



Zimbabwe Human Rights Defenders Assets and Needs Assessment

April 2021, Report





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Acronyms

ADF	African Democracy Forum
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
ANA	Assets and Needs Assessment
ARTUZ	Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe
ASC	Action Support Centre
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COVID 19	Novel Coronavirus of 2019
FiDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FREEZ	Front for Economic Emancipation Zimbabwe
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
MO	Modus Operandi
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
PPCH	Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of Health and Childcare
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAHRDN	Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
SWOT	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
UN	United Nations
VIDCOs	Village Development Committees
WARDCOs	Ward Development Committees
WILSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defenders
ZACC	Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZGC	Zimbabwe Gender Commission
ZHRC	Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students Union
ZSF	Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum



1. Introduction



The Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SAHRDN) conducted an Assets and Needs Assessment for Human Rights Defenders in Zimbabwe (the assessment or ANA) between May and September 2020. The assessment occurred during and was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated national lockdown measures.

The process adopted the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders' definition of HRDs. The declaration defines HRDs as individuals or groups collectively working towards the promotion and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms contributing to "... the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals."

The following constituted the Zimbabwe HRDs ANA objectives:

1. To conduct a detailed assessment in selected cities on the situation of human rights defenders in Zimbabwe with regards to access to support mechanisms and services, identifying the risk and protective factors to enhance their safety and security.
2. To assess the level of availability and quality of relevant services provided by human rights defenders-oriented

organisations and other relevant service providers in the field of human rights defenders' protection.

3. Identify possibilities for coordinating service provision at the national level and at the regional level to avoid duplication and working in silos.
4. Define the best approach for strengthening and offering integrated preventive, protective and reintegration services and improving access to mechanisms, systems and services at the local level.
5. To identify the institutions and actors which have a direct and indirect influence on the situation of human right defenders at risk and which SAHRDN will leverage in order to swiftly coordinate rapid protection services.

The assessment adopted a qualitative research design with COVID-19 inspired adaptation regarding methods of data collection. This entailed an extensive media scan and literature review of reports from NGOs, as well as about 15 conversations in person and telephonically with HRDs. The ANA established that Zimbabwe has a vibrant human rights sector with activists who have a proud tradition of human rights defence, especially since the turn of the new century. Most of the respondents engaged for the HRDs ANA were Directors and senior staff of organisations formed after 2000, with the exception of ZimRights. The youngest organisation

engaged for the ANA was formed in 2013. As such, both the respondents and the organisations they belong to had sufficient historical and contemporary bandwidth to adequately answer the questions of interest for the ANA from an expert as well as experiential and historical base. All respondents were purposively identified either because they belonged to key human rights organisations or were key HRDs in their individual capacities.

This assessment's findings are indicative of the situation of HRDs in Zimbabwe and their attendant assets, risks and needs. A strong infrastructure for HRDs' protection exists in Zimbabwe but there possible areas of growth and strengthening which the ANA identifies for the network of HRDs in Zimbabwe and in the SADC region. This report summarises the assessment and makes recommendations on the needs while also suggesting strategies for mitigating HRDs' risks. Box 1 highlights some general insights.

This report highlights the following eleven points as crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of HRDs protection mechanism in Zimbabwe.

1. Proactive and Anticipatory Protection/Early Warning

System: An effective protection mechanism must have a proactive and anticipatory approach to danger faced by HRDs. This includes an early warning and early response system with the following elements;

- I. It should pick up the escalation of tensions in communities;
- II. It should have clear indicators of what constitutes impending danger;
- III. Is premised on contextual understanding of who HRDs are;
- IV. Is anticipatory of the kind of threats HRDs are facing;
- V. Has the means to provide proactive responses and diffuse threats;
- VI. Is based on a clear understanding of the triggers of violations;
- VII. Has some leverage within the state system can de-escalate danger to HRDs;
- VIII. Efficient communication of threats and costs of endangering HRDs;
- IX. Has the ability to document experiences and collate admissible evidence of threats and attacks to HRDs; and
- X. Has clear links to the regional HRDs solidarity network.

HRD insights on security and protection from practice and experience

1. Where HRD security is concerned, everything matters: There is a need for HRDs to be constantly vigilant at work and in social settings because everything, including choice of recreational activities and areas, family environment, residential space, and the HRD's personal morality, matter for security.
2. To enhance security and protection, HRDs need an "informed" personal solidarity network: It is important to have a close personal network beyond work to ensure the safety of HRDs and their loved ones who often look out for them and can raise the necessary alarms should an incident occur while HRDs are away from work stations and or in personal spaces.
3. Means and channels of communication must be secure: Securing information, finding and using channels of communication that are secure through secure mobile applications is paramount. This reduces the risk of hacking of HRDs social media properties (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) and email accounts, as well as unauthorised access to their information.
4. Rapid and effective communication of risk: The ability to raise alarm as soon as possible, including being able to ensure one's narrative of events is known are key security considerations. Failure to communicate well leads to the perpetrator's narrative dominating and drowning out HDR's accounts of events.
5. Prevention is better than cure-Activist and HRD Retrievals: The process of retrieving those at risk from the areas of danger is an effective preventative protection measure and should always be prioritised instead of waiting to deal with the aftermath of reprisals, victimisation and other outcomes of compromised activist security.

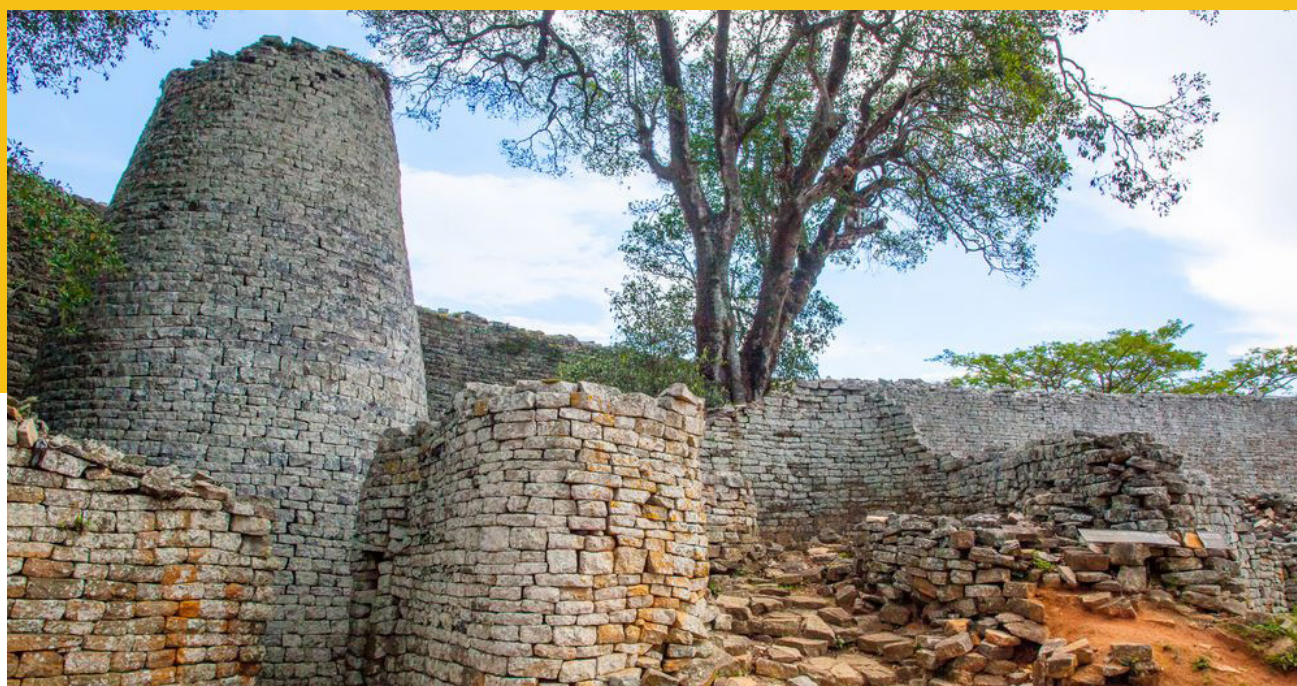
2. **Inter-agency/Service Providers collaboration:** An effectively functioning HRDs protection mechanism must be characterised by inter-agency collaboration to ensure holistic provision of protection services including a diverse range of services (medical, legal, advocacy, and psychosocial support). Inter-agency collaboration should consider the following as key considerations for effectiveness:
 - I. Having a few select case officers in the agencies;
 - II. Keeping HRDs in-country rather than assisting them to leave the country/to be exiled thus depleting rather than strengthening the network;
 - III. Trust-building among individuals and institutions, and developing a shared behavioural code to minimise risks through indiscretion; and
 - IV. Ensuring message discipline and effective control of what goes into the public domain.
3. **Information Gathering Systems:** An effective HRDs protection mechanism must develop a scientific system of processing information beyond trust which includes:
 - I. Information gathering based on structured and standardised tools;
 - II. Information analysis informed by observations in addition to intuition; and
 - III. Solid and creative verification means and triangulation of gathered data through various sources, such as the use of investigative journalists at different levels and private investigators.
4. **Mainstream Security Training and Risk assessment:** HRD protection mechanisms should mainstream the training of HRDs in self-protection mechanisms and situational awareness which also include the following key elements;
 - I. mainstreaming security training within organisations;
 - II. constant risk assessment within organisations; and
 - III. effective definition and documentation of security incidents.
5. **Rapid Reaction and Response:** HRDs protection mechanisms must develop ways of rapidly responding to security incidents. This means that the response by service providers such as lawyers must be swift.

Where there should be retrievals, these have to be swiftly done. This can be aided by and built on existing hotline infrastructure for key response institutions and replicating this framework at sub-national level.
6. **Political, Symbolic and Solidarity Actions:** An effective HRDs protection mechanism could also have a system of mobilising political action and solidarity for HRDs, including during court appearances, incarceration or hospitalisation and during periods of danger. This includes general awareness raising on the status of HRDs in the country.
7. **Devolution of Response and Protection mechanisms:** HRDs protection mechanism must be devolved to improve accessibility to all HRDs including those in rural communities. This includes devolution of key response institutions and their contacts.
8. **Conflict Management Approach:** An effective HRDs protection mechanism must take a conflict management approach.
9. **Triggers for State response:** Protection mechanisms must invest in ensuring that they have access to the state at some meaningful enough level that can be leveraged to trigger state responses regarding safety and protection of HRDs. The sense is that mechanisms that involve civil society alone without triggering state responses will be inadequate. This includes involving constitutional bodies such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC).
10. **Multi-Tier Approach** with which includes the following components;
 - I. System for information collection, verification and triangulation
 - II. Psychosocial support and rehabilitation
 - III. Litigation and advocacy
 - IV. Capacity-building and the state response component
11. **Manipulation-Proof:** Human Rights Defenders are human. While most operate with integrity and are often in real danger and need, there are instances where some unscrupulous characters try to game the system through crying wolf simply to gain access to resources, especially when knowing that other HRDs have been

assisted financially during critical times. The protection mechanisms must find effective ways of separating the weed from chaff, the genuine from the ingenious, and the real needy cases and opportunistic attempts at self-aggrandisement.



2. General Country Context & Attendant Risks for HRDs



Zimbabwe celebrated its 40th Independence anniversary on 18 April 2020. Since independence, the country has been governed by the liberation movement the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Up to November 2017, the late former President, Robert Mugabe, had led the administration of the country, only ceding to a successor administration led by Emmerson Mnangagwa after a military supported veto-palace coup dubbed “Operation Restore Legacy.” Both administrations stand widely accused of undemocratic governance, gross human rights violations, economic mismanagement, and shrinking civic and political space. This has perpetuated the sense of Zimbabwe as a pariah state, shunned by international finance capital and sanctioned by the West.

Following the 2017 coup there was widespread hope for a new start, democratic and economic reforms as well as greater respect for human rights and expansion of civic space. However, this hope was short-lived through the emergence of a contorted Executive-Military-Business compact which has mimicked capture of the State by military elites and business cartels.

2.1 Militarised Policing and its impact on HRDs

Zimbabwe’s political environment has been consistently tense and characterised over time by heightened overt military involvement in civilian life. This has been manifest since independence and is often attributed to the political nature of the militaries (two former guerrilla armies and a formal army) that merged to form the Zimbabwe National Army post independence. The military’s guerrilla elements were clearly ideological and political on account of their trainings and participation in the struggle for independence as political commissars, and often the main representatives of their parties that citizens encountered in rural Zimbabwe pre-independence. The Rhodesian army component was also ideological and political and had served as the blunt instrument that protected the Rhodesian Front’s power and white supremacy’s violent enforcer. The coming together of these armies as characterised situation yielded numerous laments around the politicisation of the military which over time interpellated into the militarisation of politics as the was often deployed to deal with dissent and political opponents as was the case in 2008. Part of the Zimbabwean context, ergo was that the ruling party ZANU-PF had an army

which it used to safeguard its hold on power. However, post the coup in 2017, the relationship appears to have been inverted with the army acquiring greater control of civilian politics and the ruling party, transitioning from a position where the ruling party had an army to one where the army had a ruling party.

Since the coup in 2017, the military has had a near-permanent presence at checkpoints on major highways, and there has been increased military intelligence incorporation into central intelligence operations and the ruling party, ZANU-PF. Beyond this presence, the new executive construct led by “military men” has increasingly deployed the army to conduct policing, especially during protests with dire consequences to protestors. In part the human rights infractions and deaths that have occurred, as will be shown below, stem from the reality that the military has been deployed in Zimbabwe to police the population but without losing their warrior and command culture which bodes poorly for civilian control outside of combat zones.

At least thrice, since coming to power, the Mnangagwa government has deployed the army to suppress protests. On 1 August 2018 the army moved in to quell protests over delays in release of election results and fears of vote rigging. It killed six (6) people. The killings led to the institution of an International Commission of Inquiry led by former South African President, Kgalema Mhlangane. The Mhlangane Commission recommended the reform of Zimbabwe’s laws and prosecution of those responsible for the violence. It also recommended the retraining of police to be professional and non-partisan, and to take action against the members of the security forces responsible for the killing of six civilians during the protest. In 2019, November 2017 coup announcer and now Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retired Lieutenant-General Dr Sibusiso Moyo, speaking on progress regarding the Mhlangane Commission recommendations remarked that:

Zimbabwe has rapidly begun the task of implementing the Commission’s key recommendations – that include reforming legislation on law and order, freedom and liberalisation of the media and electoral reform....We can expect prosecutions of those responsible to begin next year, after the police and prosecution services have completed their post-inquiry investigations.



The irony of Moyo’s statement was that it occurred over a year after the Mhlangane Commission and nine months after the government had again deployed the military to deal with protest with worse consequences than the 1 August shootings. In January 2019, the army shot 18 protestors dead following demonstrations against economic hardships and the arbitrary increase in fuel tariffs by the Mnangagwa administration. It used live ammunition to disperse civilian protestors despite the Mhlangane Commission’s exhortations.

In both instances, the 1 August 2018 and January 2019 shootings, the Zimbabwe Peace Project reported in its monthly monitoring report, whose August 2020 edition was titled “Is this freedom?” that

victims and families of those killed and injured when soldiers opened fire on unarmed protesting ... were still to get any recourse in the form of compensation, prosecution of perpetrators, or at the very least, an apology.

2.2 Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) and Instrumentalization of the Law and security agencies

In July 2020, the Zimbabwe government again deployed the army on to the streets amidst a lockdown and curfew instituted on 18 July 2020 ostensibly as part of COVID-19 restrictions but following calls for protest against corruption, human rights violations and other ills by opposition political leader Jacob Ngarivhume and others. Despite the right to protest being constitutionally protected, and the absence of real cause, Ngarivhume, journalist Hopewell Chin'ono, and opposition activist Godfrey Kuraone were arrested for inciting public violence on Twitter for calling for or supporting calls for protest, and endured long incarcerations. Their arrests and others that followed were nothing more than SLAPPs aimed at removing the wind from the sails of the 31 July protests.

On 27 July 2020 police released the names of 14 HRDs and political activists that they “wanted to interview” around the 31 July planned protests and appealed to the public for information on their whereabouts. Several HRDs on the police wanted list reported attempted abductions while Obert Masaraure of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), Peter Mutasa of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Godfrey Tsenengamu of the Front for Economic Emancipation Zimbabwe (FREEZ) revealed home invasions, break-ins and physical assaults on their families.

Over 20 other people, who answered the call to protest and staged solitary or small group demonstrations on 31 July, were also arrested and charged for participating in a public gathering with intention to promote public violence, breach of peace or bigotry as defined in Section 37(1)(b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. They were also saddled with charges of unnecessary movement during the COVID-19 National Lockdown without any exemption, with prosecutors pressing a charge of contravening section 4(1)(a) of the Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) Order Statutory Instrument 77/2020. While Opposition MDC Alliance Spokesperson, Fadzai Mahere, was amongst those arrested, the bulk, including award-winning author Tsitsi Dangarembga, were ordinary citizen activists and HRDs who participated in the demonstration in solidarity with arrested activists and calling against amendments to the

Constitution. All the above were remanded out of custody on bail and their criminal cases were ongoing at the time of writing.

Between March 2020 and 18 September 2020, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGOs Forum in their report COVID-19 & Human Rights 180 Days of what? reported a spike in the number of reprisals against HRDs and documented at least 280 cases of assault and torture, 20 attacks on journalists, 53 unlawful arrests, 12 abductions, 57 displacements of HRDs, and 2 incidents involving the firing of live ammunition in Chitungwiza and Hwange. In part, these reprisals continued because Zimbabwe's legal framework is replete with repressive legislation which impedes HRD work. These include:

- the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act of 2020 which replaced the equally repressive Public Order and Security Act (POSA)
- Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (The Code).
- Freedom of Information Act of 2020, which repealed the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) although some of its elements are yet to be replaced by two statutes which were still under development at the time of writing.

Despite ongoing reviews to some of these pieces of legislation, indications are that they will be replaced by equally draconian laws. In addition, the government of Zimbabwe has tabled motions to amend the Constitution through Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Bill, a move that HRDs have resisted leading to protests and arrests of activists like Namatai Kwekweza and Vongai Zimudzi of WELEAD organisation.

A Note on 31 July Protests & the #ZimbabweanLivesMatter Campaign

In the aftermath of the State's thwarting of the 31 July protests, Amnesty International noted that: The brutal assault on political activists and human rights defenders who have had the courage to call out alleged corruption and demand accountability from their government is intensifying [in Zimbabwe]. The persecution of these activists is a blatant abuse of the criminal justice system and mockery of justice. This latest witch-hunt and repression of peaceful dissent is a continuation of what we have seen in

the country in recent years, including the abductions and arbitrary arrests of those who are critical of the government, in an attempt to muzzle differing views. The thwarting of the protest illustrates the Zimbabwean authorities' total intolerance of criticism.

The pre-emptive State action around 31 July 2020 (arrests and bringing the army onto the streets to stop the demonstration) demonstrated high levels of State paranoia, fear of mass action, and as Amnesty International pointed out, intolerance to dissent. The State overreacted to nip any form of protest in the bud, and while characteristic of the formal arms of the State, for some time, ZANU-PF as a non-state actor had taken a back seat but ahead of 31 July protests it issued threats and demonstrated counter organisation to deal with their "common enemies" i.e. Civil Society Organisations, HRDs and the opposition political parties.

Nonetheless, the above state of affairs resulted in concerted international reputational pressure on the government of Zimbabwe, encapsulated through the online campaign, #ZimbabweanLivesMatter. This campaign, which started trending in the first week of August, saw hundreds of celebrities and social influencers, former heads of state and political leaders from across the globe calling-out the Zimbabwean government and expressing concern on human rights violations. The biggest political cost to emerge from this for the Zimbabwean state, was the united South African voice of concern and declaration of a political crisis in Zimbabwe, across party lines.

All the major South African parties (African National Congress-ANC, Economic Freedom Fighters-EFF and the Democratic Alliance-DA) staged interventions, and the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, appointed two envoys, Dr Sydeney Mufamadi and Ms Baleka Mbete, to investigate the veracity of the claims of human rights abuses. The South African intervention received support from the African Union, which South Africa also chaired at the time. The #ZimbabweanLivesMatter campaign also attracted immense local online citizen support and gained institutional support from CSOs and local

political parties.

On 14 August 2020, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) released a pastoral letter which was later read out during church services on Sunday 16 August 2020. In the letter, the Bishops outlined a multi-layered crisis, citing corruption and divisive leadership, as major national constraints. They lent support to the #ZimbabweanLivesMatter campaign, and proposed a Comprehensive National Settlement Framework that is victim led based on international norms, constitutionalism and the rule of law. They also called for a new social contract based on inclusive national economic vision, broad based national humanitarian and emergency responses as well as an intention to mend international relations.

The #ZimbabweanLivesMatter and the pastoral letter were major new developments in Zimbabwe's politics. Pastoral letters have been issued in other contexts as a channel for the people's voice. However, the government of Zimbabwe's responses to the Bishops and the #ZimbabweanLivesMatter movement were also indicative of the danger that both the clergy and laity as HRDs are in in Zimbabwe's deteriorating human rights context.

The preceding context provides a birds eye-view to a difficult context with serious ramifications on HRDs work and well-being. This broad context shows clear and present challenges for HRDs, and how they generally operate in a context of heightened personal risk of physical and political assault through consistent harassment, unwarranted arrests and long detentions as well as slurs, hounding and vilification. HRDs in Zimbabwe have had to take various evasive, self-preservation as well radical action to claw back on the intended deleterious effects of the contextual realities highlighted above. However, while the panel of responses has been broad, often enough, the dangers that come with such a context have led to the reduction in HRD activity as HRDs are forced to self-censor and limit actions for fear of upsetting the state in pursuit of self-preservation. This fear and self-limiting approach has also translated inadvertently to the communities that HRDs work with, making it more difficult, for those that continue to dare, to engage and program on human rights.

Organisations and HRDs that brave the context and continue programming sometimes find themselves, at best, as of targets of Government Owned NGOs (GONGOs) who disrupt meetings, hackle and threaten speakers and participants. At worst, HRDs fall victim to enforced disappearances (Abductions), torture, long incarcerations and trials during which they are often subjected to inhumane and degrading treatments. Quite a bit of these reprisals are often instigated by state officials whose sentiments are treated as dog whistles by their supporters. The Head of State, has on numerous occasions threatened HRDs, with other members of the ruling party following suit, and their supporters acting on this instigation.

An often under-highlighted consequence of the above context and its attendant victimisation of HRDs has been poor mental health and psychological trauma. While physical assault and physical health challenges are often highlighted and addressed, psychological trauma and poor mental health are often ignored by both the HRDs and response mechanism. HRDs often ignore or do not immediately see these as challenges worth addressing or do but are ashamed of admitting that they are mentally hounded by their experiences, further impacting their ability to operate effectively as HRDs because of the limited self-care that is a corollary of this attitude.

A Note on HRD Operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The year 2020 was confronted by an unprecedented global and transboundary outbreak that had deleterious effects on health systems, public health and the economy. A viral pneumonia later named Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) spread across the world leading the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and upgrading this to a pandemic on 11 March 2020. As the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network noted, COVID-19 did not just affect health and economies, it also had serious negative effects and implications on rights and politics as well as civic space. In response to the pandemic Zimbabwe declared a state of national disaster on 17 March 2020, with Statutory Instrument (SI) 76, as well as SI 83 of 2020 providing the legal force

and implementation *modus operandi* (MO). These instruments banned all public gatherings gave the state wide-ranging emergency powers, instituted restrictions on human rights, and increased surveillance on the population with limited to no legal constraints, checks and balances. The limited checks and balances created room for corrupt public service procurement process and led to the ostensible “weaponizing of COVID-19” to deal with perceived opposition and close civic space under cover of COVID-19 restrictions, lockdowns, quarantines, isolation and curfews. This was despite WHO’s exhortation for countries to “strike a fine balance between protecting health, minimising economic and social disruption, and respecting human rights.” Instead there was a recorded escalation of human rights violations with over 105,000 citizens arrested by July 2020 for “unnecessary movement” and breaking lockdown provisions. A significant proportion of those arrested were HRDs, civic and opposition activists.

Outside being instrumentalised and weaponised, the COVID 19 pandemic was disruptive and gave HRDs an opportunity to reflect on and build alternative strategies, tactics, tools, platforms and ways of working on human rights issues and advocacy. The increased relevance of social media and digital spaces beyond the traditional ones provided HRDs with a chance of shaping the narrative using alternative platforms that were not victims of traditional media capture. These “new” approaches had spin offs that enhanced, in some respects, HRDs online visibility as a protection mechanism and the increased reliance on recording and streaming live events and incidents as part of recording and preserving evidence. For instance, the arrests of Hopewell Chin’ono and that of Fadzai Mahere referenced above were recorded live, while the abduction of Tawanda Muchehiwa by the so called Ferret Squad was reconstructed using

CCTV footage. The internet and digital story telling showed tremendous potential around fast distribution of information, improving real time reporting of risks and violations as well as documenting them as well as to crowd source and crowdfund initiatives.



Context analysis from the perspective of HRDs

Political

1. Shrinking civic, democratic and civil society space.
2. Long history of human rights violations, intolerance, crackdowns and impunity.
3. An insensitive executive leadership.
4. Systematic abuse of state power and machinery to repress HRDs.
5. Weak opposition political parties exposing HRDs to state reprisals and targeting as they hold the authorities to account.
6. Weak state institutions such as Parliament and lack of separation of powers removes check and balances of use of state power, including the monopoly to deploy violence.
7. Captured and partisan security sector (police, army, prison services, intelligence).
8. Limited support from regional institutions and contagion effect of human rights violations in the region.
9. Instrumentalization of COVID-19 lockdown measures to local down democratic discontent.
10. Increase in anti-rights/undemocratic groups nonstate actors like Citizens' Forum.
11. Ruling party members who misrepresent the work of CSO to communities.
12. Hostility and criminalisation of HRDs and their work.
13. Limited state-HRD engagement due to labelling (regime change agents or puppets of the West).
14. State media vilification and dog whistling.

15. Unhealthy competition among HRDs, coupled with mutual de-campaigning.
16. Favouring of male HRDs over female HRDs in support provision.
17. Informal partisan vetting culture which is not rights-based.

Socio-Economic

1. Increased state financial surveillance through monetary and fiscal policy requirements.
2. HRDs are subjected to socioeconomic exclusion and ostracization, including denial of public social welfare programs such as food aid, especially in rural areas.
3. Economic collapse.
4. HRDs' unhealthy situation of donor dependency.
5. HRDs' indiscretions and compromised personal relations with the state's operatives-placing themselves in harm's way and at risk of revealing sensitive information and being manipulated wittingly or unwittingly.
6. Job insecurity for NGO staff exposing HRDs to possible recruitment, incorporation and compromise by the state, compromising the security of HRDs.
7. Limited and shrinking support /funding for NGOs that provide frontline support resulting in unsustainable institutions and temporary support for HRDs, even when loses include loses to economic wherewithal.
8. HRDs living in constant fear of surveillance and vulnerability to invasions of privacy in social set ups, including honey traps and compromising of their families.

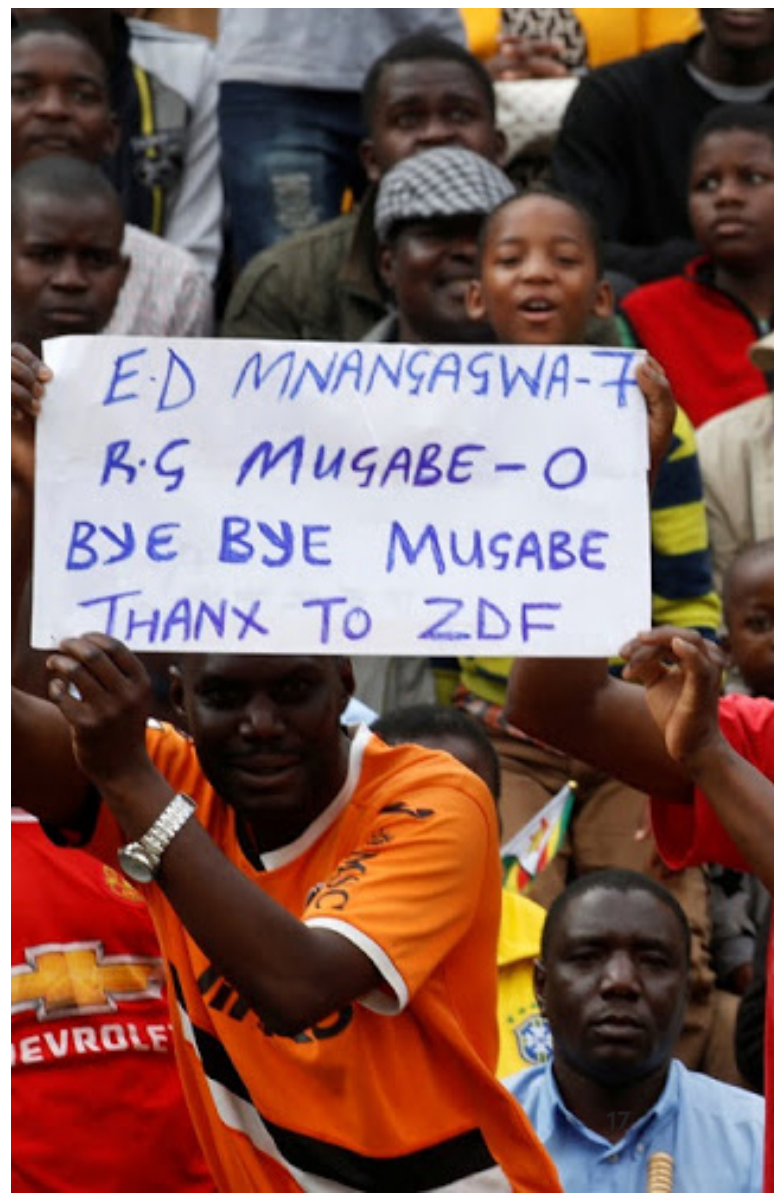
9. New trends of ransoming relatives of HRDs in exchange for HRDs handing themselves over to the state.
10. Breakdown in the public service delivery has also affected HRDs, including infrequent water for their offices.
11. Constant monetary policy changes which affect smooth flow of work.
12. De-prioritisation of activism, HRD work and political engagement on account economic hardships which force HRDs to operate on socio-economic survivalist basis.
13. Limited funding limiting HRDs ability to provide full range of care resulting in inadequate service both at technically, materially and geographically.

Legal

1. State use of pseudo-legal strictures to restrict the work of HRDs including the requirement that NGOs need MoUs to enter certain areas.
2. Manipulation of tax laws and policies to siphon money from NGOs.
3. State interference with NGO work through enacting legislation and orders such as the registration of NGOs and restrictions on offshore bank accounts and support by the High Court.
4. Prosecution for the purposes of persecuting HRDs (criminal prosecution and misinterpretation of the law to weaponize it against HRDs).
 1. For instance the authorities have been interpreting the Public Order and Security Act to suggest that citizens should obtain permission to demonstrate whereas the legal position is that they must only notify the police.
5. Long incarceration and low resolution of HRDs' cases before the courts, including unwarranted denial of bail.

Technological

1. The major technological challenge has been increased surveillance by the state including tapping of phone calls, hacking digital communities, and attack on websites.
2. HRDs have been unable to afford technology due to the economic environment or lack of connectivity in the areas. The cost of data has also been a prohibitive factor.
3. Rise of anti-rights social media trolls bent on harassing and attacking HRDs through fake news.
4. Rise in internet shutdowns or disruptions by the authorities and laws to restrict the cyber space.





2.5 Extended Challenges for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)

The challenges highlighted above generally impact HRDs in Zimbabwe negatively but WHRDs face additional challenges, problems and vulnerabilities as a result of their gender. As the Women and Law in Southern Africa (WILSA) noted in their October 2020 Position paper: The freedoms of association, assembly and expression in Zimbabwe

It is a fact of recognition that most of the social activists who have been demanding human rights and good governance in recent times are women. Correlatively, most of those arrested and treated in extralegal ways are women. Women human rights defenders have thus far been targeted because they are women who are defending human rights. These have been targeted by virtue of being women and the misconception that they are weak and can easily be intimidated into submission.

Outside the above, it is common cause that women are generally disproportionately affected by human rights infractions, including socio-economic rights by virtue of their reproductive roles and gender dynamics in patriarchal societies. In Zimbabwe's case, as elsewhere, women's participation in emotional labour and care work at various levels have also placed them on the frontlines of human rights infractions and placed them as HRDs on labour matters at the sharp end of the rebuttal sticks. A case in point are the retributions against striking nurses at various points over the last couple of years in Zimbabwe. In addition the following issues emerged as peculiar to WHRD:

1. A particular set of slurs such body-shaming, sextortion, sexual assault including rape, and name-calling (including profanities) are often used to intimidate, discourage and harass WHRD.
2. During long incarcerations, WHRDs are often subjected to unhygienic facilities without the relevant amenities such as sanitary wear and bins. As such beyond abuse of their human rights through the general ways highlighted in section 3.1 – 3.3, their Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) are also adversely affected.
3. This assessment also revealed that WHRDs are often overlooked in provision of protection in times of risk or danger. When danger arises, men often coordinate

with other men leaving women vulnerable. WHRDs highlighted a case from the January 2019 protests highlighted in section 3.2. when a lot of HRDs had to flee Zimbabwe to safety in neighbouring countries following a crackdown and threats. Women, including the ones that held leadership roles in HRD organisations received limited attention and assistance while their male counterparts in similar institutions and circumstances got assistance.

- In addition when male HRDs in both rural and urban areas flee from their homes they leave women and children exposed to danger. This danger continues to be heightened as the state security apparatus increasingly uses wives, sisters or mothers of HRDs as a bait to force HRDs out of hiding.
4. Outside emergencies, WHRDs also revealed that they were also often neglected when HRD trainings occurred including those on safety and security in the practice of human rights work. The perception is that WHRDs have to be informally connected to men to access some protection mechanisms, creating the impression that HRD work is male-centric and gender biased.
 5. WHRDs issues as well as issues relating to women and girls seldom occupy centre space in human rights discourses and engagements and as a result are left out of policy and action prescription from both states and nongovernmental organisations.
 6. The militarisation of politics and the state is also replicated in mainstream social movements and HRD organisations posing a unique challenge to effective participation of WHRD. The militant nature of civic engagement and the perception of HRD work as acts of bravery and resistance can feed into longstanding patriarchal traditions of women as "weak" and not fit to engage in human rights defence work. This trend towards favouring militant forms of activism (demonstrations, and brave confrontations with the state) was picked out as one of the key inhibitors of effective women's participation on account of male HRDs thinking this is the only best way to engage as well as women HRDs often shying away from the space of the brutal nature of engagements.

There is a clear need to develop, stage and promote safe spaces for WHRDs in NGO and social movement spaces' initiatives around HRDs and protection. In addition, a

deliberate gendered approach to characterising and analysing civic space and HRD needs and capacities, is warranted. This also includes the need for the inclusion of a gendered approach and women's involvement in HRD conversations and action to ensure that HRD protection mechanism and approaches deal with structural inequalities between men and women in society that have for too long not just been long standing but also outstanding.

2.6 Actors Enabling And Disabling HRDs' Work In Zimbabwe

The context and its attendant risks identified in Section 3 show a dire state of affairs for HRDs in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, the context is contested and while HRDs work is impeded by detractors there are also other actors who assist to enable HRDs to do the best they can with the difficult situation. In this section we try to highlight both sets of actors and reveal the complex character of the Zimbabwean context through the reality of some actors appearing on both lists of enablers and disablers of HRD work. Besides showing the complex nature of the context, the reality of some broad categories of actors as both threats and supporters of HRDs defies over generalisations in characterising actors and the deployment of a single story narrative and simplistic analysis of the dynamic Zimbabwean context. Table 4-1 lists some of the local and international actors perceived by HRDs as being supportive of HRD work.

Local Actors

1. Constitutional commissions like ZHRC, NPRC, Zimbabwe Gender Commission-Election observatory.
2. Independent Media
3. Cooperative Government Officials
4. Ordinary people
5. Parliamentary Portfolio Committees e.g. Health and Childcare
6. Courts

7. Members of Parliament

8. Chiefs

9. Councillors

10. WARDCOs, VIDCOs

International Actors

1. International human rights networks e.g. SAHRDN, Frontline
2. UN Organisations e.g. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Southern Africa, UN Human Rights Adviser for Zimbabwe
3. Regional civil society networks
4. Leader Development Exchange Institutions
5. Development Partners e.g. Ford Foundation, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, Wallace Global Fund etc.

The outline of local actors supportive of or considered enablers by Zimbabwean HRDs also shows the variation across context and actors who are otherwise similar. Several HRD organisations in Zimbabwe have signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with constitutional commissions like the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC). They feel that there is ample space to share information and influence the ZHRC's human rights reports. A similar situation exists with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC). Cooperation and support also exists but to a limited extent with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) which is often engaged around the right to vote and licenses civics and HRDs to conduct voter education as part of civic education. However, the same doesn't apply to the Zimbabwe Media Commission and the jury is still out on the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). The foregoing suggests that the level of collegiality and cooperation depends on the specific human rights issues that HRDs will be working on. This is true not only of constitutional commissions but also other bodies like parliament. For instance, where parliament is concerned, HRDs in Zimbabwe reported that the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of Health and Childcare (PPCH) was

responsive to issues and supportive on rights issues related to health. However, on issues related to civil and political rights parliament in general and its committees offers limited support, responses and avenues for engagement.

The variation in the ability of actors to support the work of HRDs is also seen at local government level where some traditional and local government institutions such as the Village Development Committee (VIDCOs), Ward Development Committees (WARDCOs) as well as headmen and chiefs have been flagged as enabling some HRDs while inhibiting others incumbent on issues as well as location. The same also applies to courts, media and international development partners..

The actors impeding HRDs work and posing significant risk cut across the state and nonstate actors divide. Some occupy a grey zone in that they are suspected to be but do not identify themselves as agents of the state. The table below shows an indicative list of actors mentioned by HRDs as the major contributors to restrictions, risks and shrinking civic space, and also outlines the general modus operandi for the two groups outlined.

ACTORS IMPEDING AND INCREASING RISKS FOR HRDS & THEIR WORK

State Actors

1. Security Agents(ncies)
 - Zimbabwe Republic Police
 - Zimbabwe National Army
 - Central Intelligence Organisation
 - Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services
2. State media
3. The President's Office
4. Government Ministers
5. Judiciary
6. Traditional leaders
7. Local government actors

Non-State Actors

1. Vigilante groups (e.g. Al Shabab, Chipangano)
2. Negative NGOs, Government-owned NGOs, pro-state groups (e.g. Citizens Forum, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Justice, ZICOSU, Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Associations)
3. Social media trolls (e.g. Varakashi)
4. Partisan "Private" media (e.g. the Patriot e.t.c)
5. ZANU-PF members (Including the youth league, war veterans.
6. Ferret Squad (teams of suspected state agents responsible for abductions)

Instrumentalization of the law

1. Charges, arrests, long incarcerations and denials of bail out of custody.
2. Physical violence
3. Physical and administrative barring of HRD work (misapplication of the law or turning villages and other areas into inaccessible areas for NGOs)
4. Physical disruption
5. Deployment of Negative Narratives:
 - Vilification
 - Slurs,
 - smears
6. Abductions/Enforced disappearances
7. Surveillance

3. Extant HRD Protection Mechanisms & HRDs levels on (in) security in Zimbabwe



Arguably the first duty of any government is to protect its peoples. This duty is stipulated in international law and general norms of states and their claims to sovereignty. In pursuing their protection citizens (inclusive of HRDs) have a right and legitimate expectation to be protected by the state. The state must “go beyond simply refraining from interfering in peoples’ enjoyment of their rights” to “actively take steps to protect people who choose to associate, peacefully assemble and express themselves.” In this respect, state protection must shield citizens from reprisals and remove fear of the lack of freedom after expression and protection during public gatherings. Despite the preceding normative position, the Zimbabwean context is indicative of a state of affairs where the state has abrogated its duty to protect leading to violations and infractions. In addition these violations have been with limited to no repercussions allowing perpetrators to conduct illicit civic space shrinking activities with impunity. In the absence of effective protection by the state, HRDs have had to develop protection mechanisms, processes and modalities to safeguard their rights and security. Quiet a number of HRDs have invested in these aspects of HRD protection at

various levels as briefly outlined below.

3.1 Structured Protection Mechanisms for HRDs

1. **Human Rights Legal Defence Fund/Facility** which provides legal aid to HRDs in distress over human rights work. The primary actors on the legal side include the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, while other organisations like the Legal Resources Foundation, MISA, The Transparency International’s ALARC project, and the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association also provide ancillary legal services on specific issues often in specific locations. This mechanism has often suffered from the finite nature of resources with the ZLHR for instance operating with limited resources to respond in 2019 following early exhaustion of its fund due to the January 2019 protests and allied cases, as well as the deliberate prolonging of trials and long incarcerations of most of its clients over time.

2. **Medical and Psychosocial Support Facility** providing urgent medical and counselling care to HRDs: The primary actor responsible for this structured mechanism is the Counselling Services Unit (CSU), which operates with a network of clinics and medical practitioners with ancillary support from the Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR). This mechanism has been severely affected by shortage of resources and de-investment in the mechanism by some donors. Tree of Life has also been providing ancillary psychosocial support to victims of organised violence and torture.
3. **Social Safety Nets for HRDs** including the provision of infrastructural rehabilitation in case of property damage as reprisals for HRD work as well as support with material non-legal or medical needs of HRDs during incarceration. The Heal Zimbabwe Trust has programmed on the first element. However organisations that used to support the second element are largely defunct and those that specialise as listed in 1.1 and 1.2 are often unable to support with critical material needs due to both the specialisations as well as donor requirements. Often friends, family and individual organisations welfare departments have to deal with the social and material needs of HRDs, although at the height of repression in August 2020 the SAHRDN was able to establish a decentralised support mechanism to assist with increasing numbers of arrests of HRDs and to cater for the social and material wellbeing of activists.
4. **HRD retrievals & protection** including mechanisms to remove activists from harm's way and placing them in temporary protective safe houses or facilitating passage to safe haven in other towns or countries. While some local organisations like CSU have greatly assisted with this mechanism, it is usually the domain of regional and international support systems. Amongst those identified as operational in Zimbabwe were Frontline Defenders and the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network. This mechanism has often been challenged by issues of accessibility to HRDs in rural areas and not in the mainstream HRD networks. Most of these structured mechanisms come with hotline or emergency numbers that HRDs can use to access services. In addition the mechanisms also often work as referral networks to each other depending on the HRD needs at the time of interest.
5. **Capacity Building & Other Protection Measures for HRDs:** There are several capacity building initiatives aimed at enhancing HRD protection in Zimbabwe which are allied to the standing mechanisms mentioned above. These include:
 - i. Physical security trainings aimed at making HRDs aware of their environment, avoiding danger and knowing their rights after or during arrest.
 - ii. Digital security trainings, including the provision of software for data and equipment (laptops or mobile phones) protection.
 - iii. Access control to HRD offices restricting access, Stationing security guards and Installing closed circuit television monitors (CCTV) have been offered to HRDs.

3.2 Levels of (in)security & Periods of increased vulnerability

Despite the existence of self-instituted protection mechanisms, HRDs levels of insecurity in Zimbabwe are quite high. This heightened insecurity is on account of several factors including the following:

1. **The dereliction of duty on the responsibility to protect** by the state has led to heightened level of insecurity amongst HRDs in Zimbabwe. Most HRDs feel so insecure that if they haven't already been targeted they believe that "it is only a matter of time before they become victims."
2. **The futility of physical security measures:** HRDs believe that the state and other nonstate actors have the ability to get to them regardless of any physical security measures, like security guards at their residences or offices, that may put in place to stem vulnerability. The police and other security agents have often conducted raids at offices and homes without search warrants and undeterred by physical and human barriers. HRDs also believe that "safe houses" are no longer safe because these have been raided before leading to hesitancy and doubt around the reliability of these facilities to offer protection. There is thus, a general sense amongst HRDs that the infrastructure of Safe Houses needs revamping as there are now limited places safe and away from state surveillance.

3. Trust deficits amongst HRDs also increase the perceptions of risk. There is a sense amongst HRDs in Zimbabwe that the levels of state security infiltration are high in human rights organisations and mainstream NGOs. As a result, HRDs are often wary of other “HRDs” whom they believe are either agents of the state, or are so compromised that they become informants to state security.

The risk and vulnerability of HRDs in Zimbabwe increases with the onset of major political moments and events like elections and mass demonstrations. Below are brief outlines of the circumstances and moments when risk and vulnerability increases.

i. Elections: Elections in Zimbabwe are moments of great contestation and confrontation amongst political protagonists as well as ordinary citizens. Tensions rise and election related violence and reprisals against perceived opponents are high placing HRDs at risk due to sponsored narratives of them as regime change agents. During electoral period, HRDs are often in the direct line of fire as they are usually involved in promoting the right to vote through various processes including assisting candidates with the nomination processes, providing communities with voter education, observing the electoral process and or running Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) or Sample based Observation (SBO).

ii. Mass demonstrations and popular resistance: Section 59 of the Zimbabwean Constitution states that “Every person has the right to demonstrate and to present petitions, but these rights must be exercised peacefully.” Despite the existence of this right, when challenged by way of protest, the Zimbabwean state has tended to respond with brutality increasing the levels of harm, vulnerability and risk to HRDs. In most instances the state’s security apparatus usually goes on witch hunts of perceived key organisers ahead of planned protests and tries to pre-empt and foil protests. It is these attempts that have often led to compromising the security of HRDs through abductions, vilification, unwarranted arrests and threats. HRDs are regularly accused of being behind protests (organisationally and financially) making them targets for the above actions and reprisals.

iii. Providing other HRDs support/solidarity: Providing support to victims and HRDs through the structured mechanisms mentioned in 5.1 also increases risk and vulnerability for HRDs. Doctors are often at risk for providing medical support, lawyers for providing legal support, and civil society for documenting violations and using the information of international advocacy. In addition, those incarcerated in police custody are usually also vulnerable further abuse and are at heightened risk of torture and other inhuman and degrading treatments.

iv. Economic downturn and social unrest: The other period of risk is when the economic challenges in the country are biting. When there is increased anger amongst the people who are raising their voices to demand accountability, it triggers violent response from the state. The respondents highlighted that the challenges Zimbabwe is going through may lead the state to attempt to finish off all voices of dissent.



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4. HRDs' Response to Repression & Risk Mitigation Approaches



Zimbabwean HRDs have employed several strategies and approaches to mitigate risk and counter repression as well as closing civic, democratic and civil space as shown in the table below.

Resistance	Stepping Up Solidarity
<p>HRDs have employed strategies to resist repression and counter the intended effects of cowing them into submission and compliance through intimidation. Under this response framework, HRDs refused to have either themselves as individual and organisational actors silenced and continued acting against state intransigence and made public condemnations of irregular state conduct. This included litigating against infractions and unconstitutional conduct as well as unapologetically promoting human rights including through international advocacy to increase political costs and reputational pressure. HRDs have also attempted to communicate and organise better through providing counter-narratives to hostile media profiles, and constant organising of HRDs. This strategy has mostly been forwarded by the Unions (e.g. ARTUZ & ZCTU) and health professionals who have consistently demonstrated and called for strike action, as well as other NGOs like ERC and ZLHR who have litigated on several matters. People Power Movement "Respect our existence OR expect our resistance"</p>	<p>HRDs have stepped up their solidarity building actions locally and in the region. Anticipated state and nonstate repression occasioned the need for preventative protection, including the establishment of rapid response funds and pre-emptive safety nets that catered for various HRD needs inclusive of legal, social, safety and material needs. This solidarity building framework allowed HRDs to receive assistance beyond legal services once arrested on in anticipation of arrests or abductions and moved beyond press statements to provide humanitarian support to victims beyond medical and legal assistance. This approach also included political solidarity with HRDs speaking up for each other within and across countries, adding to the reputational pressure that was central to the resistance frame. Gaps in this approach include limited support for psychosocial support for victims as well as sustained integration of livelihoods support for HRDs and victims of violence through income-generating projects to counter the effects of patronage. International solidarity was also pinpointed as an important enhancement of HRDs protection.</p>

Building Capacity for Personal Protection

HRDs acknowledged that risk management and personal security started at the level of personal responsibility. HRD organisations, have within a limited frame trained HRDs on situational analysis, including the ABCs of arrest. However, some HRDs felt that the current security training was inadequate because it was common-sensical and only scratched the surface. They suggested a more extensive approach to capacity building for HRDs on the full range of threats, including marriage invasion, honey-traps, offer of positions, digital breaches and loans from potential threats, On a regular basis with the curriculum refreshed to incorporate new threats as well as be practice. It was emphasised that the morality of HRDs was a security threat. There was need for investment in hardware and software that enable security compliance.

Closing loopholes in HRDs' operations

HRDs highlighted that one of the key element to their safety was making sure that their work had integrity including evidence-based advocacy and operational probity in complying with regulatory requirements. However some of the regulations are stifling and deliberately made hard to comply with as they had the effect of negating the work of HRDs. As one HRD said, "our work will stand up in a court of law, in a medical review and in any kind of ethical review." The other area identified as needing attention was tax compliance. In an environment of scarce resources some HRDs indicated that it may be prudent to consider crowdfunding as part of local philanthropy to support human rights work.

4.1 Other ways HRDs could use to lessen the impact of contextual risks and vulnerability

In addition to the mitigation approaches referenced above, the following were also flagged as ways of lessening the impact of impeding actors and contextual risks' impact on HRDs and their work in Zimbabwe.

1. Community mobilisation and awareness. This helps communicates respond, lessening, say, the disappearance of HRDs or attacks at their homes.
2. Evidence-Based Advocacy: Ensuring that HRDs base their work, actions, advocacy and other interventions on a solid evidence-base. Strong empirical evidence which is hard to dispute and plain for everyone to see can be disarming and should go beyond testimonies to concrete evidence like video and oral evidence with cases situated in sound legal, constitution, international law.
3. Narratives & Story telling: In part effective gathering of solid empirical evidence to support the work and actions of HRDs also has to be supported by effective communication of the same through effective communication and storytelling methods beyond press statements to include other modes of popular digital story telling in audio and visual formats. This approach will assist in popularising HRDs' narratives as well as mitigate and claw back on state sponsored negative narratives on HRDs meant to delegitimise HRDs.
4. Maintaining HRDs' Integrity: Related to narratives and storytelling is a need for HRDs to respond effectively to issues that have an impact on their integrity and credibility. Part of this process also entails HRDs maintaining "neutrality", impartiality and non-partisanship in the conduct of their work.
5. Conflict resolution and amicable settlement of differences: Physical attacks on HRDs as well as attacks on their integrity doesn't always come from adverse forces. They also come from other HRDs as part of an insidious NGO politics that is not undergirded by values and a solid mechanism for addressing differences as well as ensuring equitable distribution of opportunities and resources. HRDs need to minimise or avoid authoritarian and non-democratic practices in their institutions and also institute effective dispute resolution mechanisms in the sector which can mitigate differences turning into enmity with deleterious effects on HRDs integrity and well-being.
6. Pressuring the State on Best Practice: HRDs should exert pressure on the government to respect the Constitution and continue to fight for a stable operating environment. HRDs should continue holding the government accountable, testing the judiciary system through legal recourse, exposing corruption including through social media, use institutions provided by the constitution to seek justice, and bringing errant members of the security forces to court through litigation.

4.2 Mock-up of a Possible Risk Mitigation Strategy/Matrix

Risks	Mitigation
As CSOs move work online on ICT-based platforms like smartphones or laptops there is risk of hacking and surveillance	Use of secure online platforms (like Google for Non-Profits but currently not available for Zimbabwe)
Job insecurity creates a lot of security challenges and institutional stability.	Ensuring that HRDs organisations have staff retention and job security measures
Infiltration by state agents posing as HRDs	Information security and due-diligence training
HRDs organisations prosecution for non-compliance with statutory requirements such as tax requirements	Capacity-building of HRDs in tax compliance
State taking advantages of HRDs' personal indiscretion to set them up and discredit. Examples: reckless driving, honey traps and involvement in corrupt dealings	Training of HRDs to maintain high personal discipline (activist code) in both on-work and off-work settings
Emergence of divisions and activist classes due to exclusion of grassroots HRDs in protection mechanisms while catering for high-profile HRDs	Ensuring that protection mechanism cater are decentralised to include grassroots HRDs, including those in rural areas and small towns
State-led socioeconomic exclusion and ostracism in government programs especially of rural and grassroots activists, including denial of food aid.	Protection mechanisms that go beyond just responding to the political rights threats.
Losing credibility due to failure to be seen as impartial and non-partisan	HRDs organisations need to fiercely defend their impartiality and monitor the conduct of their staff
Physical harm targeting HRDs and their families Beatings, Rape , Abduction, Torture, Death, Enforced Disappearances, violence	Situational awareness by HRDs, legal, medical and psychosocial support to HRDs, as well as rapid response and retrieval of at-risk HRDs. Provision of safety nets. Bringing perpetrators to book.
Judicial persecution targeting HRDs and their families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and judicial persecution, harassment or Lawfare against individual HRDs as well as organisations Imprisonment 	Strengthening of mechanisms to use the law as a protection measure, use court process to expose infractions and search for justice. Court and prison solidarities beyond press statements.
Vilification, alienation from society and emotional abuse: Social media bullying, Media vilification, Body-shaming, Character assassination, Labelling e.g. using terms like sell-outs, regime change agents	Effective communication and shaping the narrative by HRDs in their own defence
Destruction and loss of property	Support to economically rehabilitate and restore loss Replacement of destroyed property
Restriction of access to communities	Ensuring that there are ways of engaging gatekeepers and disarming hostility including consistent non-partisanship
Breach to privacy through surveillance	Use of secure communication channels
Physical Raids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasion of places of residence Workplace raids 	Securing of workplace and residential areas of HRDs



5. HRD & Institutional Capacity Gaps and Needs



As shown in Section 4 the Zimbabwean HRD sector has a standing infrastructure for HRD protection that is segmented and partially coordinated. The extant protection mechanisms for HRDs include in some instances grassroots community monitors and social networks at local level that cover the country to detect threats and mitigate their impact. The biggest challenge for most HRD organisations that coordinate these mechanism is limited financial support to optimise the extant capacity and presence of these protection mechanisms.

To mitigate the impact of limited financial support, HRD organisations have often coalesced to take advantage of their different strengths to broaden and enhance operations as a robust unit. This coalescing, however, while enhancing service provision to HRDs continues to suffer from the challenge of scale due to stated financial challenges as briefly outlined as follows.

1. As such while the depth of services is increased due to working together, the breadth of services continues to be limited in various respects. In some instances, with HRDs away from metropolises (Harare and Bulawayo as well as Mutare, Masvingo and Gweru) often under serviced.
2. The challenges of scaling up service provision to HRDs also spreads beyond provision of legal, psychosocial and medical support. It also translates to opportunities limited opportunities for HRD communities working in the bucolic having fewer opportunities to benefit from regional advocacy opportunities through UN and African Human rights mechanisms as well as their access and ability to engage with and influence constitutional commissions.
3. Medical doctors working with HRDs expressed the need to expand the range of care they can provide. Some of the specific needs include:
 - I. resources for data collection, cleaning, organising and storage externally in case of internet shutdown.
 - II. communication gadgets,
 - III. refresher trainings in line with regional trends, and
 - IV. security training for staff and securing office spaces.
 - The medical practitioners also indicated that protection of HRDs a daily thing and HRDs needed resources to protect themselves at all times, including their homes and offices.

4. The need to build the capacity of local communities to provide HRDs protection using locally available resources in case of emergencies and the often cumbersome efforts required to access external support, and the long time lag between incident and arrival of support.
5. The need to strengthen the HRDs network in Zimbabwe through developing partners run programs to help capacity enhancement for information security and physical protection of HRDs.

5.1 Beneficiary Participation in the Development of Protection Measures

Participation is a cardinal element of pursuing development and accessing rights. It entails the right to voice up when there are challenges or shortcomings and to hold those presiding over systems accountable through dialogue and other embedded accountability mechanisms. Participation is so integral that participation of subjects on how and when decisions that affect their lives are made is considered integral amongst rights considered foundational and central to other rights. In this respect, when it comes to protection mechanisms, analysis of risk and development of mitigation measures, HRDs ought to have the right and that embrace the duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of measures that impact their security and wellbeing.

In Zimbabwe, HRDs' participation in HRD protection mechanisms is often as beneficiaries but with limited participation in the design and implementation of protection measures. The limited opportunities at design phases are often a result of the fact that protection mechanisms in Zimbabwe are already matured, fairly well developed and were designed a long time ago. As a result, some beneficiaries, especially at the level of community-based organisations revealed that they had limited to no participation in the design of the structured and institutionalised protection measures meant to be of benefit to them. In response, some HRD service providers confirmed that while they listened to HRDs, they retained the prerogative to make strategic decisions depending on the technical knowledge and understanding of the functioning of the service.

Beyond structured local protection measures, some grassroots HRD organisations revealed that they have participated in the design of interventions and worked with

institutions such as the Frontline Human Rights Defenders Network to assess the situation of HRDs and designing interventions. Others were able to identify the Zimbabwe HRDs ANA as an opportunity to impact HRD support service provision design and future implementation. In addition, there is some awareness amongst Zimbabwean HRDs that local HRDs are part of community early warning and response systems that monitor the human rights situation and gather information of HRDs at risk. These local monitors have often participated in the design of information gathering templates and have been equipped with communication gadgets to assist their monitoring efforts. HRDs have also participated in the training and design of the curriculum of other HRDs in personal security, including the ABCs of arrest.

One of the key findings of the Zimbabwe HRD ANA is the need to mainstream participation of HRDs in the design of protection mechanisms and to create opportunities for them to review existing mechanisms as both partners and beneficiaries of the mechanisms.

5.2 Risk Assessment, Vetting & Case Management

Given the continuous state of flux of the operating environment and its dynamic nature as outlined in section 3, some HRD organisations and their networks conduct context analyses on a fairly regular basis (some do it daily, fortnightly or monthly) to see how it affects the work of HRDs. These exercises are key to identifying and responding to threats. HRDs use various tools and methods to scan the environment including Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), Triangle Analysis, and basic brainstorming around key developments to help them adapt to the environment and develop strategies. HRDs also network with other organisations to gain their perspectives on situations and pick up new information which they use to adjust their efforts, programming and actions.

Beyond global risk assessments based on contextual understanding, trust and knowledge, i.e. "trusted sources" and "trusted information" are often the central means of assessing HRDs at risk and the central locus used in assessing risk. This access to "trusted sources" manifests in various ways a way of risk assessment as follows:

1. In some cases HRDs receive tip-offs about impending risks from state security insiders or other HRDs,

organisations or media with access to these state institutions. In these situations, HRDs often raise the alarm to stem impending attacks, although some such tip-offs can be unfounded leading to false alarms impacting negatively on HRD's credibility. This challenge has proved difficult to deal with for most HRDs as verifying information based on tip-offs by "friendly" forces within the state has often proved difficult to corroborate and verify. HRDs often chose to err on the side of caution and constant vigilance and alertness in such matters.

2. Some grassroots organisations have formed early warning and early response committees at community level to help with human rights monitoring. These networks help in collecting information needed in risk assessments and in triangulating and verifying reported cases of human rights violations. While this is commendable, some organisations admitted to not having a policy of assessing who is at risk, but measured risk on community members' requests for assistance. Thus the risk assessment process is needs-based depending on community-member requests for support rather than any scientific matrix to assess risk.
3. Some organisations stated that they were able to assess who is at risk because they worked with HRDs throughout the electoral cycle and knew people at the centre of organising and aspiring politicians likely to be targeted.
4. Lawyers were identified as key in verifying cases of HRDs at risk. If an HRD goes missing lawyers can access the nearest police station to see if it is an arrest. Local organisations also highlighted that they had been engaged by international HRDs protection institutions to vet a case and recommend support.

The above trust based assessments are integral in an environment like Zimbabwe's but they are not without their limitations. One of the challenges of trust-based systems is that it can often leave other HRDs behind regarding protection either because they are unknown to or not trusted by key informants at community level or mainstream HRD organisations. This can be mitigated by a merit based risk assessment matrix or system that is standardised to ensure that activists at risk are not left behind or fall through the holes of existing trust based frameworks.

Given the preceding, information about the HRDs at risk is available across a number of organisations and may be shared among organisation in protection networks on a need also based on trust. The said information is retrieved from communities through referenced relationships and networks. However, some respondents felt that HRDs were mainly identified as being at risk once arrested, and stated a need for a process that could identify such HRDs prior to calamity striking. In addition, there were some respondents who felt that there were grassroots organisations with key community persons who did not know of the networks with information on HRDs at risk and did not participate in regular situational analysis and referral networks.

5.3 Referrals Systems

As already highlighted there are existing structures and systems for HRD monitoring, referral and protection that have been in existence for over ten years. The HRD protection ecosystem involving lawyers, doctors, counsellors, archivers, local and regional advocacy experts and constitutional commissions has inbuilt inter-agency referral networks that bring together technical services and community links. Despite its long life, this system still needs better coordination as there are sometimes double referrals, or no referrals at all and sometimes responders don't respond believing someone else has responded. Nevertheless, the links that exist in the context of the referral system are both formal and informal, and work on the basis of who is best placed to provide a particular service. The inter-agency referral networks meet as regularly as twice a week to, among other things:

- i. Ensure all the cases are being dealt with
- ii. Limit double-dipping of support by HRDs.
- iii. Ensure that no cases are falling between the cracks
- iv. Facilitate support for families involved in cases,
- v. Collectively manage cases, although highly sensitive ones will not enter broader domain but managed by a few people, and
- vi. Assess the best protection for a person and how to implement it.

In these networks, community-based groups provide the infrastructure for monitoring. Some of the community organisations boast of over 5, 000 monitors and more than 250,000 members across Zimbabwe. Some of the technical service providers have been in existence for over 20 years and have processed over 75,000 people to date.

These systems also include national level hotlines for lawyers and safe houses. Sometimes these referrals link up with international organisations, especially in helping vet HRDs for support. However, despite being fairly formidable the referral system faces several challenges. Some of these are briefly described in the table below.

Challenge	Brief Description
1. Funding	The inadequacy and sometimes absence of funding for key elements of the referral networks and protection
2. Capacity-building	Absence of a sustainable way of capacitating individuals to defend themselves in the face of a clampdown and limited opportunities for ongoing training for organisations and individuals.
3. Physical security	Current referral networks limitations in protecting the physical security of HRDs offices or working spaces, as well as the physical security of families and homes especially in the face of heightened abductions.
4. Financial referrals	No clear financial referrals to augment the legal, medical and psychosocial support.
5. Delays	Some, at times, inordinate delays in the processing and the arrival of support especially from international organisations.
6. Mapping of HRDs	Gaps in mapping of HRDs especially where HRDs are in rural communities. HRDs were mainly protected at a national level. CBOs are scarcely involved in formal referral networks and regular situational analyses.
7. Transparency	Some HRDs stated difficulties in establishing the veracity of the existence of an HRD fund from civil society organisations and donors, partly due to concerns around confidentiality in certain circumstances.
8. Regional and international links	For HRDs at local levels there are no defined links with international protection networks. This gap became more defined when local HRDs are also at risk and running from danger such that they cannot provide protection at a national level
9. Unstable partnerships	Unstable partnerships which made referral networks intermittent depending on funding cycles.
10. Flexibility	Referral networks and protection systems sometimes are sometimes too inflexible to meet specific needs outside the designed protection measures. For instance, the collapse of institutions giving specific support to student activists left some of their needs unmet.
11. Coverage	Sometimes protection interventions did not meet the required extent due to limited funding and unavailability of staff.
12. Communication	There is a need to improve the adequacy of communication between HRDs, especially in marginalised communities, about the existence protection measures and how they can be accessed.
13. Unhealthy Interagency competition	Scarcity of resources has often led to unhealthy competition for funding amongst the various players who should be cooperating and collaborating, weakening local networks.
14. Decentralisation	Provincial organisations feel that referrals networks are not devolved enough to best serve marginalised communities, especially in rural areas.
15. State response and connection	Some HRDs feel that existing referral networks are inadequately geared towards triggering a response in the state system to end violations, while that has been identified as a key component of an effective referral system. However this could be as a result of the state's own resistance to the human rights discourse and position as a violator.
16. International links and coordination	It was established that there is no known coordination among international agencies in providing protection to HRDs in Zimbabwe

6. Towards An Improved and Effective HRDs Protection Mechanism



The different interlocutors engaged during the Zimbabwe HRD ANA shared a variety of ideas for enhancing the efficacy of existing HRD protection mechanisms s outlined below. A significant number of the recommendations are steeped in practice and experience and are foregrounded by HRDs' lessons learnt including the following five key reflections on HRDs protection:

1. Where HRD security is concerned, everything matters: There is an awareness around amongst HRDs and their organisations for constant vigilance of HRDs both at work and in social settings. This is because when it comes to HRD security and protection everything, including choice of recreational activities and areas, family environment, residential space, and HRD's personal morality, matters.
2. To enhance security and protection, HRDs need an informed personal solidarity network: HRDs recognise the importance of having a close personal network beyond work to ensure their safety and that of their loved ones which looks out for them and can raise necessary alarm should an incident occur off-work cite and in the personal space.
3. Means and channels of communication must be secure: HRDs recognise the importance of securing information, finding and using channels of communication that are secure through secure mobile applications to limit the possibilities of face the risk of hacking of their social media properties (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) and email accounts.
4. Rapid and effective communication of risk – the ability for raise alarm as soon as possible was highlighted, including being able to ensure one's own narrative of events are known. Failure to communicate will ensure that the perpetrator's narrative to make your story ignored.
5. Prevention is better than cure: Activist and HRD Retrievals: HRDs found the process of retrieving those at risk from the areas of danger was an effective preventative protection measure and was better than dealing with the aftermath of reprisals, victimisation and other outcomes of compromised activist security.

HRDs in Zimbabwe highlighted the following ten points as crucial elements of an effective HRDs protection mechanism in Zimbabwe.

1. Proactive and Anticipatory Protection/Early Warning

System: An effective protection mechanism must have a proactive and anticipatory approach to danger faced HRDs. This includes an early warning and early response system with the following elements;

- i. It should pick up the escalation of tensions in communities
- ii. It should have clear indicators of what constitutes impending danger
- iii. Is premised on contextual understanding of who HRDs are
- iv. Is anticipatory of the kind of threats HRDs are facing
- v. Has the means to provide proactive responses and diffuse threats
- vi. Is based on a clear understanding of the triggers of violations
- vii. Has some leverage within the state system on contacts that can de-escalate HRD danger.
- viii. Provides efficient communication of the threats and raises the costs of endangering HRDs;
- ix. Has clear links to the regional HRDs solidarity network.

2. Inter-agency/Service Providers collaboration: An effectively functioning HRDs protection mechanism must be characterised by inter-agency collaboration to ensure holistic provision of protection services including a diverse range of services (medical, legal, advocacy, and psychosocial support). Inter-agency collaboration should consider the following as key considerations for effective inter-agency collaboration:

- i. Having a few select case officers in the agencies
- ii. Keeping HRDs in-country rather than assisting

them to leave the country/to be exiles thus depleting rather than strengthening the network.

- iii. Trust-building among individuals and institutions, and developing a shared behavioural code to minimise risks through indiscretion

3. Information Gathering Systems: An effective HRDs protection mechanism must develop a scientific system of processing information beyond trust which includes:

- i. Information gathering based on structured and standardised tools.
- ii. Information analysis informed by observations in addition to intuition.
- iii. Solid verification means and triangulation of gathered data through various sources and creative ways of verification, like the use of investigative journalists at different levels

4. Mainstream Security Training and Risk assessment;

HRD protection mechanisms should mainstream the training of HRDs in self-protection mechanisms and situational awareness which also includes the following key elements;

- i. mainstreaming security training within organisations
- ii. constant risk assessment within organisations
- iii. Effective definition and documentation of security incidents.

5. Rapid Reaction And Response: HRDs protection mechanisms must develop ways of rapidly responding to security incidents. This means that the response by service providers such as lawyers must be swift. Where there should be retrievals, these have to be swiftly done. This can aided by and built on existing hotline infrastructure for key response institutions and replicating this framework at sub-national level.

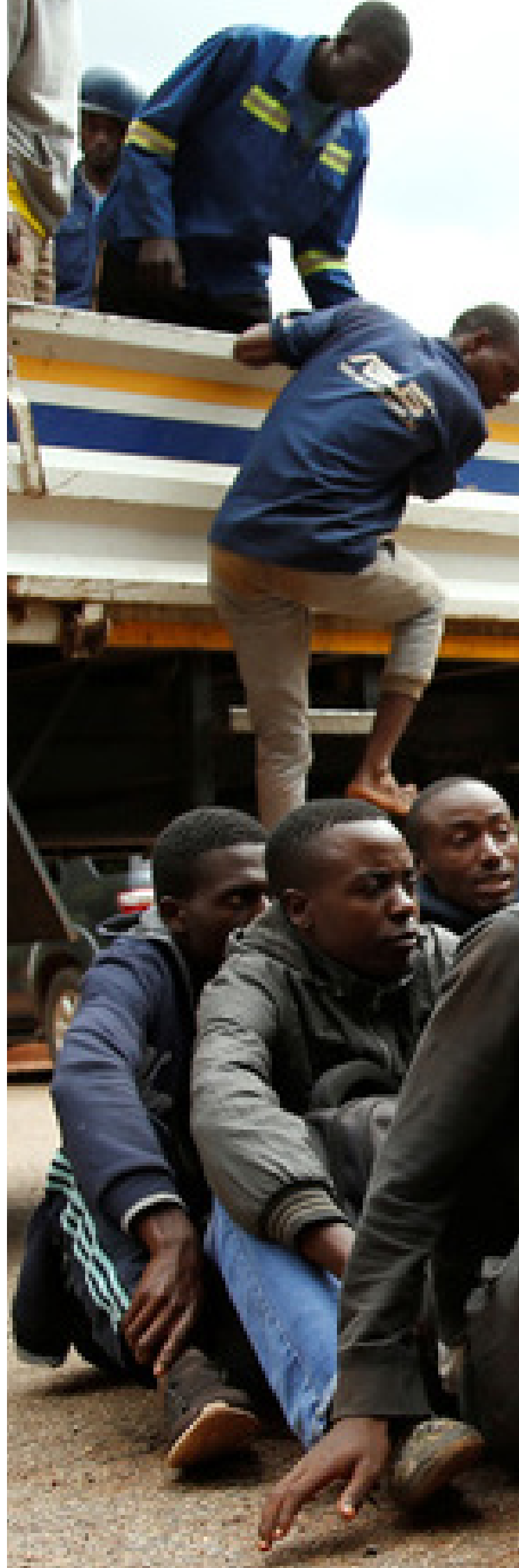
6. Political, Symbolic and Solidarity Actions: An effective HRDs protection mechanism could also have a system of mobilising political action and solidarity for HRDs, including during court appearances, during incarceration or hospitalisation and during periods of danger.

7. Devolution Of Response and Protection mechanisms;

HRDs protection mechanism must be devolved to improve accessibility to all HRDs including those in rural communities. This includes devolution

of key response institutions and their contacts.

8. **Conflict Management Approach;** An effective HRDs protection mechanism must take a conflict management approach.
9. **Triggers for State response;** Protection mechanisms must invest in ensuring that they have access to the state at some meaningful enough level that can be leveraged to trigger state responses regarding safety and protection of HRDs. The sense is that mechanisms that involve civil society alone without triggering state responses will be inadequate. This includes involving constitutional bodies such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC).
10. **Multi-Tier Approach** with which includes the following components;
 - i. System for information collection, verification and triangulation
 - ii. Psychosocial support and Rehabilitation
 - iii. Litigation and Advocacy
 - iv. Capacity-building
 - v. State response component
11. **Manipulation-Proof:** Human Rights Defenders are human. While most operate with integrity and are often in real danger and need, there are instances where some unscrupulous characters try to game the system through crying wolf simply to gain access to resources, especially when knowing that other HRDs have been assisted financially during critical times. The protection mechanisms must find effective ways of separating the weed from chaff, the genuine from the ingenious, and the real needy cases and opportunistic attempts at self-aggrandisement





7. Areas for SAHRDN's Attention



With specific reference to the SAHRDN, HRDs in Zimbabwe drew its attention to the following needs;

1. The creation of databases of HRDs in the region devolved to national and subnational levels.
2. Support for conducting regular country level situational analysis, including an Operating Environment Indicator Index which could be calibrated against the political crisis and incorporating ways of extracting data quickly and pre-empting vulnerabilities on HRDs.
3. Support the construction of devolved protection mechanism that feed into the regional network but with infrastructure that goes beyond cities and towns to the rural areas.
4. Facilitating local HRDs engagements with young politicians on human rights issues as well as raising awareness of how government structures can play a role in upholding human rights.

8. Annexure 1: Field Notes on Challenges, Needs & Recommendations

8.1 Risks/Challenges

- Physical harm targeting HRDs and their families
 - * Beatings
 - * Rape
 - * Abduction
 - * Torture
 - * Death
 - * Enforced Disappearances
 - * violence
- Use of disasters such as the COVID 19 pandemic to implement and justify restrictions to HRDs work and on democracy in general
- Judicial persecution targeting HRDs and their families:
 - * Legal and judicial persecution, harassment or lawfare against individual HRDs as well as organisations
 - * Imprisonment
- Vilification, alienation from society and emotional abuse:
 - * Social media bullying
 - * Media vilification
 - * Body-shaming
 - * Character assassination
 - * Labelling e.g. using terms like sell-outs, regime change agents
- Ostracism in government programs
- Destruction and loss of property
- Restriction of access to communities
- Breach to privacy through surveillance
- Physical raids:
 - * Invasion of places of residence
 - * Workplace raids
- As CSOs move work online on ICT-based platforms like smartphones or laptops there is risk of hacking and surveillance
- Job insecurity creates a lot of security challenges and institutional stability.
- Infiltration by state agents posing as HRDs
- HRDs organisations prosecution for non-compliance with statutory requirements such as tax requirements.
- State taking advantages of HRDs' personal indiscretion to set them up and discredit. Examples: reckless driving, honey traps and involvement in corrupt dealings
- Emergence of division and activist classes due to exclusion of grassroots HRDs in protection mechanisms while only catering for high-profile ones. State-led socioeconomic exclusion, especially of rural and grassroots activists, including denial of food aid.
- State-led socioeconomic exclusion, especially of rural and grassroots activists, including denial of food aid.
- Losing credibility due to failure to be seen as impartial and non-partisan

8.2 HRD Needs

- Capacity building
- Digital and physical security training
- Resources to secure workplaces of at-risk HRDs
- Resources to secure residential places of at-risk HRDs
- Stronger, widely accessible and robust preventative and responsive safety nets
- Mapping of HRDs in growth points and rural areas as they only begin to be visible from provincial level
- Regional and national solidarity network building
- Stronger and more resourced referral networks
- Communications training
- Access to secure online platforms to work without surveillance and infiltration
- Sustainable funding to ensure long-term stability
- Local capacity to run protection mechanisms in case of limited or low arrival of external support
- Resources for capacity-building in tax compliance
- Training and capacity-building of HRDs in personal leadership development and integrity
- Protections mechanisms that go beyond just responding to the political rights threats.
- recreate platforms that seek to support specific groups e.g. Students Solidarity Trust (SST) – targeted protection mechanisms to meet specific needs; to create networks with other groups in SADC
- To have a regional response mechanisms when local ones when local ones cannot function due to heightened risk, which even affects HRDs protection organisations who will also be in danger
- Funding to sustain a stable and coherent referral network with different partners perhaps through long-term partnership agreements
- Capacity to full utilise existing opportunities including extant referral networks, constitutional bodies and skills with the ultimate view of successfully working towards a political solution in Zimbabwe
- Localised awareness of where to get support
- Presence of strong constitutional and statutory bodies that practically support the work of HRDs
- Money for gender-based violence rapid response, not necessarily coming from traditional HRD protection organisations.

8.3 Recommendations

- Availing of resources for HRDs for work to open shrinking democratic space and build more capacity
- More robust security training regimes (as opposed to light box-ticking and common sense content) to include the full range of ways in which HRDs are in danger at home, in workplaces and recreational spaces, including new threats
- Strengthening of existing local and in-country systems to enhance reach, collaboration, sustainability and scope of protection mechanisms taking advantage of network members' diverse strengths such as technical know-how and community reach
- Strengthening regional networks for learning and solidarity
- Early warning system that serve HRDs to community level
- More inclusive definition of HRDs beyond the popular ones, catering for those in rural areas with an even greater vulnerability
- Creation of gender-sensitive HRDs protection mechanism
- Creation of real-time database of at-risk HRDs in the region
- Real-time early warning database of at-risk HRDs
- Development of an Operating Environment Indicator Index calibrated against the political crisis
- Creation of a database of HRDs in the region, advisory note on state of HR in different countries, and constant researching by SAHRDN on what is transpiring at country level
- Some respondents even suggested counter-digital surveillance and digital tracking to protect HRDs at risk

- Ensuring that protection mechanism are decentralised to include grassroots HRDs, including those in rural areas and small towns
- Protection mechanism must be beyond just addressing the immediate physical threats, but address socioeconomic threats to HRDs such as exclusion or ostracism in public welfare programs or income loss, through providing humanitarian support
- Local communities to have local level protection mechanisms that use local resources to be used in cases where there might not be enough time for them to get external support;
- Ensuring local referral mechanisms are linked to regional, Africa-wide and international protection mechanisms since protection is often difficult to access when local HRDs systems fail. In some cases of heightened risk and widespread danger even local HRDs service organisations end up on the run.
- Building of a stable referral network that ensures there is well-defined channel through which a victim is fully processed from getting medical attention; to psychosocial support; and to legal aid; and to get justice. This can be achieved through funding long-term partnership agreements amongst protection ecosystem organisations.
- Gearing all HRDs work and defence towards finding a political solution for the country
- Because protection mechanisms should work before rather than after the fact of victimisation, they need to be focused on pre-emptive measures like training HRDs on personal security
- Decentralisation of protection mechanisms to provincial levels, including of hotlines to facilitate, smoothen and quicken community-based HRDs' requests for support
- A robust system of tapping into and processing information already existing in communities about HRDs risk levels, which builds on and strengthens existing structures in communities like peace clubs, etc.
- SAHRDN must not confine themselves to urban areas; need for an infrastructure that devolves into the rural areas where most undetected and unaddressed rights violations happen
- HRDs protection mechanism need to also employ a conflict management approach to dealing with risk and ensure protection
- Broadening of thematic definition of HRDs and to include those working on HIV/Aids, sexual reproduction and family planning issues who encounter risk in their apolitical rights work
- Protection mechanisms should also have simple and low key support to avoid further victimisation or attracting attention and harm, and ensure HRDs can control their spaces – for instance small financial support to quietly go to a relative than relocation to a safe house
- Protection must also seek to strengthen the freeness and security of the entire environment by strengthening existing multi-stakeholder platforms like ZHRC, NPRC's Early Warning and Early Response Committee, and Zimbabwe Gender Commission's Elections Observatory. These mechanisms have unique access to the State and can stop violations.

9. End Notes

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2. Zimbabwe Peace Project (August 2020) Monthly Monitoring Report, August Edition: Is This Freedom.
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8. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/06/forum-condemns-attacks-on-its-members/> and <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/stop-creating-mirages-and-deliver-ngo-forum-cautions-govt/>
9. WILSA (2020) Position paper: The freedoms of association, assembly and expression in Zimbabwe. October 2020
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