



# ZIMBABWE

2016 Report on Open & Secretive  
Public Institutions in Zimbabwe

## INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has been in a process of trying to implement its new Constitution, enacted in 2013. Very little has been done to synchronise access to information laws with the new Constitution. Out of the 159 laws aligned with the Constitution, none of these have been access to information laws. There have been a lot of threats to members of the media during the time of this study. Government also announced a Cyber Crime Bill to curb what it said is 'Cyber terrorism' but the government is responding to a recent spate of civil disobedience led by #ThisFlag, an online campaign relying on Facebook to convey its messages. The campaign aims to mobilise citizens to hold the government of Zimbabwe accountable for the "poverty, corruption, and injustice that plague" Zimbabwe.

On 6 July, the day that both the online movement and teachers unions announced that there will be a mass strike, the Whatsapp platform mysteriously went down and could only work when VPN software was installed. This suggested that the platform had been deliberately shut down by network operators under the orders of government. Whatsapp was the main platform conveying messages of the strike alongside pictures and videos of violence that was occurring in the country. The attempt was an effort by government to stifle access to information by closing down some social media platforms.

One anonymous internet group responded by attacking government websites. Credit to government for quickly putting the websites up again. For example, the Ministry of Finance which we studied in this research had its website hacked but it was up again in no time.

Early in the year, state media journalists were arrested for writing an investigative story on elephant poaching involving high ranking police officers. Police proceeded to arrest the two journalists and their editor, demanding to know where they had accessed their information. The matter is still before the courts but it highlighted how accessing information in Zimbabwe has been made a taboo by those who are in authority.

Earlier on, other journalists running an online publication were arrested and questioned by the police over the bombing of President Robert Mugabe's dairy farm. The journalists were interrogated on where they had obtained the information. Only recently, another journalist, Richard Chidza was summoned by police to disclose his sources on a 'treasonous' communiqué reportedly authored by war veterans in Zimbabwe.

Generally, the access to information and freedom of the media situation in the country has deteriorated in the last few months, with threats against journalists by government and political leaders increasing. Threats to ban social media have also been made, with military leaders publicly denouncing social media. The police brutally attacked at least five journalists, including a BBC journalist who was covering a protest. There has been a pattern of violating the Constitution.

Under the Constitution the following rights are explicitly guaranteed:

### 61 Freedom of expression and freedom of the media

- (1) Every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes—
  - (a) freedom to seek, receive and communicate ideas and other information;
  - (b) freedom of artistic expression and scientific research and creativity; and
  - (c) academic freedom.
- (2) Every person is entitled to freedom of the media, which freedom includes protection of the confidentiality of journalists' sources of information.
- (3) Broadcasting and other electronic media of communication have freedom of establishment, subject only to State licensing procedures that—
  - (a) are necessary to regulate the airwaves and other forms of signal distribution; and
  - (b) are independent of control by government or by political or commercial interests.
- (4) All State-owned media of communication must—
  - (a) be free to determine independently the editorial content of their broadcasts or other communications;
  - (b) be impartial; and
  - (c) afford fair opportunity for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions.
- (5) Freedom of expression and freedom of the media do not include—
  - (a) incitement to violence;
  - (b) advocacy of hatred or hate speech;
  - (c) malicious injury to a person's reputation or dignity; or
  - (d) malicious or unwarranted breach of a person's right to privacy.

### 62 Access to information

- (1) Every Zimbabwean citizen or permanent resident, including the Zimbabwean media, has the right of access to any information held by the State or by any institution or agency of government at every level, in so far as the information is required in the interests of public accountability.
- (2) Every person, including the Zimbabwean media, has the right of access to any information held by any person, including the State, in so far as the information is required for the exercise or protection of a right.
- (3) Every person has a right to the correction of information, or the deletion of untrue, erroneous or misleading information, which is held by the State or any institution or agency of the government at any level, and which relates to that person.
- (4) Legislation must be enacted to give effect to this right, but may restrict access to information in the interests of defence, public security or professional confidentiality, to the extent that the restriction is fair, reasonable, necessary and justifiable in a democratic society based on openness, justice, human dignity, equality and freedom.

There still exists subsidiary legislation that is clearly inconsistent with these new provisions. Notable among such laws is the *Official Secrets Act 1970*, which makes it difficult for citizens

and media to access some information held by government and public institutions. Another law is the Public Order and Security Act 2002 (POSA), which restricts freedom of association and freedom of assembly.

Then there is also the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act 2002* (AIPPA). In its preamble, the Act states it will provide members of the public with a right of access to records and information held by public bodies. It further pledges to make public bodies accountable by allowing the public the right to request correction of misrepresented personal information.

However, in reality, the opposite is true, as the law takes away more than it gives. Under AIPPA, applicants seeking records or information held by a public body should request the information in writing and where possible pay a reasonable fee. The head of any public body is given up to 30 days to respond. He/she is allowed to refuse to grant the requested information where it is deemed the information sought is not in the public interest. If the information involves a third party, the head of the public institution is allowed 30 more days to consult the third party before responding to the request. However, the head of a public body may also refuse all or part of a request for access to information, in which case he/she has to give the applicant reasons for such refusal.

In the event the applicant feels aggrieved by the decision not to grant information, he/she may ask the Commissioner to review the public body's decision. In essence, this constitutes a mere review process that does not guarantee access to information to the applicant. In fact, it actually makes the process of accessing information more cumbersome and complex. The process is unnecessarily bureaucratized, as it may take more than 60 days before a final decision is made on whether an applicant can have access to a record or requested information. This is one of those typical scenarios in which AIPPA begins to act as an impediment to access to information rather than foster the spirit of openness and transparency within public bodies. The process contradicts the law's intended principle of encouraging openness and accountability in the work of public institutions.

Some public officials take advantage of the bureaucratic nature of this legislation to frustrate requests for public information. This legislation has disempowered junior public officials who are fearful of disclosing any information to citizens or the media. Positive advances recorded a few years ago are now being reversed with government escalating its intentions to clamp down on social media through the Cybercrime Bill. As we speak, the government is crafting a cyber law which can potentially silence social media users and criminalise certain types of internet use. This will affect access to information on social media and other online platforms.

Many institutions have hostile personnel manning their gates and receptions, and who made it impossible to hand over letters to the relevant authorities. For example, at the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) one cannot enter the premises without an ID and one is forced to have his/her issues addressed by guards at the gate. There was palpable resistance in many institutions to give

information. It was not uncommon to be questioned about who the researcher was or what the information was needed for.

Civil servants continue to express shock on why ordinary citizens request information. The attitude from these civil servants is that ordinary citizens have no business accessing public information. Information remains to be regarded as a privilege for those in authority or for those who work in certain stations in society such as the media.

A culture of fear and unnecessary bureaucratic tendencies was evident. Organisations that have Public Relations Officers still asked the researchers to contact the Chief Executive Officer in order to access information. Those in these positions fear losing their jobs if they entertain requests for information.

One was likely to get a somewhat better response or more attention from institutions if it was mentioned that the requester was a journalist as opposed to an ordinary citizen seeking information.

## RATIONALE AND RESEARCH PARAMETERS

### AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to assess the state of access to information in the country. Citizens require information to make informed choices and decisions and this study sought to determine whether such information as held by public institutions is available to citizens in a usable form upon request.

### Objectives of the study:

1. To determine which public institutions provide information to citizens upon requests with relative ease; and
2. To determine which institutions are utilising online platforms to promote access to information.

### Research methodology

The research adopts qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, and seeks to evaluate the level of public access to information held by government and public institutions. The MISA Chapters conduct research by evaluating the websites of government and public institutions along with submitting information requests. This method seeks to establish the transparency and efficiency of government and public institutions in providing information to the public.

The following public institutions were surveyed:

1. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
2. The Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union (ZCFU)
3. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
4. The Public Service Commission (PSC)
5. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC)
6. The Tobacco Industry Marketing Board (TIMB)
7. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)
8. The Grain Marketing Board (GMB)
9. NetOne
10. The Zimbabwe Anticorruption Commission (ZACC)

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Category 1: Website Analysis

- Most websites were poorly managed;
- Content had not been updated regularly;
- No critical information such as procedure on how to obtain public information was available;
- Some websites generated error messages; and
- Some websites were not compatible with mobile phones.

### Category 2: Requests for Information

- Most institutions failed to provide written responses;
- NetOne asked the researcher to contact the CEO of the company;
- GMB responded promptly and allowed the researcher access to their PR department;
- ZACC partly answered some questions but declined to answer others;
- Most government institutions had hostile personnel who denied the researcher access to relevant officials;
- Oral requests for information were mostly declined and the researcher asked to request information in writing; and
- Hostility was shown to non-media members in some departments.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### 1. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

#### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.zimtreasury.gov.zw/](http://www.zimtreasury.gov.zw/)

This website was hacked by an anonymous internet group a few weeks ago but it is up and running again. It has useful information such as the national budgets and laws. It has policy statements and statutes, such as the Statutory Instrument 64 that prohibits importation of goods, and that the majority of Zimbabweans trade in the informal market.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?			•	Not on all pages
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programmes?	•			
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			They did not respond to messages sent via the mechanism

**Total Score: 13/20**

#### CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development:

- 1) What was the outcome of the talks between the Ministry and the IMF?
- 2) What has the Ministry done with the %7 million collected for afforestation efforts in tobacco farming?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?		•		
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?		•		
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?		•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•		
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?		•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•		
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•		

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•		

**Total Score: 0/20**

## 2. Zimbabwe Farmers Union

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.zcfu.org.zw](http://www.zcfu.org.zw)

The website is very informative and is regularly updated. It has information on farming and agriculture activities that members of the association carry out. It is also informative for other interested stakeholders such as journalists who may require information on farming. However, the organisation does not respond to feedback sent via its website emailing system.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?			•	It lists the mandate of the organisation in detail without being specific
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programmes?			•	There are some reports available
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?			•	They have a feedback mechanism on the website

**Total Score: 7/20**

### CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Zimbabwe Farmers Union:

- 1) Where does the Union get funds for undertaking its activities?
- 2) How does the Union make sure that it promotes and advances farmers' interests and welfare?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?	•			
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?	•			
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?	•			
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?	•			
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•		

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?	•			
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•			
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•			

**Total Score: 16/20**

### 3. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

#### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.mopse.gov.zw/](http://www.mopse.gov.zw/)

It has relatively useful content. It has been updated although more useful information could be added.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?			•	Not all pages are updated
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programmes?			•	Not updated
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		Not updated
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			Name, address and telephone number are available
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

**Total Score: 4/20**

#### CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education:

- 1) How much money was allocated to your Ministry in the current national budget?
- 2) What is the total number of primary and secondary schools in rural areas?
- 3) How many teachers are currently employed by the Ministry?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			The Permanent Secretary. It is difficult to secure a meeting with the Permanent Secretary.
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?		•		
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?		•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•		
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?		•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•		
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•		

**Total Score: 2/20**

## 4. Public Service Commission

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.psc.gov.zw/](http://www.psc.gov.zw/)

The website has regulations, policies and laws relevant in the operations of the institution. The website is not updated regularly. There is room for improvement on how content is managed.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?			•	Some sections have up-to-date information; press statements are old
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programmes?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?	•			
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?			•	Name, address and landline phone numbers are available
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		Only office contacts available
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			It gives an immediate auto response

**Total Score: 10/20**

### CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

**The following questions were sent to the Public Service Commission:**

- 1 How many civil servants are under the government's payroll?
- 2 How does one apply to be in service to the government?



n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			The letter was left at the reception. The receptionist asked a lot of questions before taking letter and throwing in tray. When called, all questions were referred to the President's Office.
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?		•		
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?		•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•		
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?		•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•		
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•		

**Total Score: 2/20**

## 5. Tobacco Industry Marketing Board (TIMB)

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.timb.co.zw/](http://www.timb.co.zw/)

The website is well-managed and updated regularly. It has useful information for different stakeholders including the media. It has contact details and useful policies and regulations.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programmes?	•			
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?	•			
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			

**Total Score: 14/20**

## CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to TIMB:

1. How much revenue was realised from tobacco sales in 2015?
2. How is the Board assisting farmers to replace trees they are cutting to cure their tobacco?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?	•			
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?	•			
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•		
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?	•			
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?	•			Official asked if there were any other questions
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.	•			
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?	•			
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•			
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•			

**Total Score: 18/20**

## 6. Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.zhrc.org.zw/](http://www.zhrc.org.zw/)

The website is relatively efficient and gives key information on human rights in the country. The website has contact details and reports on the operations of the Commission.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programmes?			•	
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			

**Total Score: 11/20**

## CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission:

1. How many cases of human rights violations did you process in 2015?
2. How is the Commission funded?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			PR official
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?	•			
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?	•			
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?	•			
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		Some questions were answered; some questions would only be answered after clearance from higher authority
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?	•			
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.	•			
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?	•			
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•			
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•			

**Total Score: 18/20**

## 7. Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.zrp.gov.zw/](http://www.zrp.gov.zw/)

The website is relatively efficient and gives key information on human rights in the country. The website has contact details and reports on the operations of the Commission.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?			•	Some pages are up-to-date, others are not
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?			•	It briefly outlines its mandate
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programmes?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		Just an explanation of how money is collected and disbursed; revealed no money coming from Treasury
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

**Total Score: 6/20**

## CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

### The following questions were sent to ZRP:

- 1) Where does the ZRP get funds for its daily operations?
- 2) How does the ZRP work towards dealing with corruption in the country?
- 3) How many rape cases were reported in 2015?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			Public Relations Department
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?		•		
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?		•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?	•			
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?		•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•		
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•		

**Total Score: 4/20**

## 8. Grain Marketing Board

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.gmbdura.com/](http://www.gmbdura.com/)

The website is relatively informative. It has information on policies and regulations. There are contact details for relevant company authorities.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programmes?	•			
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?	•			
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?			•	Physical address is present
h) The contact details of specific public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			

**Total Score: 11/20**

## CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the GMB:

- 1) What is the institution doing in a bid to accord producers their fair share of the local and export markets?
- 2) Is the local maize production still capable of meeting the maize demand in the country?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			PR Manager
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?	•			
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?	•			
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?	•			
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?	•			
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.	•			
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?	•			
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•			
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•			

**Total Score: 18/20**

## 9. NetOne

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.netone.co.zw/](http://www.netone.co.zw/)

The website lacked contact details for the Public Relations Department. It had relatively recent information. More can be done to add relevant information, for example on tenders.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?			•	Only some of the information is available
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?			•	Only some of the information is available
c) Reports, policies, programmes?			•	Only some of the information is available
d) Budget and expenditure?			•	Only some of the information is available
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?	•			
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?	•			
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?			•	The email bounced back

**Total Score: 13/20**

## CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the NetOne:

- 1) What is the source of NetOne's funds for its operations?
- 2) Where can we obtain the 2013 abridged audited statement for NetOne?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			PR Department
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?		•		
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?		•		Referred questions to CEO
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•		
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?		•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?			•	Referred questions to CEO in a friendly manner
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•		

**Total Score: 3/20**

## 10. Zimbabwe Anticorruption Commission

### CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

[www.accz.org.zw/](http://www.accz.org.zw/)

The website is on the one hand efficient but also very poor in some aspects. The whistleblower page for example generates an error message when one tries to send a message.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?			•	
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programmes?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The address, telephone number, and working hours of the institution?	•			
h) The contact details of specific public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?			•	Messages bounced back

**Total Score: 4/20**

## CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

### The following questions were sent to the NetOne:

- 1) Where does the commission get funds for its day to day operations?
- 2) How many cases of corruption has the Commission concluded since its inception?

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests?	•			
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days?	•			
3. Did the institution respond to the request for information?	•			
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?	•			
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested?		•		
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information?		•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.			•	Partially answered how they are funded
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?	•			
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•			
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•			

**Total Score: 15/20**

## SUMMARY IN NUMBERS

Institution	Website	Request for information	Total score
Ministry of Finance	13	0	13
ZCFU	7	16	23
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	4	2	6
PSC	10	2	12
TIMB	14	18	32
ZHRC	11	18	29
ZRP	6	4	10
GMB	11	18	29
NetOne	13	3	16
ZACC	4	15	19

## RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

From the sample survey, one is inclined to conclude that the majority of institutions remain rather closed and averse to placing information in the public domain. Compared to previous studies where websites have been rather poor, the departments selected this year had relatively well-managed websites. Most of them however fell below standards expected from organisations of such stature.

This year there were both extremes. Either an organisation performed well or it performed dismally.

## THE MOST SECRETIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN ZIMBABWE

The surveyed institutions have a long way to go towards transparency and opening themselves up to public scrutiny. Most of them can easily be classified as secretive after most of them failed to respond to written requests for information.

The **Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education** is the Most Secretive Public Institution after they scored 6/40.

They did not respond to written electronic or printed requests for information. The Zimbabwe Republic Police follows as second most secretive institution, requesting that written questions be submitted to them despite written questions already having been sent to them without any response. The website remains badly managed. Officials at the Public Service Commission refused to give any information on anything asked of them electronically, orally or printed. Their website is the only positive that could be taken.

## THE MOST OPEN PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN ZIMBABWE

Some organisations promptly responded to information requests electronically and called the researcher to give answers to written questions.

The TIMB has a very vibrant website and responded to questions promptly through a designated public relations manager. The GMB has a less vibrant website but their personnel promptly attended to information in a friendly and helpful manner.

Based on the research findings, the **Tobacco Industry Marketing Board (TIMB)** is the Most Open Public Institution of those surveyed after scoring an impressive 32/40.

The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is second scoring 29/40. The GMB ties with the Human Rights Commission but the GMB invited us to their offices and answered questions to the best of their ability.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Zimbabwe seems to be sliding back into the dark ages of clamping down on social media and the internet by introducing a Cybercrime Bill which is intended to silence government critics. There is a long standing plan by government to clamp down on social media after President Mugabe said Zimbabwe needed to emulate China's way of dealing with social media.

Evidence shows that most of the institutions are now taking online communication seriously, a good number of them responded through email. While this is commendable it neglects the fact that the majority of citizens do not yet have access to internet.

Government must first ensure that the existing access to information legislation is aligned with the new Constitution before promulgating new laws whose objective is to stifle access to information.

Government could also improve simple administrative procedures in its institutions in terms of clarity on where information requests should be taken. There should be clear guidelines on how to obtain public information. The current situation where this is explained only after approaching government departments, is not ideal.