

THE COMMISSION EXPRESS

December 2023



ZHRC members wind-up planning for 2024

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Editor's Note



The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission takes pride in the *Commission Express* and views it as an important communication channel with its stakeholders. As such, effort is made to produce a publication that represents the work of the Commission's departments and units.

The 2023 Second Edition features articles on human rights programming, stakeholder engagement, regional and international visits as well as human resource issues. Of particular note in this

edition is the Commission's exhibition award at the Masvingo Provincial Show.

As we begin a new year, may I implore you all, our valued Stakeholders, to continue safeguarding your human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as those of others.

Finally, the Commission values your feedback on how we can improve this Newsletter. Therefore, we will be looking forward to it.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. William'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

S. William

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

FOR FEEDBACK

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Dr. Delis Mazambani

Executive Secretary

Greetings from the Executive Secretary's Office.

The year 2023 has been an eventful year. Let me acknowledge your immense support and contribution to the achievement of set goals.

During the year under review, the Commission continued to establish new offices and to date, has a presence in Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo, Manicaland as well as Matabeleland North Provinces and is in the process of opening a sixth office in Mashonaland West. Our decentralization effort has resulted in phased recruitment which has seen the staff compliment of the Commission increase from 83 to one hundred and thirty eight 138. This saw activities being scaled up across departments . At this point, let me welcome all the new members of Secretariat. Most of members managed to adapt to the new environment in the shortest space of time and look forward to your immense contribution towards the facilitation of the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As expected, the Commission actively monitored the 2023 Harmonised Election process as Zimbabweans went to the polls to vote for a new leadership. Our Elections Report which is now in the public domain, was widely received with admiration, all because of the Secretariat's sheer hardwork and competence.

The Chairperson, Dr Elasto Hilarius Mugwadi's tenure at the helm of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions ended on 19 October 2023 at the 14th Biennial Conference in Ghana after serving two years. We applaud the Chairperson for the exemplary leadership at home and abroad.

In the same manner, we would like to thank Commissioner Sethulo Ncube whose term of office expired after serving as ZHRC Commissioner for a mandatory 10 years. We are grateful to Commissioner Ncube for her selfless service and guidance to the Commission and wish her well in her future endeavours.

Our 2023 International Human Rights Day celebration was successful as has become the norm despite being low key due to the widespread cholera pandemic in the country. The celebration effectively marked the end of our business year as the Commission will be scaling down for the holidays.

A special thank you to our esteemed Stakeholders for being part of the Commission's history. We look forward to what we will achieve together in the years ahead.

Thank you.

HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION UPDATE

ZHRC honoured at Masvingo Provincial Show



ZHRC Masvingo Provincial Co-ordinator Mr Fidelicy Nyamukondiwa (in a white shirt) joins other members of the secretariat to celebrate the second place prize (Commissions Category) at the Masvingo Provincial Show in October 2023.

The Masvingo Provincial Show ended on a high note for Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission when it got more than it bargained for by coming second in the Commissions Category thereby getting a trophy.

It all began when the Commission made a conscious decision to make an inaugural appearance at the Masvingo Provincial Show which was held from 28 September to 1 October 2023 to publicise its new offices which were opened in Masvingo Town on 23 December 2022. The other

objective of the exhibition was to enhance interest in the work of ZHRC on promoting, protecting and enforcing human rights and administrative justice. In particular, the Commission was on a mission to raise awareness on the new category of business and human rights in light of the show theme which was *Transformation, the key engine 4 economic growth*.

Masvingo Provincial Co-ordinator, Mr Fidelicy Nyamukondiwa could not hide his joy.

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ZHRC honoured at Masvingo Provincial Show

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"I'm pleased to notify that ZHRC has scooped a prize on its first appearance at Masvingo Provincial Show.

"Special thanks to Mai Ratsauka Mr Salanje and team, Team Masvingo, Management and our supportive Commissioners for making this happen," Mr Nyamukondwa announced.

The Masvingo Provincial Show delegation was led by Deputy Chairperson, Dr Dorothy Moyo and Professor Cowen Dziva who also participated on two one-hour radio shows.

The show was officially opened by the Masvingo Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Honourable Ezra Chadzamira.

Earlier on, the Commission had participated at a similar exhibition which was held in Mutare from 21-24 September 2023. The Show, which was officially opened by Manicaland's newly appointed Minister of State and Devolution Honourable Misheck Mugadza ran under the theme, *Innovation and collaboration for sustainable growth.*

The Chairperson, Dr Elasto Hilarious Mugwadi led the delegation that participated at the Manicaland Agricultural show where two radio slots were used to announce the Commission's presence in the province and to raise human rights awareness.

The exhibitions exposed the need for the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to educate citizens on the new Marriages Act [Chapter 5:15] because there are misconceptions surrounding its effects on the family and children's rights. It is also recommended that there be counselling services in schools to deal with drug abuse jointly by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Health and Child Care as well as the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

The Commission has plans to cascade the exhibitions to communities so that awareness of the ZHRC brand reaches the grassroots and judging by the success of the Masvingo show, achieving this is not a mere dream.

ZHRC takes human rights to the Church

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission will not leave anyone and any place behind in ensuring that human rights and administrative justice awareness reaches all and sundry.

To ensure it fulfils this mandate, the Commission took an unprecedented but necessary step by visiting the Zimbabwe Christian Church (ZCC) at their annual international conference held at Defe in Gokwe, Midlands Province from 8-11 August 2023. Taking human rights to the church was one of the innovative approaches taken by the Commission during the run-up to the harmonised elections when it became difficult to conduct Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission related activities in communities. Using two strategically located branded tents, the outreach promoted awareness of the mandate and functions of the Commission amongst the ZCC leaders and their congregants through widespread dissemination of leaflets on electoral rights. At the time of the exhibitions, it was estimated that about 40 000 congregants from all over the world

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were in attendance. However, it is estimated that 29 768 people visited the two tents and consisted of 16967 females and 12808 males and 423 595 IEC materials were distributed. The congregants were encouraged to read the IEC materials and return for quiz competitions where successful quiz participants had a chance to win ZHRC branded T-shirts or pens for demonstrating new acquired knowledge. The exhibitions were inclusive of all social groups in that they attracted male and female participants, the elderly, Persons with Disabilities, youths and children from five years and adults aged up to 79 years. Although the main church programme was

packed, the Commission was given a slot to address women on the topical issue of marriage rights. The presentation also covered other issues requested by the women such as the types of marriages in Zimbabwe that are provided for in the country's Marriages Act and implications of property rights on women as well as prohibition of child marriages in Zimbabwe.

The challenge now is to ensure the Commission sustains the platform for collaboration with the ZCC leadership and its congregants, including promoting future opportunities for further awareness and advocacy engagements with the church.



ZHRC Executive Secretary Dr Delis Mazambani preaches the gospel of human rights at the Zimbabwe Christian Church Annual Conference at Defe in Gokwe on 9 August 2023.

Political actors pledge peace



Mr Innocent Gonese (left), a participant at the Pre-Election Engagement Meeting for Political Parties and Stakeholders held in Mutare, reads an electoral message on a T-shirt.

Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) was pleased by the level of openness, maturity and the pledge to uphold political rights by Stakeholders to the two Pre-Election Engagement consultations held in Bulawayo and Mutare prior to the 2023 General Elections.

The two workshops which were well attended by a total of 112 participants, saw the main political parties contesting the elections being brought together in a calm and friendly environment. Of interest was that participants were able to express their opinions freely, thereby fostering political tolerance.

During the deliberations, it was noted that some of the stakeholders were not fully

aware of the Commission's role and mandate. The participants expressed keen interest in engaging the Commission in their future activities in areas that needed human rights expertise and knowledge thereby, promoting collaborative networks. The stakeholders reflected on the general human rights situation in the country with duty bearers being constantly urged to play their role in the protection and enforcement of electoral rights during the pre-election, election and post-election periods of the electoral cycle.

Some stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with court cases relating to qualification of some candidates contesting for different

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Political actors pledge peace

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positions including that for presidency after they had been successfully nominated, a move they felt negatively affected people's participation in the harmonised elections.

According to other participants, the nomination process for the 2023 harmonised elections was discriminatory against prospective contestants with limited financial resources who could not pay the exorbitant nomination fees.

Stakeholders were able to point out the determinants of a free and fair election including having a neutral arbiter in the event of disputes on electoral outcomes, a level playing field and absence of violence and coercion, the existence of non-partisan traditional leaders and inclusivity of all duty bearers and rights holders. Issues concerning assisted voting, vote buying, partisan food distributions and the need to encourage traditional leaders and civil servants to be non-partisan in their conduct were some of the issues that were also raised. Stakeholders were urged to report human rights violations to the ZHRC, the police, the Zimbabwe Election Commission and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), among others.

While appreciating the Commission's increased visibility and accessibility through decentralisation, there were concerns about the human rights body's lack of powers to enforce its recommendations.

Midlands/Matabeleland South radio programmes a success

Statistics on radio programmes conducted with listeners via social media platforms, by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission in Midlands and Matabeleland South Provinces point out to a successful awareness-raising campaign. The Commission conducted radio programmes at Central Radio Station, 98.4 FM Radio Station (Gweru, Midlands Province) and Ntepe-Manama Radio Station (Gwanda, Matabeleland South Province) to raise awareness of electoral rights and redress mechanisms available to them in the event of human rights violations during the entire electoral cycle. Each of the three radio stations hosted five radio programmes from 3 to 7 July 2023, making a total of 15 radio programmes. Each programme lasted for 30 minutes. During the programmes, ZHRC engaged

with listeners via social media platforms, particularly the Whatsapp Messenger platform. In addition, both radio stations in Gweru livestreamed the programmes. Quiz questions on the topics discussed during the radio programmes were conducted and winners were given prizes in the form of ZHRC electoral rights branded awareness raising t/shirts. Quiz participants interacted with the Commission via the interactive WhatsApp platform. The listenership for 98.4 fm is estimated to be 2 million while that for Central Radio Station and Ntepe-Manama Radio Station is around 500 000 and 600 000 respectively. Concurrent with the radio programmes, the ZHRC team disseminated

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Midlands/Matabeleland South radio programmes a success

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IEC materials on electoral rights in local communities to raise awareness on electoral rights. In Gwanda, the team took the opportunity to visit various stakeholders to notify them of their presence and intended activities in the district. The visits to stakeholders were also aimed at gathering their views on the general human rights situation in the district especially regarding the need for duty bearers to play their critical roles in the protection of human rights and of electoral rights during the pre-election, election and post-election periods. In Gweru, initially listeners of the three radio stations indicated they were not free and comfortable to make comments or ask questions because of fear of publicly discussing politics but progressively improved as the programmes unfolded. Issues raised by the listeners were similar to those raised during community outreaches, for example, concerns on forced assisted voting, partisan conduct of traditional leaders and partisan distribution of agricultural inputs including seed. Other issues raised included fear of wearing regalia of certain political parties, inability to freely express their political freedoms by attending rallies and meetings of their choice due to fear of victimisation, intimidation, possible abduction and other violations and cases of police failure to reasonably act on reported cases of rights abuses.



A team from the Commission embarks on a human rights educational campaign using community radios in the Midlands Province.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE NEWS

Alternative Dispute Resolution training capacitates Complaints Handling & Investigation & Administrative Justice personnel



(Seated from the right) Mr N. Chishakwe, DES Programmes Mr. Erick Mukutiri, ZHRC Commissioner Dr. Angeline Guvamombe, Directors; Mrs Kurai Makumbe and Mrs Pauline Ngarande and Human Rights Officers in attendance at the ADR training at Holiday Inn, Mutare.

The Complaints Handling and Investigation

Department of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) has been instrumental in advancing the commission's constitutional mandate of investigating human rights violations and recommending effective measures in an effort to promote human rights protection in Zimbabwe. Experiencing exciting times as the ZHRC decentralises to Provinces, the CHI Department, continues to demonstrate its stalwart and unwavering commitment to human rights promotion and protection. Since its inception, the ZHRC has made

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Alternative Dispute Resolution training capacitates Complaints Handling & Investigation & Administrative Justice personnel

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significant strides in advancing its mandate. The Commission has grown in leaps and bounds, with numerous achievements to its name. The ZHRC has been successful in handling a myriad of simple and complex human rights cases through desk and field investigations, thus demonstrating its commitment to ensuring that the rights of Zimbabweans are protected. The Commission has been relentless in its pursuit of justice, ensuring that human rights violations are thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators held accountable.

In an effort to equip its staff with the relevant knowledge and skills, the ZHRC successfully conducted an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms training for its Human Rights Officers in the Complaints Handling and Investigations and Administrative Justice Department. This training focused on conciliation, mediation and negotiation as ADR mechanisms. The aim of this training

was to equip Human Rights officers with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle and solve human rights-based disputes by invoking ADR mechanisms and related principles of fairness and impartiality. The Human Rights Officers were trained on International Best Practices that should be employed when invoking the relevant ADR mechanisms to solve human rights complaints. The success of this training is a testament to the ZHRC's commitment to promoting a culture of human rights protection and respect for human rights in Zimbabwe. The ZHRC's success in conducting the ADR Mechanism training is a significant milestone in the Commission's journey. It demonstrates the ZHRC's commitment to building capacity within its ranks and ensuring that its officers are well-equipped to handle any human rights issues that may arise. This training has undoubtedly enhanced the Commission's ability to effectively handle human rights complaints and investigations through ADR.



ZHRC Human Rights Officers Role-Playing Mediation Proceedings

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS

ZHRC proposes introduction of human rights maps

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission recently participated at the VII International Scientific and Practical Conference "Issues of Human Rights Protection: Exchange of Best Practices of Ombudspersons", held on October 18, 2023 in Moscow in a hybrid format on the topic "Competencies of Ombudspersons". The event brought together ombudspersons of foreign countries, human rights commissioners in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, representatives of international organizations, government authorities of the Russian Federation, the scientific community and human rights organizations. This meeting was held against the backdrop of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which most if not all countries subscribe to. Participation at the workshop underscored Zimbabwe's willingness to co-operate with the global community in ensuring administrative justice issues in the country are effectively tackled.

The Executive Secretary Dr Delis Mazambani and the Director responsible for Complaints Handling and Investigation Mrs Kurai Makumbe represented the Commission.

The International Conference "Problems of Human Rights Protection: Sharing Best Practices of Ombudspersons" has been held since 2017 with the support of the President of the Russian Federation and serves as a significant influential platform for expanding international relations in the field of human rights protection, sharing best human rights practices, and holding discussions on human rights issues.

The objective of the conference was to bring together ombudspersons and representatives of international organizations from around the globe with the purpose of encouraging innovative ideas and sharing diversified knowledge

and international experiences. It provided indispensable exposure to the audience promoting the highest utilisation of human rights knowledge. It also provided a key platform for ombudspersons, scholars and experts to disseminate knowledge and present ongoing research on human rights issues. Finally, the conference facilitated and provided opportunities to network and build connections with human rights champions on shared interests.

During its stay in Moscow, the Commission delegation had the opportunity to tour the Russian House of Human Rights where it made the recommendation:

"The Commission develops Human Rights Maps which depict the prevalence of human rights violations in different parts of the country to inform programming and interventions."

This is important in that useful information will be readily available for quick decision-making. It also made an observation that there were computers in the Citizens Reception Area for those that wish to lodge their complaints using soft copy complaints registration forms. The availability of exhibition corners where pictures, reports and books are showcased for information sharing purposes and preservation of institutional memory cannot be ignored as this shows that the Commission is a learning organisation which is conforming to modern human rights trends.

The conference attracted 205 participants from 47 countries. Nine international human rights bodies were also represented at the meeting including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Euroasian Ombudsman Alliance, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).



Photographs from the VII International Scientific and Practical Conference "Issues of Human Rights Protection: Exchange of Best Practices of Ombudspersons", which was held on 18 October 2023 in Moscow, Russia.

HUMAN CAPITAL UPDATE

Commissioner Sethulo Ncube bids farewell



Commissioner Sethulo Ncube

One of Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission's remaining longest serving Commissioners, Sethulo Ncube has retired. Commissioner Ncube's term of office expired on 31 July 2023, after a decade of selfless service.

The current Chairperson, Dr Elasto Hilarius Mugwadi is now the remaining longest serving member.

During her tenure at the Commission, Commissioner Ncube chaired the Thematic Working Group on Capacity Building and Development.

Commissioner Ncube is a legal practitioner registered with the Law Society of Zimbabwe since 1999. She holds a Bachelor of Laws Degree (LLB) (Hons), a Master's Degree in Women's Law and a Master's Degree in Human Rights Specialising in Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. She is currently the co-ordinator at the Southern Region Office of the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA). She has previously worked at various NGOs and has also worked as a public prosecutor. Commissioner Ncube has sat on various NGO boards in Bulawayo including, Habakkuk Trust (2006-2014), AIDS Education and Training (ACET), Bulawayo Agenda (2012-2014), Zimbabwe Climate Change Organisation (ZiCCO) and Emthonjeni Women's Forum. She is also a member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe.

Lady Luck smiles at Mr Tacilicako Muleya, not once but twice within a month

They say fortune knocks once at a man's door but not for this man, Mr Tacilicako Michael Muleya. The 34-year old Mr Muleya joined the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission on 1 July 2022 as a Human Rights Officer responsible for Education, Promotion and Research at the Bulawayo Office.

Incredible as it is, on 1 August 2023, Mr Muleya was promoted to Provincial Human Rights Officer responsible for Education, Promotion, Research and Advocacy (EPRA). Lady Luck continued to smile at

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Lady Luck smiles at Mr Tacilicako Muleya, not once but twice within a month



Mr Tacilicako Michael Muleya

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him as he was appointed Acting Provincial Co-ordinator for Matabeleland North Province a week later. The Human Resources Director, Mrs Pauline Ngarande, on 9 August 2023, announced to members of staff, "Please be advised that Mr. T. Muleya Provincial EPRA Officer Bulawayo has been appointed Acting Provincial Coordinator Mat North and will be based in Hwange. "The appointment is with immediate effect. Kindly render him the necessary support." The Matabeleland North office was opened in August this year and Mr Muleya becomes its inaugural Acting Provincial Co-ordinator. To some, it is not a surprise that Mr Muleya

was appointed to this latest position as he is experienced, multi-lingual and was the best candidate available. He is conversant in Tonga, Nambya, Ndebele, Shona and English. Before joining the Commission, Mr Tacilicako Muleya worked as a Legal Advisor for an educational institution in South Africa. Mr Muleya's immediate task is to ensure the new office is fully functional so that it serves the province effectively and ensure that he raises human rights awareness throughout the province including the marginalised areas such as Binga. The office will also empower the communities in the province on their rights as enshrined in the Declaration of Rights as well as emancipate them from violations of human rights and educate them on the available redress mechanisms. A devout Christian, Mr Muleya attributed his success to "the Most High". "I think my recognition is because of hard work. Try to follow instructions and seek clarity where you are not clear but ultimately, it's the lord who guides and protects us," explained Tacilicako Michael Mr Muleya. By occupying a new office and a new position, Mr Muleya is not intimidated. He is obviously, expecting some challenges but believes he will be equal to the task. He quotes Fr. Michael Tremel, the man who inspired and motivated him who said, "Life is a series of struggles and decisions." So, leadership is about being firm in making decisions, according to Mr Muleya. The Acting Provincial Co-ordinator is aware he needs the support of everyone including the Executive Secretary, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes and other members of management from whom he will receive guidance.

NEWS IN BRIEF...



Don't mistake them, they're the same Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission secretariat, only that they have become smarter and better. The Commission unveiled a corporate uniform which will go a long way to enhance its image.



ZHRC Chairperson, Dr Elasto Hilarious Mugwad (seated second from right) and Executive Secretary, Dr Delis Mazambani (seated second from left) meet new members at Masvingo Office.



ZHRC Chairperson, Dr Elasto Hilarious Mugwadi addressing delegates at the 14th Biennial Conference of Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) held in Accra, Ghana. Dr Mugwadi's tenure at the helm of the regional body ended on 19 October 2023.



ZHRC Deputy Chairperson, Dr Dorothy Moyo hosts a delegation from the European Union during the 2023 pre-election period.



The Commission values the well-being of its members and recently held a wellness programme in Harare.



ZHRC Chairperson, Dr Elasto Hilarious Mugwadi is interviewed by a Diamond FM presenter at the Manicaland Agricultural Show in September 2023.

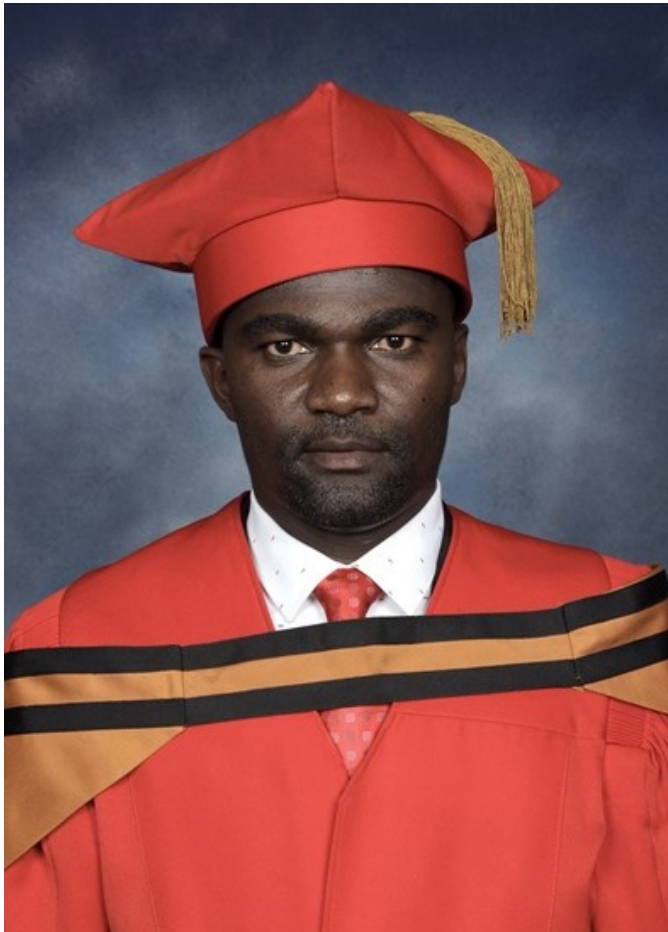


(Above) ZHRC's work received a boost after the Commission got a donation of a motor vehicle and laptops from the European Union through RWI.

(Above left) ZHRC Executive Secretary, Dr Delis Mazambani and the Chief Procurement Officer Mr Lloyd Nyeke captured at the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe 3rd Annual Conference held in Harare.



Participants at the recently held Strategic Planning Workshop in Chinhoyi take time for a photo shoot with Commissioners and the facilitator.



Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission is proud to introduce Commissioner Prof Cowen Dziva (left) following his appointment as a professor in September 2023 and Dr Nancy Kwangwa who graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Cape Town in December 2023.

Numerous successes scored ...as ZHRC's NANHRI Chairmanship comes to an end

Zimbabwe's term as Chairperson of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) has ended with many successes to celebrate and cherish. The Chairmanship ended on 19 October 2023 and was handed over to Advocate Joseph Whittal, the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana at the 14th Biennial Conference held in Accra. The Conference ran under the theme, *"Nurturing responsible business conduct in Africa"*.

Dr. Elasto Hilarious Mugwadi, was elected as the Vice Chairperson of NANHRI by the Gen-

eral Assembly at the Cairo Conference in 2019 and assumed Chairmanship of the regional body in November 2021. The NANHRI is a regional body of 46 National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in Africa. Its mandate is to support establishment and strengthen NHRIs in Africa as well as to facilitate co-ordination and cooperation between and among themselves and between them and other key human rights actors at the regional and international levels. Dr Mugwadi's tenure at the helm of NANHRI was not a stroll in the park as

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Numerous successes scored ...as ZHRC's NANHRI Chairmanship comes to an end

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he was faced with a lot of hurdles. “One of the biggest challenges was that of the interference in most of our operations by the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic which was at the peak when I took over in November 2021. In order to alleviate the problems and continue to successfully discharge our mandate in terms of the objectives of our strategic plan as NANHRI, we immediately agreed to adopt what was then referred to as the ‘New Normal’ in which business was conducted virtually or through the hybrid format which was both virtually and physically,” reminisced Dr Elasto Hilarius Mugwadi. However, amid the COVID-19 challenge, there were notable successes to celebrate during the chairmanship of Dr Mugwadi. One of these was resolution of poor conditions of service of the NANHRI Secretariat whose members were resigning en masse to join local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). After reviewing with the concurrence of the Steering Committee, the staff salaries and other allowances were improved to match those offered by local CSOs thereby retaining experienced personnel including the Executive Director who was about to resign. In August 2023, Dr Mugwadi participated at

the Conference on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrants in Southern Africa which Zimbabwe hosted. He also attended the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights Annual Conference in Banjul, Gambia in October 2022 where he delivered a historic speech on the subject. Apart from the conferences, the Chairperson attended GANHRI meetings on behalf of the region in Morocco in 2021 and 2022 as well as in Qatar in February 2023. The Qatar meeting dealt with the challenges caused by climate change. The Chairperson presented another remarkable and well-received paper. “In addition, most importantly, I also superintended the accreditation, with the A’ status, of 3 NHRIs as members of GANHRI and these are Benin, Ethiopia and the Gambia. “So I would say we deserve as a country, the necessary accolades for steering NANHRI to the success that it was notwithstanding the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a leadership of one of its kind because it was successful under very difficult circumstances,” concluded Dr Mugwadi whose leadership acumen at home and abroad is the pride of Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission.

International Human Rights Day an opportunity to reflect on progress in promoting human rights

International Human Rights Day is observed on the 10th of December each year. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 10th December 1948 being the first international agreement that outlines human rights standards to which everyone is entitled by virtue of being human.

The theme for this year’s IHRD commemorations that has been running since 2022 to mark yearlong celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the UDHR is *Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All*.

“The Commission acknowledges continuous efforts by the Government of Zimbabwe as it makes positive strides towards promotion of human rights in the country. One of the efforts

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ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) as well as the Public Protector for Zimbabwe as provided for by the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013. It was operationalized by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Act [Chapter 10:30]. The ZHRC took over the advancement of administrative justice mandate from the now defunct Public Protector (Ombudsman) in line with Section 16 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The functions of the ZHRC are outlined in Section

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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International Human Rights Day an opportunity to reflect on progress in promoting human rights

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to promote the right to dignity is education and the Commission commends the Government for maintaining high levels of investment in education, including adoption of policies that promote human rights, not only in the education sector but in other sectors such as the gender and disability sectors. The amendment of the Education Act to prohibit corporal punishment in schools and to allow pregnant girls to continue learning in school in accordance with the Zimbabwe Constitution, guarantees the right to education for everyone," the Chairperson remarked.

On its part, the Commission has to date established five provincial offices in Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo, Manicaland and Matabeleland North Provinces and is in the process of opening a sixth office in Mashonaland West and should have established offices in all provinces by the end of 2025. Decentralisation is backed by phased recruitment of staff which has seen the staff compliment of the Commission increase from 83 to 138 and is expected to increase to 247 by 2025. The Commission has managed to operationalise the Administrative Justice department, as a separate entity from the human rights Complaints Handling and Investigations Department. It has also operationalised some functions such as Knowledge Management, Advocacy and Research to enhance promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Commission, however, believes that despite progress made, much still remains to be done to improve the human rights situation in the country and to ensure that a culture of human rights becomes ingrained in our society.



Participants at the 2023 International Human Rights Day Press Conference held in Harare on 8 December 2023.

Protecting, Promoting and Enforcing Human Rights