum collections.

In October 2010, the Minister of Culture, delivering the 13th Annual Lozikeyi Lecture at the Bulawayo National Art Gallery, confirmed the seriousness of the situation. At the same time, he recognised the important role of artists in healing the nation and assisting in 'the serious challenge of rebranding Zimbabwe in a more positive light'. With many musicians and writers now in exile, and brain drain having a considerable

effect on cultural practice, this will not be easily achieved. Those remaining in the country are largely isolated from developments in the Commonwealth and internationally. Museum directors, for instance, report on their lack of meaningful exchange with international institutions. Active contacts with NGOs outside the country are minimal.

Opportunities and recommendations

- In view of the Commonwealth Foundation's recent emphasis on the important role of culture in development, there is a vital need to engage or re-engage with cultural practitioners in the country. This should take place across a broad range of culture and the arts, i.e. in publishing, literature, theatre, music, film, dance, the visual and applied arts, museums and galleries, and youth culture.
- A needs assessment should be put together to determine priorities in the cultural sector and to identify individuals and organisations working in the arts and culture that most require assistance. This should be undertaken in association with arts organisations within the country and should include consultation with the Minister (MoESAC), whose brief includes culture.
- Roundtable meetings could be held in London, Harare or Johannesburg on the role of arts and culture in the new Zimbabwe in order to assess need, set priorities and develop a vision of future developments beyond the present situation.
- In response to requests from Zimbabwe a training programme for cultural practitioners should be envisaged in appropriate Commonwealth countries. A pilot scheme might be developed for persons working within the museum sector, where needs are particularly urgent.

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- Twinning of cultural institutions should be implemented and here museums again offer an opportunity.
 - The Commonwealth Fellowship Programme should include cultural practitioners.
 - Participation by Zimbabwean scholars still within the country should be facilitated at international conferences hosted by NGOs working in the cultural sector.

Local Government

Situational analysis

Local government in Zimbabwe, consisting of rural district councils and urban local governments (cities, municipalities, towns and local boards), received its own democratic mandate at the 2008 elections, separate from the more controversial processes and outcomes of the national elections.

These authorities have significant responsibilities for local infrastructure development and the delivery of basic services to local people, including road construction, civil protection, education, social welfare, public health (primary health care, hospitals, health protection), housing and town planning, transport, refuse collection and disposal, cemeteries and crematoria, water supply and economic promotion. Urban councils are also responsible for the provision of infectious diseases hospitals.

Local governments in Zimbabwe, in particular urban councils, have traditionally been empowered to be able to raise much of their own revenue through rates for land and buildings, water and sewerage fees and other fees. They have been badly affected by Zimbabwe's economic problems, with the lack of grants from the centre having a serious impact on the ability of councils to deliver services. There has

been a serious decline in standards of basic service delivery evident in such areas as limited waste collection and disposal, lack of chemicals and poor water supply, reduced healthcare facilities and poor repair of public buildings and facilities.

Commonwealth Organisations' Response

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) has continued to support elected local government in Zimbabwe. A needs-assessment team made up of experts from the UK and South Africa visited in February 2009 and identified critical needs, especially skills shortages at all levels and infrastructural decline. On the basis of this report, CLGF is working with its members and other partners, especially Canada, South Africa and the UK, as well as the Netherlands and Sweden, to provide a co-ordinated programme of support. These consultations have included Harare-based international development partners and stakeholders and also contacts with the Government of Zimbabwe.

The needs assessment identified a number of core priority areas with a strong humanitarian focus for short to medium-term support:

- Local government input into the constitutional review process
- Councillor and staff training, including awareness training for newly elected councillors, and reorientation/up-skilling of senior local government officials
- Infrastructure development
- Conflict management and community-based reconciliation
- Capacity building for local government representative associations
- Policies and practices on gender equality and gender awareness
- Legislative and administrative reform.

In February 2010 CLGF and the Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA) organised the Zimbabwe Local Government Technical and Development Partners Roundtable in Harare. This brought together representatives from ZILGA, the Local Government Association of England and Wales, and ZILGA's local government association partners from Sweden, South Africa, Canada and the Netherlands and other key stakeholders/development partners to consider strategies to enhance international engagement in support of local government and restoring essential local services and infrastructure. It has helped to improve co-ordination and a number of collaborative initiatives were agreed. In addition to the more immediate needs identified above, a number of other areas were highlighted as medium- to long-term priorities. These included solid waste management, water and sanitation, roads and transport, and urban planning.

The challenge of identifying funding remains very real for local authorities in Zimbabwe with levels of own-source revenue collection increasing only slowly, with no central government grants to local government and limited direct donor support.

CLGF and the Local Government Association of England and Wales are working with the Zimbabwe Local Government Association under an EU-funded project to support the strengthening of the local government association in Zimbabwe to better support and represent its members. This will include work on lobbying and advocacy and financing local government. The partners are also closely monitoring developments in the sector, highlighting local government's key role in development, and formulating proposals for future projects.

Working with its members in Africa, CLGF has assisted Zimbabwe local government to develop its position in respect of the constitutional review process. Senior representatives of UCAZ/ZILGA participated in the March 2011 CLGF Biennial Conference in Cardiff, Wales.

8 Commonwealth Professional Fellowships

The Commonwealth Professional Fellowship scheme supports mid-career professionals from developing Commonwealth countries to develop skills and experience. Candidates from Zimbabwe were invited to apply and a group of five candidates were selected to come to the UK in March 2011. One was unable to travel as she had been arrested and detained as part of a group who had been watching television coverage of the events in Tunisia and Egypt. Commonwealth organisations registered their concern about the action that had been taken by the Zimbabwe Government against Tafadzwa Choto and the Secretary-General was asked to intervene to secure her release.

The other four Fellows took part in an induction programme organised by the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, and during Commonwealth Week the Fellows met Commonwealth parliamentarians, scholars and delegates to the annual conference of the CLGF, as well as other Commonwealth organisations and partners who share a common interest in Zimbabwe.

The Fellowship programme was designed to focus on the key areas relevant to the consideration of Zimbabwe's return to membership of the Commonwealth, including the conduct and machinery of democratic elections; the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary; the freedom of the press and the role of the media; and the protection of human rights. Commonwealth organisations and partners hosted individual Fellows and provided opportunities for practical training and experience to develop skills that will be required in strengthening democratic institutions in Zimbabwe and implementing the reforms that were agreed through the Global Political Agreement.

9 Effective Partnerships and the Diaspora

Commonwealth organisations have worked in partnership with Common Purpose, a not-for-profit organisation that brings together people from a wide range of backgrounds to help them become more effective leaders in society. Common Purpose has run programmes in London and Johannesburg for Zimbabwean leaders in the Diaspora and this initiative has generated new strategies for making effective use of the skills and experience within it. The Commonwealth Fellows benefited from attending the London leadership programme.

Strong partnerships between the Commonwealth and other organisations such as Common Purpose and Link Community Development have underpinned the progress made over the past year.

Appendix: COCZ

Participating Organisations

Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

Action for Southern Africa

Association of Commonwealth Universities

Britain-Zimbabwe Society

Budiriro Trust

Citizens UK

Common Purpose

Commonwealth Association

Commonwealth Broadcasting Association

Commonwealth Business Council

Commonwealth Consortium for Education

Commonwealth Foundation

Commonwealth Foundation, Special Programmes

Commonwealth Human Ecology Council

Commonwealth Journalists Association

Commonwealth Lawyers Association

Commonwealth Local Government Association

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit

Commonwealth Press Union Media Trust

Commonwealth Professional Fellow

Commonwealth Secretariat

Commonwealth Youth Education Council

Council for Assisting Refugee Academics

CPU Media Trust
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Health Cluster
House of Commons, Zimbabwe All Party Parliamentary Group
Link Community Development
Nexus
Overseas Development Institute
Ramphal Foundation
RASC
Round Table
Royal Commonwealth Society
Royal United Services Institute
UNISON
White Ribbon Alliance
Zimbabwe Diaspora Development Interface
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum