

WELCOME TO THE ZIMRIGHTS ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY ACTION ZONE

FACT SHEET



“
The will of the people shall be the basis
of the authority of government; this will shall be
expressed in periodic and genuine elections which
shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall
be held by secret vote or by equivalent
free voting procedures.
”

ARTICLE 21:3
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS,
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1948.

INTRODUCTION

The ZimRights is Zimbabwe's first post-independence indigenous human rights advocacy group established in 1992 as an association of ordinary people and registered as a PVO in 1993. Over the past 30 years, ZimRights has grown to over 250 000 members across the country's 10 provinces. Under ZimRights' new strategy – the Shifting Power to the People Strategy, ZimRights members work through 8 action zones to advance various human rights issues in their communities.




250 000
Membership

These are:

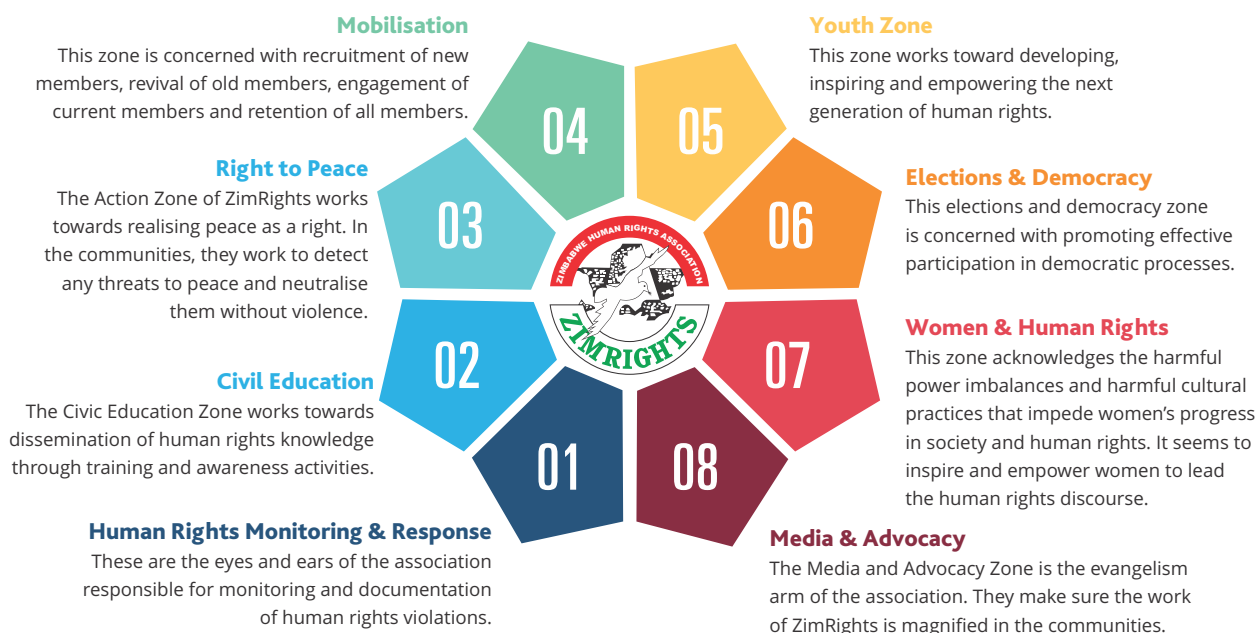
- Human Rights Monitoring and Response,
- Civic Education,
- Peace Building,
- Mobilisation (membership engagement),
- Youth,
- Elections and Democracy,
- Women and Human Rights and
- Media and Advocacy.



Figure 1 below shows these 8 Action Zones and the work they do.

This factsheet focuses on the Elections and Democracy Action Zone. The Elections and Democracy Action Zone is concerned with promoting effective participation of citizens and communities in democratic processes.

THE ACTION ZONE FRAMEWORK



WHAT IS THE LEGACY OF ZIMRIGHTS ON DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN ZIMBABWE?

While packaged differently under the SP2P Strategy, ZimRights Democracy and Elections Action Zone is not new. It has been in existence prior to the SP2P known simply as the Elections Desk.

WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS, ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY?

Why should ZimRights, a human rights organisation care about elections and democracy? ZimRights cares about elections and democracy because both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Zimbabwe's bill of rights care about democracy and elections.

AS ARTICLE 21:3 OF THE UDHR STATES

“

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

”

Our own Constitution embodies civil and political rights which are essentially the right to participate in civic life. Section 67 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe states clearly as follows:

“Every Zimbabwean citizen has the right:
(a) To free, fair and regular elections for any elective public office established in terms of this Constitution or any other law; and
(b) To make political choices freely.”



The section goes further to speak of the right to participate in political activity and to influence, challenge or support the policies of government or any political party.

It is the participation of ordinary people in civic life, in politics, that gives meaning to democracy. As such, empowering communities to exercise their civic rights in election and democratic process is indeed a human rights agenda.



HOW DO WE SUPPORT CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES IN ELECTIONS AND OTHER DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES?

Our part as a mass movement in realising the rights enshrined in section 67 of the Constitution is to provide support to communities so that they can participate in elections and democratic process in a manner that is meaningful and effective. We do this work through the Elections and Democracy action zone.

This zone works towards the following:

- Supporting the effective participation of citizens and communities in elections and other democratic processes;
- Empowering citizens to monitor and respond to human rights violations before, during and after elections and other democratic processes.
- Contributing to the advancement of democratic, transparent and credible electoral processes which are in line with the Constitution of Zimbabwe, regional and international standards.
- Supporting civil society partners in their watchdog role over elections and other democratic processes in Zimbabwe.



WHAT KEY INTERVENTIONS DO WE UNDERTAKE TO ACHIEVE THE ABOVE?

Over the years, we have undertaken a number of initiatives to achieve the objectives mentioned above.

a. 10x10 Voter Mobilisation Campaign

Under the Democracy and Elections Action Zone, ZimRights is currently running the #10*10 voter mobilisation campaign. The campaign seeks to increase the participation of women, men, youth and persons with disabilities in key electoral processes. In this campaign which started in 2021, we have deployed 5 shuttles across the country to support citizens staying in remote areas to access voter registration and polling centres. Through these shuttles, we provide important information for prospective voters to become champion mobilisers for the electoral process. The campaign is supported by road shows that raise awareness of the ongoing electoral processes as well as 64 youth organisers who move door to door speaking to people encouraging them to participate in electoral processes.

b. Data4Rights and Democracy Initiative (D4RDI)

The D4RDI seeks to harness the power of information to empower communities to take part in democratic processes. The initiative targets communities that have upcoming elections, extracts critical information and creates discussion platforms with small groups of ZimRights members who use the information to identify key obstacles to participation and gaps and design strategies for communities to close the gaps and make a difference.

The initiative releases targeted information for key electoral demographics like youths giving them real evidence that their voice matters.



BULILIMA BY-ELECTION WOMEN & VOTING



“There is no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter”

BARACK OBAMA

Ladies let's go in our numbers and vote.
Every Vote Counts

IN WARD 1

7 out of 10 registered voters are women.



IN WARD 14

7 out of 10 registered voters are women.



IN WARD 16

6 out of 10 registered voters are women.



c. The Masterclass on Building a Culture of Effective Participation in Democratic Processes

This is an essential course offered to community organisers providing essential skills for ordinary citizens to make a transition from merely becoming participants in electoral processes into becoming champions of electoral processes.

The Masterclass equips community activists with a deeper understanding of the concept of democracy, its meaning to ordinary people, its benefits to the community, the link with human rights and the tools that people can deploy in their individual or collective capacity to make democracy work for ordinary people. At the compilation of this factsheet, the Masterclass is running in Midlands, Masvingo, Matebeleland North, Mashonaland West and online through ZimRights' Amalungelo Kodzero Knowledge Centre (AKKC).



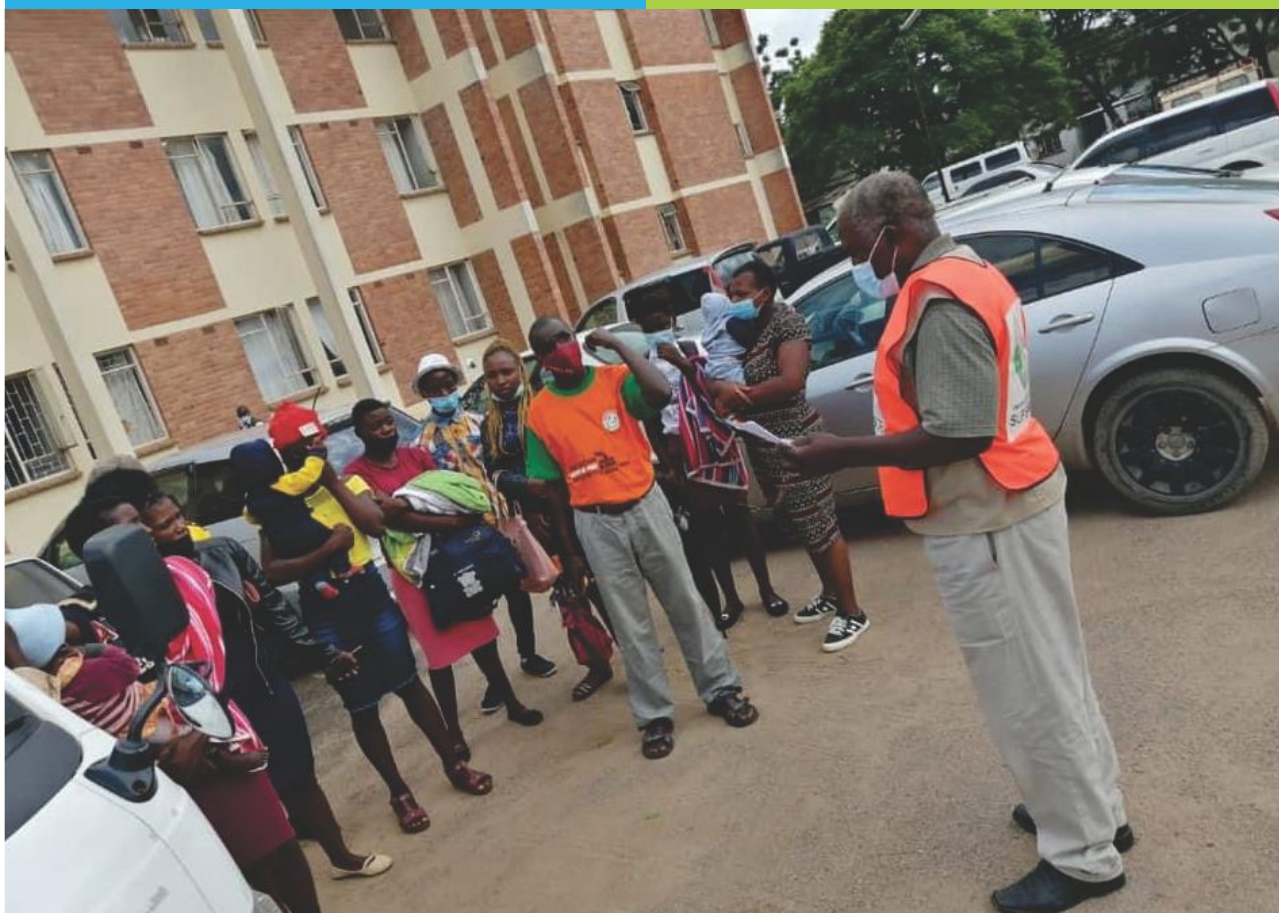
d. The Show Up Campaign

Coming soon is the Show Up Campaign which is a media campaign designed to mobilise young people to take an interest and participate in democratic processes.

The campaign is still in the design stage.

e. Human Rights Monitoring

In partnership with the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), ZimRights members across the country participate as human rights monitors before, during and after elections. They document human rights violations committed during elections and contribute to the national information grid that exposes human rights violations, electoral malpractices, and work towards redress.



f. Election Observation

In partnership with the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), ZimRights members across the country participate as election observers, documenting the electoral processes and sharing important insights and lessons that help advance democracy in Zimbabwe.

KEY RESOURCES

To advance the work, we have made available a number of resources which community activists can take advantage of.



a. The Handbook

In 2022, we are launching a brand new resource to guide our work on elections and democracy. The handbook is titled - Elections and Democracy

in Zimbabwe: Citizen Guide to Building a Culture of Effective Participation in Election and Democratic Processes. The Guide provides in simple language, all the essential information from various sources in one place, for the citizens to understand and play their role effectively. The manual can be used by activists, citizen observers or ordinary voters. It provides basic information on elections and related democratic processes. This includes information on the foundations of democracy in our laws, expert views on democracy, reflections on the role of citizens in democratic processes, understanding the processes that make democracy work, obstacles to participation and the role that ordinary people can play. You can download this handbook from the resources section on our website.



b. The Election Observation Checklist and Manual

This resource gives guidance to election observers on the electoral processes they need to observe before during and after

the election day. It also highlights key processes that happen on the election day and how the observers can participate in the processes.



c. Budding Democracy or Judicialisation: Lessons from Africa's Emerging Electoral Jurisprudence

This is a special resource, a book that was edited by Christopher

Mbazira and launched by the Africa Judges and Jurists Forum on 4 June 2021. In the Book, ZimRights National Director, Dzikamai Bere contributes a chapter titled Pre-Electoral Period: Election Environment, Law and Practice for Restoring the Promise of African Elections. In this chapter, Bere discusses the nightmare that comes with elections in Africa and offers some suggestions on transforming the situation and how courts can assist to transform the nightmare into a dream. The resource is available on the below link:

<https://electionjudgments.org/api/files/1622816572862hgdsok0u73w.pdf>

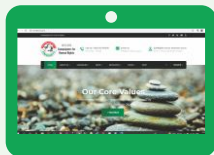


d. AKKC Platform

Our digital learning platform is an important tool for activists who may not have time to attend our Masterclass. It features our Masterclass on Building a

Culture of Effective Participation in Democratic Processes delivered online.

You can visit our website and follow the link to AKKC and register for the course which you can take and use at your convenience.



e. ZimRights Social Media Platforms

Through our social media platforms, we provide real time information and updates on our work under this zone. Currently, you will find a video skit on promoting voter registration,

<https://www.facebook.com/100044230699481/posts/497681778382841/?app=fbl>. It highlights the importance of voting and outlines the voter registration requirements for a citizen to be registered to vote.



WHAT CAN ONE DO TO PLUG INTO THIS ZONE?

There are many ways to plug into this initiative. If you are an active member of ZimRights, keep watch of the activities that are coming to your area. Stay in touch with your local chapter so that you do not lose these opportunities. Also watch our social media platforms.

If you are not a member of ZimRights, this is probably the best time to join ZimRights and start interacting with the Elections and Democracy Action Zone. Write to membership@zimrights.org.zw or use other details at the end of this document.

When you become a member of ZimRights, and you choose the Elections and Democracy Action Zone as your primary arena for action, all the resources mentioned here will be made available to you. First you will be invited to take Masterclass that makes you an official member of the zone. From there, a whole world of resources are at your disposal as a champion. Use these tools to promote civic participation in your community and contribute through various platforms. Through the Secretariat, you can enhance your knowledge on the country's electoral processes by registering more activities which will give you a real grounding in civic engagement and participation in democratic processes. We look forward to supporting your good work.



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**Elections are supposed to be empowering.
They must be a tool that enables hopeful participation
in the creation of a world of humanity's dreams.**

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DZIKAMAI BERE, 2021, AJJF.

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1992 - 2022