



# The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe

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## Summary

This report on Zimbabwe is one of a set of four country case studies designed to study the implications of closing civic space for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The case study was commissioned in response to the wave of legal, administrative, political and informal means to restrict civic space and the activities of civil society actors in countries around the world in the past decade. Based on a literature review and conceptual framework developed for the study (see also Hossain *et al* 2018), the report documents how changing civic space in Zimbabwe, a country characterized as a predatory authoritarian state, has impacted on development outcomes, with a focus on specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) outcomes, including poverty, hunger, economic development, inclusive cities, and inequality. The study found that:

- The ‘fit’ between civil society and the state has changed over time, from repression to cautious engagement, especially on the Constitution after 2009, but formal civil society has been weakened by years of oppression. With formal avenues for policy engagement closing after 2013, informal protest and other movements have entered the scene, enabled by the growth of digital public space.
- At the macro level, there are several indications that the restrictions on civic space helped allow the state to become increasingly predatory, with devastating effects on overall economic development (SDG 8), and poverty, hunger and nutrition levels (SDG 1, SDG 2).
- There is evidence that the Government deliberately prevented civil society from supporting Zimbabweans to address hunger and poverty, by denying or complicating access to specific areas and households within communities considered disloyal to the ruling ZANU-PF party. However, data from these hard-to-reach areas is scarce, and more fine-grained analysis of the role played by civil society in ensuring humanitarian aid delivery is needed.
- Extreme regional inequalities persist and deepen in part because civil society is unable to challenge corruption and the deliberate exclusion of certain populations.
- A period of relative openness under a Government of National Unity (GNU) saw an improvement in socio-economic policies through active engagement by civil society. The political stability and confidence in a coalition government led to re-engagement of donors, ensuring the GNU government had funds to promote recovery. At the same time, the introduction of the US dollar helped stabilize the economy and, in combination with political stability, this led to the re-engagement of investors.
- An indirect effect of the restricted civic space between 2000 and 2008 is that NGO and civil society lack the expertise and capacity to engage the state on macro-economic issues, to hold it accountable over public financial management - a key step towards policies to mitigate regional inequalities (SDG 10) - and so to prevent economic crises.
- Non-formalised civic movements that have recently emerged have mobilised around economic issues, which may have prompted the new ZANU-PF leadership to prioritise economic recovery to a certain extent. These new movements mobilise online and on the streets, and directly confronted the Government over malfunctioning and corruption.

It is too early to establish how the post-2018 Zimbabwean Government is likely to address the issues of civil society and civic space. The present study offers important, albeit limited, insights into the impacts of restricted and repressed civil society on key development outcomes, and highlights the need for further analysis of the roles of civil society in priority areas such as poverty, food security, and hunger.

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# 1. Introduction

## Background

This report on Zimbabwe is one of a set of four country case studies designed to study the implications of closing civic space for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It adopts a theoretical and analytical framework developed in a companion synthesis report, entitled *The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Development* (see also Hossain *et al* 2018). The study was commissioned from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) by the Act Alliance during 2017-18, in response to the wave of legal, administrative, political and informal means to restrict civic space and the activities of civil society actors in countries around the world in the past decade. It was motivated specifically by the need to assess the implications for development outcomes, as measured by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This reflects the wide body of evidence that civil society has played a significant role in promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable modes of development in the past, and reasonable concerns that closures of civic space may choke off pathways to the achievement of the SDGs. The study as a whole comprised:

- a review of the literature on closing civic space, and the development of a conceptual and methodological framework for further study
- an application of these frameworks to a desk-based analysis of the potential development implications of closing civic space in 12 selected countries of interest to the Act Alliance and its wider partnerships
- a subset of country case studies selected from the 12 for more detailed and empirical analysis of development impacts in selected policy domains (land rights, labour rights, social inclusion, gender equality, poverty, hunger, and urban livelihoods) where identified as of potential relevance in four countries: Brazil, Cambodia, Nepal, and Zimbabwe.

## Zimbabwe country case study

The country cases were selected in part to represent different pathways in the political economy of development. Zimbabwe represents a political settlement in which political power has, since national independence in 1980, been dominated by the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), with a brief interlude of power-sharing with opposition parties during a Government of National Unity (GNU) from 2009-13. Zimbabwe’s development trajectory is best characterized as an extreme case of predatory authoritarian rule, in which public policy has been geared towards benefiting a small elite and its supporters. The 2000s were marked by extreme economic volatility and food insecurity, including episodes of hyperinflation, drought and recurrent food crises requiring emergency humanitarian assistance at scale. Civic space has been closely shaped by the nature of the Zimbabwean regime. The democratic opening initiated by the GNU and constitutional reforms narrowed again once the ruling ZANU-PF resumed control of power after the 2013 elections. The main means through which civic space has been controlled since 2013 is through bureaucratic measures and the violation of socio-economic rights. By contrast, while civil and political rights continue to be violated, the situation has not returned to the same scale and intensity of political violence as prior to 2009.

In November 2017, the military brought an end to the rule of President Mugabe through what was internationally regarded a ‘soft coup’ (Chikowore and Davis 2018). The Presidency and leadership of ZANU-PF was taken over by former Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa, also a former army general and ally of Mugabe since the liberation struggle. ZANU-PF and President Mnangagwa won the 2018 elections with a narrow margin of 50.8 per cent, avoiding the need for a Presidential run-off. The election results were contested and the opposition MDC-Alliance<sup>1</sup> filed a court case, which it lost. International election observers were critical of certain flaws but condoned the elections, and therefore the international community considers the ZANU-PF government legitimate.<sup>2</sup> With

President Mnangagwa’s emphasis on economic recovery and openness to foreign investment, international investors and donors are planning to re-engage. However, despite an initial sense that civic space was becoming more liberal under this new political dispensation, it is not clear civil society and the media have been able to operate freely in the aftermath of the July 2018 elections. What happens to civic space depends on how the ZANU-PF leadership intends to hold on to and consolidate its power. Whereas President Mnangagwa may promote a discourse of unity and openness at national level, at the local level partisan agents may continue to enforce loyalty to the party through intimidation, as was visible just before the elections.<sup>3</sup>

The findings of the case study are set out as follows. The next section discusses the methodology of the study, the SDGs the research team focused on in this case study, and the pathways from civic space to development outcomes. Section 2 sets out the challenge of sustainable development in Zimbabwe, the political economy of development and the role of civil society in development. Section 3 presents the main findings from the interviews and fieldwork, analysing the implications for poverty, hunger and nutrition, macro-economic development, and urban poverty, through a closer look at the relevant SDGs, integrating analysis of the implications for SDG 10 (inequalities) throughout. Section 4 summarizes key findings from the analysis, and discusses some of the implications to address the potential adverse consequences of restrictions on civil society for the achievement of the SDGs.

## Methodology

The case study in Zimbabwe was conducted by one IDS researcher with expertise in civil society, urban livelihoods, and conflict in Africa, together with researchers from the University of Zimbabwe and the Research and Advocacy Unity, a civil-society-based research organisation in Harare.

The methodology for the Zimbabwe case study entailed two full-day workshops, one in Harare and one in Bulawayo (Matabeleland), with mainly NGO and media representatives. Discussions focused on the nature of civic space during the three political settlements (2000-2008; 2009-2013; 2013-2017), the implications for the activities of civil society, and the impact on the SDGs. In the Bulawayo workshop the discussion also focused on the specificities of marginalisation in the Matabeleland region. After the workshops a total of 16 key informant interviews was conducted in Harare and Bulawayo with civil society representatives from food aid and food security organisations, urban vendors, youth civil society and women’s organisations. In addition, the researchers collected secondary data and literature and collected and analysed civic space, statistical and development performance data to situate and illuminate the case further. This report provides no detail about the identity of respondents or names of the organisation they work for, in order to protect the security of respondents in this uncertain and potentially risky context. Participants identified other relevant experts and actors in key sectors willing to discuss these issues. While all research participants agreed that the ‘new political dispensation’ – the common phrase to refer to the situation after the soft coup- offered at least for the moment more space to organise workshops and interviews to discuss governance, the researchers nonetheless remained cautious in their discussion of government strategies for curtailing civic space, and their implications.

For many participants in the study, the Millennium Development Goals or Sustainable Development Goals were not part of their organisation’s discourse. Therefore, the research team prompted for programmes and policies that spoke most directly to the focal SDGs in the Zimbabwe context. These are summarised in Table 1

*Table 1 Selected SDGs*

<b>Sustainable development goal</b>	<b>Relevant policy or programme of focus</b>
SDG1 <i>No Poverty</i>	Food aid and food security programmes

& SDG2 <i>Zero hunger</i>	
SDG 8 <i>Decent work and economic growth</i>	Macroeconomic policies, specifically monetary and inflation policy The Indigenization Act Overall economic development
SDG 10 <i>Reduced Inequalities</i>	Regional inequalities Urban informal settlement policies
SDG 11 <i>Sustainable Cities and Communities</i>	Policies on the urban informal economy

### Traceable pathways of impact: civic space to development

Zimbabwe's marked tendency to economic and food crisis has been associated with the domination of power and restrictions on civil society and civic movements that prevent them holding government to account over corruption and misuse of public funds (HRW 2014). By contrast, during its brief experiment with a Government of National Unity between 2009 and 2013 in which ZANU-PF shared power with the MDC-T and MDC-M was a period of relative economic advancement and other progress, including control of inflation. Zimbabwe's dependence on humanitarian aid forced the government to at least open some operational space for humanitarian agencies to deliver relief. However, the delivery of humanitarian aid remains highly politicised at the local level.

The study examine the processes through which civil society (including the media, international human rights defenders, domestic CSOs, NGOs, and social movements) engaged with development processes throughout the period 2000-17, covering the three distinct political settlements and economic development outcome periods identified above for evidence of a) the nature of civic space and b) the impact of civic space on development outcomes, in particular on policy domains of relevance to SDG 1 'End poverty', SDG 2 'End hunger and achieve food security' ; SDG 8: 'Economic development'; SDG 11 'Inclusive cities'. (The post-Mugabe era from November 2017 was excluded because it was too recent to have seen any impacts).

For four selected goals (SDG 1 End poverty, SDG 2: End hunger and achieve food security; SDG 8: Economic development; SDG 11 Inclusive cities) the impact of restricted civic space on development occurs through at least four mechanisms. When civic space is restricted in predatory authoritarian settings such as Zimbabwe, the following outcomes with development implications are likely:

- i. Citizens lack civic space or 'civil' means of giving their feedback on economic policy, public services, or corruption. Under duress, this often gives rise to unruly forms of protest by groups adversely affected by public policy, including public sector workers, the urban poor, and informal sector workers. Such protests are frequently disruptive, and are frequently violently repressed by the state and its supporters
- ii. The scope for independent civil society actors to influence policymaking is reduced. Unsustainable or inequitable policies endure without pushback from political opposition, independent civil society or an independent media
- iii. Gross human right violations may push civic actors to focus on civic and political rights, often to the neglect of socio-economic rights
- iv. Humanitarian aid is often necessary in settings where states lack the systems or incentives to protect citizens against disasters or crises. Yet such states often retain political control, so that civil society groups involved in delivering emergency aid or food security may be restricted in their access to beneficiary populations, with direct adverse implications for hunger, nutrition, and poverty



- v. In combination with political uncertainty and a lack of state capacity for macroeconomic policy, this deters international donors and investors, with negative effects on the economy at large.

Given the regime's strategy of economic exclusion of (potential) opposition, it is likely that regions that have historically opposed the regime bear the brunt of state neglect. To research SDG 10 specifically, the study attempted to examine inequality in economic development between the southern Matabeleland region and other parts of the country. A violent 'Gukurahundi' campaign was waged against the Ndebele people of Matabeleland in the 1980s by the ruling ZANU-PF, and the region remains associated with support for the MDC-T.

The report and findings are structured according to three distinct phases in Zimbabwe's history that reflect difference in relative openness of civic space, with the period between 2000 and 2008 being the most difficult period for civil society to operate, the 2009-2013 GNU period the most open, and the 2013-2017 relatively closed but with potential lasting positive impact from the GNU. We therefore assumed that effect of different degrees of openness would be visible in terms of the development outcomes for each of the selected SDGs.

## 2. The political economy of development in Zimbabwe

This section describes key milestones in the political economy of development in Zimbabwe, as well as in civic space. After Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe developed into a one-party state, with the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) firmly in control. The balance of power shifted in the 2000s, when the hegemony of ZANU-PF was first challenged by the MDC. In response, the ZANU-PF regime stepped up its overt repression of the political opposition and civil society actors. The situation escalated from 2008 with the peak of the economic crisis and severe election violence, and the international community brokered the Government of National Unity (GNU, 2009-2013). ZANU-PF then went on to win the 2013 elections, ending the coalition government. The military 'soft coup' in November 2017, which led to the resignation of President Mugabe and change of ZANU-PF leadership, is a significant moment in Zimbabwe's history, of which the implications are not yet fully clear. The section is structured chronologically and discusses developments in Zimbabwe's political and economic situation, as well as the developments in civic space, in three parts. The first part discusses the developments that led to the crisis period 2008-2009, the second the GNU period, and the final part details the post-GNU period up to November 2017. Given the lack of documentation on civil society activity after 2013 the last section will include findings from our empirical study.

### Development up to 2009: from on track to middle-income status, to crisis

When coming to power in 1980, Mugabe and ZANU-PF inherited a strong, centralised state bureaucracy from the colonial era. Already in the 1980s it became clear that the ZANU-PF regime mobilised violence to consolidate its power, when thousands of civilians lost their lives during a military operation in the Matabeleland region between 1980 and 1987 called *Gukurahundi* launched to quell resistance against ZANU-PF (Alexander 1998; CCJP 1997; Dzimiri (2014)). It would be the deadliest period in Zimbabwe's history under ZANU-PF rule.

The regime developed an architecture for the organization of repression, state surveillance and election violence (McGregor 2002, 2013; Sachikonye 2011a; Sithole 2001). It has made use of state security agents as well as state-sponsored entities such as war veterans<sup>4</sup> and party youth to sustain surveillance. The regime has also used economic strategies to curtail potential opposition, by excluding opposition supporters from economic resources such as housing, jobs, farming inputs, market stalls and land (McGregor 2013). Controlling access to civil service jobs in rural areas helped the regime to extend its control into the local realm and promote loyalty to the party through nepotism (ibid). After 2002, similar strategies were applied to the city councils (McGregor 2013).

Within the typology set out for the overall study, Zimbabwe has been a dominant, nearly hegemonic, regime and largely predatory on the country's resources (Dawson and Kelsall 2013). Economic decline originated in the 1990s, and an International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank-sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was adopted (Carmody 1998). Large businesses with vested interests were consulted for the design of ESAP, whereas the peasantry and organized labour movements were marginalized in the process (Sachikonye 1995). ESAP involved the removal of subsidies and price controls as well as the termination of controls that denied employers the right to fire employees, after which companies laid off thousands of employees (Kamete 2006). Raftopolous and Phimister (2004:358) sum up the disastrous effects of ESAP:

*a decline in real wages from an index of 122 in 1982 to 88 in 1997; a drop in the share of real wages in the gross national income from 54 per cent in 1987 to 39 per cent in 1997; the figure of households living in poverty increased from 61 per cent in*

*1995 to 75 per cent in 2000; and employment growth decreased from an average of 2.4 per cent between 1985–90 to 1.55 per cent between the years 1991–7.*

Specific government actions in the late 1990s are considered to be the triggers of the Zimbabwe economic crisis that lasted from 2000 to 2008/9; actions that are symptomatic of a hegemonic, predatory state. In response to protests by organised war veterans, who could pose a real threat to ZANU-PF's power, the Government introduced a veteran pension and other benefits in 1997. This led to a loss in value of the Zimbabwe dollar against the American dollar of nearly 72 percent on 'Black Friday' in November 1997 (Dawson & Kelsall 2013). In 1998, Zimbabwe supported President Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to quell an insurgency, a highly costly involvement. Both were 'unbudgeted'. In the early 2000s, Zimbabwe entered a period of massive deindustrialisation, compounding to unemployment (Kamete 2006).

In 2000 the ZANU-PF government embarked on a rapid land reform process as part of a political project named the 'Third Chimurenga' or last phase of the liberation struggle that would lead to redistribution of land from white farmers to black Zimbabweans, and reduce rural poverty. The expropriation of farms saw the violent evictions of many farm-owners with 24-hour notice, with the pressure group Justice for Agriculture claiming that more than half of the expropriated farms were subsequently left derelict and abandoned (Magure, 2012). According to Zimbabwe's Ministry of Finance (2010), the agricultural sector recorded a sustained cumulative decline of 86 per cent between 2002 and 2009. The land reform programme destabilised the supply of agricultural inputs to a number of downstream processing industries, and reduced the demand for agricultural equipment and other farming inputs, destroying the agriculture sector that was the backbone of Zimbabwe's once fairly diversified economy (Magure, 2012). Apart from economic mismanagement, the ZANU-PF government also stands accused of misappropriation of national resources and funds, which were redirected to party officials and their networks. For instance, a Joint Operations Command (JOC) of security chiefs took over key policy making functions from the Cabinet, and ZANU-PF and the armed forces appropriated funds from the Reserve Bank (Bratton and Masunungure 2011).

The period of 2000-2008 has been described as the 'lost decade' or 'Zimbabwe crisis' due to the devastation of the economy and public services, combined with increasing levels of state repression (Sachikonye 2011b). By 2009, Zimbabwe became what can be called an 'insecurity' state, i.e. a state that actively undermines the welfare of its citizens (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). The Zimbabwean economy had collapsed, shrinking in nine of the preceding ten years. Formerly ranked by the World Bank as a middle-income country, Zimbabwe's economy lost about 54 per cent of its productive potential between 2000 and 2010 (Magure, 2012). The country's Human Development ranking sank from 35 in 1989, to 71 in 2002, and further to 151 (out of 177 countries) in 2009 (see also Table 2). Life expectancy fell by one-quarter, teachers, doctors and nurses were paid irregularly, and cholera broke out in late 2008 (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). Despite mass emigration, unemployment was estimated at 80 percent in early 2009, and the Government's vast budget deficit (reaching almost 100 percent of GDP in 2007) pushed inflation higher (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). It is notable that the country made far faster gains in the 2010-15 period than in the preceding two decades, suggesting that the period of political power-sharing may have helped drive more distributive public policies and more stable macro-fiscal policies that benefited human development, as will be explored in more detail below.

Table 2 Human development in Zimbabwe and comparators

	Human Development Index (HDI) (value)				Average annual HDI growth (%)			
	1990	2000	2010	2015	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2015	1990-2015
Zimbabwe	0.50	0.43	0.45	0.52	-1.55	0.57	2.67	0.13
Low human development	0.36	0.39	0.48	0.50	0.89	2.02	0.92	1.35
Developing countries	0.51	0.57	0.64	0.67	1.02	1.18	0.85	1.05
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.40	0.42	0.50	0.52	0.54	1.67	1.04	1.09
Least developed countries	0.35	0.40	0.48	0.51	1.40	1.90	1.08	1.54

Source: 1 Human Development Index

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), Zimbabwe's Department of Social Services was extremely understaffed and under-financed, and the delivery of other social protection mechanisms such as Public Assistance, health and school fee waivers, and public works programmes, had been crippled by the crisis (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). A large proportion of Zimbabwe's poor was now dependent on food aid provided by donors or remittances from kin living abroad.

In response to worsening economic conditions and the erosion of public services, large-scale protests were organised by the labour and student movements in the late 1990s. The National Constitutional Alliance (NCA) formed in 1997 out of a coalition of civic organisations and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), in order to debate and challenge proposed constitutional reforms (Dorman 2016). It was out of this coalition that the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was born under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai. In 2000, the Government lost the referendum on the draft Constitution due to the mobilisation by the NCA, and in sub-sequent elections the MDC gained a significant share of the votes, especially in urban areas (Sithole 2001). ZANU-PF now started to clamp down on the opposition and civil society.

After 2000, increased investment in surveillance became a strategy to control MDC politicians and (suspected) supporters, and civil society (Alexander & McGregor 2013). The state operated a sophisticated system of surveillance from the highest political level down to the local level, with a prominent role for the police and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO, secret police), which has an estimated 10,000 employees and a network of informants; ZANU-PF agents actively threatened opposition supporters and conduct low-tech surveillance (McGregor 2013).

During the crisis period, legislation was also introduced to restrict NGOs and media, immediately after the elections in which MDC won a significant share of the votes. In 2002, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), came into effect giving much power to the Zimbabwe police. Civic groups, priests and NGOs have been the major targets of POSA, hundreds of MDC rallies were banned, and MDC members and activists were arrested for treason (Dorman 2016). A highly restrictive Media Law was also introduced in 2002, as well as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) which has been used to curtail the independent media and foreign journalists with fines and imprisonment. Many journalists were charged with publishing false information under the AIPPA, but none from the state media, raising concerns about the selective application of this law (Ndlovu, 2015; Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004; Sachikonye, 2002). The General Laws Amendment Bill of 2002, later declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, barred external election observers and undercut the role of civic organizations in the electoral process (Sachikonye, 2002). The 2004 Non-Governmental Organizations Bill increased scrutiny of human rights groups and explicitly prohibited them from receiving foreign funds.<sup>5</sup>

During the 2000-2008 crisis period many cases of torture and murder also occurred, as well as the disappearance of opposition members and supporters, and civil society activists and journalists (Dorman 2016). Election violence peaked in 2008 in the run-up to the Presidential elections, resulting in the withdrawal of MDC's presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai from the Presidential run-off elections (Hammar 2008). The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) intervened to broker the 'Zimbabwe's rival elite coalitions into an awkward power-sharing settlement' (Bratton and Masunungure 2011, 23). Overall, the 2000-2008 period witnessed a significant reduction of civic space, both through formal measures in restrictive legislation as well as through surveillance, intimidation and violence.

### The Government of National Unity (GNU) period, 2009-2013

In September 2008 the three major political parties (MDC-T, led by Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC-M led by Arthur Mutambara, and ZANU-PF of President Robert Mugabe) signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA), establishing the Government of National Unity (GNU). The main objective of the agreement was to bring the crisis under control, stabilise the country, and work towards a permanent resolution (Mpofu, 2016). ZANU-PF was allocated 14 ministries (including Defence, Justice, Home Affairs and Mining), MDC-T was allocated 13 ministries (including Finance and most portfolios involving service delivery) and MDC-M three (including Education). ZANU-PF was widely seen as having taken key portfolios, leaving the MDC factions with the responsibility for service delivery without adequate funding (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016).

Between 2009-2013, MDC ministers oversaw a series of important reforms that contributed to the stabilization of the economy, a decrease in levels of hunger, and the consolidation and expansion of state programmes. Further, the dollarization of Zimbabwe's currency in 2009 led to the return of foreign direct investment to some degree. Despite being limited by debt arrears (then USD 7 billion), the Zimbabwean government was also able to borrow USD 1.2 billion offshore in the period from 2010 to 2012 (Freeman, 2014). Reforms were not necessarily due to the MDC-T being a more 'social democratic' party than ZANU-PF, but rather because it had better relations with foreign donors and worked closely with them and local NGOs on both existing programmes and innovative reforms (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). Once the GNU was formed, Western funds poured in; the EU and its member states provided more than USD 2 billion for assistance to education, water, sanitation, health, agriculture and food aid (Freeman, 2014)., and Muchadenyika (2016:1338) summarizes how international donors in Zimbabwe were active in five Multi Dollar Trust Funds (MDTFs), an aid modality that had become popular in fragile settings due to the Busan agenda: the Education Transition Fund, and Health Transition Fund (both UNICEF managed), Analytical Multi-donor Trust Fund and Results-based Financing Trust Fund (both World Bank managed) and the Zimbabwe Multi-donor Trust Fund (Zim-Fund) (African Development Bank managed).

Reforms adopted during the GNU period led to a shift from emergency food aid to food (or cash)-for-work programmes, later transformed into food (or cash)-for-assets programmes, and cash transfers (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). The state and donors collaborated to introduce a new Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme for households without adults fit to work, with the goal of reaching the poorest 10 percent of the population. Growing numbers of poor Zimbabweans received benefits in the form of food or cash, and potentially larger numbers benefited from investments in infrastructure (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). While these reforms were important – not only stopping the decline in state capacity but reversing it – they were partial and limited by a number of factors, particularly the highly unequal division of power and resources between ZANU-PF and the MDC factions. ZANU-PF controlled the key resource of mining revenues and withheld these from the MDC-controlled Ministry of Finance, leaving MDC Ministers reliant on sums brought in by donors and international agencies. MDC Ministers lacked know-how and

experience and struggled to work with Permanent Secretaries appointed by Mugabe, and donors and agencies such as UNICEF operated in effect almost as a 'shadow government' (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016).

The GNU enabled a notable relaxation in the political environment. The legal space for civil society improved as some of the most repressive elements of the POSA and AIPPA were revoked, but Section 27 of POSA was maintained, which allowed the police to prohibit public demonstrations if there were suspicions they could result in public disorder. Attacks on NGO activities and staff were less overt during the GNU period, but prominent civil society activists and journalists continued to be arrested during the GNU. Repression continued in more subtle forms of lengthy legal battles against certain activities and charges over lack of registration and licences (Dorman 2016). The government lifted restrictions on a previously banned daily newspaper, The Daily News and in February 2010 established the Zimbabwe Media Commission (HRW, 2010). Several new titles emerged in the print media market (Mpofu, 2016).

Dorman (2016:200) highlights the major challenges to the effective performance of civil society during the GNU. First of all, the transition of the MDC into a government role made it difficult for civil society to provide independent scrutiny of their performance. Civil society leaders felt 'crowded out' by politicians (ibid). Secondly, the process of the drafting of the new Constitution, led by the Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC), dominated the focus and activities by civil society. Unlike in the late 1990s when the civic NCA coalition had been the driver behind consultation and awareness raising of the draft constitution, political parties were now the driving force, enabled by donor funds. Furthermore, divisions within the MDC also posed challenges to the labour movement and NGOs, creating rifts between potential allies. Since donors limited their funding of civil society to humanitarian or good governance projects, CSOs were less well-resourced to focus on macroeconomic and development policy (Dorman 2016:203)

At local levels, intimidation continued to some extent. The process of public consultations on the draft constitution was marred by intimidation and violence by ZANU-PF supporters, leading to the disruption and cancellation of at least 23 constitutional outreach meetings in Manicaland and Harare. Soldiers abetted the intimidation and police did little to curb the violence and protect the freedom of speech and assembly (Dziva et al., 2013). However, a new development was the increased diffusion of the internet and digital platforms during the GNU period, which provided the expansion of communicative spaces and voices, such as e-newsletters, forums, email lists, etc. There is limited evidence on the impact of online activism and the impacts of ICTs on civil society in Zimbabwe to date, however.

### Post-GNU, 2013-2017

The period of ZANU-PF rule from 2013 to the end of 2017 was characterized by political uncertainty. ZANU-PF was plagued by fierce infighting and factional struggles around the succession to Robert Mugabe. The main opposition party MDC-T struggled to recover from its junior position in the GNU, its own corruption scandals and internal leadership battles, and failed to exploit the situation to expand its power base (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018).

With the ruling elite preoccupied with the factionalism and succession struggle, the economic situation was neglected and conditions have worsened. ZANU-PF's recommitment to the policy of indigenisation led foreign direct investment to plummet once again, and the acceleration of deindustrialisation caused job losses in 2014 (Freeman, 2014). Large company closures and a wave of dismissals after 2013 saw unemployment rates rise to 80 per cent, with many Zimbabweans having to find additional income in the growing informal sector (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018). The

government struggled to secure financial assistance from international financial institutions, the West, or China, and was forced to borrow to finance recurrent expenditures (Freeman, 2014). According to the World Bank, economic growth slowed further post-2015, falling from 2.3 per cent in 2015 to 0.5 per cent in 2016. Exports further fell by 50 per cent to USD 3.4 billion in 2016, with the deficit expected to reach over USD 1 billion (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018).

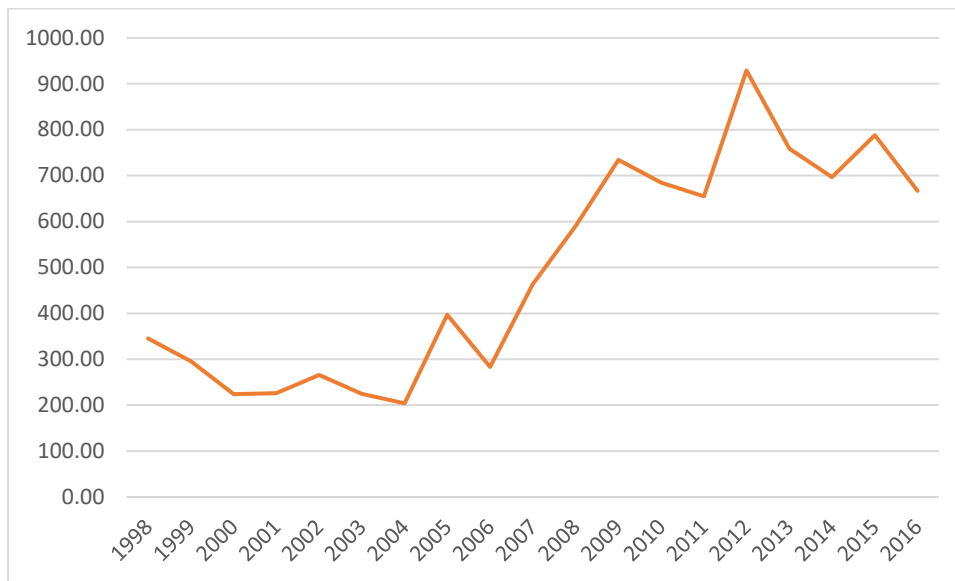
While many of the reforms and social protection programmes adopted during the GNU were slowed by the successive ZANU-PF government, they were not entirely reversed. The expansion of the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme was halted, but donors continued to provide for existing beneficiaries in participating districts. The government further assumed responsibility for some programmes, particularly the school fee subsidy programme Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). The relationship between ZANU-PF and foreign donors deteriorated post-GNU, but did not regress to pre-2009 hostility, suggesting that despite the curtailment of several provisions, the effects of the GNU endured to some degree (Chinyoka and Seekings, 2016). Continuing dependence on humanitarian aid shows that the political settlement is also shaped by Zimbabwe's engagement with the international community.

The ZANU-PF government attempted to institute new reforms, including the addition of an element of flexibility to the Government's indigenization policy (which in its new form, continues to act as a deterrent to investment), a new Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement programme (allowing farmers to lease land for 99 years and use the lease as collateral to secure loans), and a promise to provide 'fair compensation' to the estimated 4,800 white farmers forced off their land during the forced evictions and land seizures that began in the 2000s (Schneidman, 2016). In the context of economic crisis and a severe lack of funds, however, the strength of ZANU-PF's commitment and its capacity to implement reforms remains to be seen.

There is little published research on the nature of civic space and organised civil society and NGO activity in the post-GNU period. Therefore this section discusses some of the existing literature as well as findings from our study on recent trends in civic space. The post-2013 era, after the end of the GNU when ZANU-PF was back in power, is best described as a liminal and uncertain phase. One respondent working for an NGO described the 2013 election result as a shock: 'The question that we asked as civic society was whether to engage or whether not to re-engage [with the Government]. I think that question took us even way into 2014.' Contributing to the uncertainty about civic space was the intensified factionalism within all political parties. For NGOs this created some confusion at operational level as certain officials they had worked with were suddenly 'out of favour' and removed from office, and certain community groups were divided.<sup>6</sup> Vendor associations that had developed relationships with some politicians found themselves cut-off from access to power. Youth looking for work now had to assess the political affiliation of the people they approached for jobs and decide whether it was worth taking the risk when approaching someone aligned with a rebel ZANU-PF faction (Oosterom 2019).

Donors were also reluctant to fund the Government. Figure 1 depicts the net development assistance received, showing international engagement during the GNU and a plunge after 2013.

Figure 1 Net ODA and official aid received (millions, in constant 2015 USD prices)



Source: 2 World Development Indicators

In terms of policy engagement by civil society, the adoption of the Constitution offered some security for their activities post-2013, even though much legislation is still to be developed and implemented. Workshop participants agreed that from 2013-2017 there was less openness to engage the Government compared to during the GNU, especially on issues like youth, governance and accountability. ZANU-PF was no longer under threat and no longer felt the pressure to be accountable. The discourse of civil society as inherently anti-government has been revived, and civil society is cautious about any form of community mobilisation. Meetings have been attended and disrupted by the police and Central Intelligence Officers (CIOs, the secret police) more frequently than during the GNU. A representative from an organisation working on informal settlement issues said:

*We need to operate in a way which does not seem threatening. We are conscious and careful of our space and the wording. If you utter the word 'governance' in the community, you are automatically perceived as anti-establishment. It's even worse to talk about civic education or human rights. We have a project that speaks to those issues but in terms of messaging, you present it in a way which is non-threatening but at the same time we are empowering communities to participate in local government.<sup>7</sup>*

A representative from a human rights organisation, who had been involved in monitoring and documenting of human rights violations since the mid-2000s, indicated that since the GNU period there had been fewer cases of civil and political rights violations, compared to the 2000-2008 crisis period. The 2013 elections were not violent like previous elections, although a level of intimidation persisted. Occasional grave human rights violations such as rape, abduction and torture do happen, like the disappearance of journalist Itai Dzamara in 2015. Dzamara led the protest #OccupyAfricaUnitySquare, demanding Mugabe to step down. Another activist from this group, Roy Issa, died under suspicious circumstances, allegedly murdered by the CIO.<sup>8</sup> If civil and political rights violations are fewer than in the pre-GNU period, this may reflect the effects of the new Constitution, the lasting effects of the GNU, and the lack of a political threat due to the fragmentation of the opposition parties.



However, a new trend in human rights violations appears to be an increase in violations of socio-economic rights, according to human rights organisations interviewed. At the local level, people are being denied access to services and resources based on party affiliation. This is not a new strategy, as it is well-documented that party patronage affects the allocation of civil service jobs (McGregor 2000, 2013), farming inputs and market stands (DzImiri 2014; Kamete 2010). However, respondents said that land invasions, land evictions and partisan influence over access to housing have become 'contagious'.<sup>9</sup> The human rights organisation therefore has expanded its work to monitoring socio-economic rights:

*In terms of open forms of violence there has been some noted decrease, but we cannot talk of an open environment yet because cases of intimidation, harassment and discrimination are still rife.*<sup>10</sup>

Another trend is new efforts to exert formal and informal control over access to target groups. Service delivery NGOs reported that bureaucratic procedures to implement programmes in communities have become more complicated since 2013.<sup>11</sup> In particular in order to access rural communities, NGOs interviewed and workshop participants agreed that there is an increase in the number of gatekeepers from whom NGOs need to seek permission, either through further paperwork on top of MOUs or by paying them off. They also find they have to submit more paperwork, and that it is checked in detail. Participants in the Bulawayo workshop said that organisations that have funds to do human rights work or civic engagement find that on submitting paper work to RDCs they are asked to elaborate on activities, to submit the curriculum used in trainings, and even to present to officials first. Those who give previews are subjected to interrogations about concepts, anticipated outcomes etc. RDC officials may insist on accompanying them to the activities.<sup>12</sup> One implication is that NGOs have shifted from convening large public meetings to organising many small groups of only 5 – 8 people in people's homes. This, together with the need to pay off officials and gatekeepers, has increased transaction costs, but can be hard to justify to donors.<sup>13</sup>

The new political dispensation was not the specific focus of this study, but workshop participants did comment that there had been a reduction in surveillance by police and CIOs over public meetings since December 2017. However, everyone was still cautious, knowing that, as one respondent put it, 'When ZANU needs to be ZANU, ZANU will be ZANU'<sup>14</sup> – referring to the readiness of the party to use repression if it deems necessary.

### New #-movements

New urban movements, combining online activism and street protests, have been documented recently (Gukurume 2017). The spread of internet access, ICTs, and social media has fuelled civic action post-2013. Over half of the population now has internet access. The rapid growth of mobile phone services led to a burgeoning popularity of social media amongst the youth in urban areas, who constituted the majority of participants in movements known as #ThisFlag, the #Tajamuka movement linked to urban informal vendors, and #ThisGown initiated by unemployed graduates (Gukurume, 2017). These movements emerged in direct response to increasing hardship that was believed to be caused by corruption and bad governance (Gukurume 2017).

All #-movements combined online with offline activity, with for instance #ThisGown graduates working as street vendors in their graduation gown to critique unemployment. The #ThisFlag protest became significant as it provoked government response. Pastor Mwarire, leader of the #ThisFlag movement, called for a national stay-away which was dubbed 'Shutdown Zimbabwe,' on 6 July 2016. Many people in Harare did not go to work and businesses shut their shops on that day for a boycott

in protest against the Government. Although state media reported that it was business as usual, the reality on the ground and pictures circulated through social media and independent newspapers indicated that business came to a total halt across the country (Gukurume, 2017). The arrest of Pastor Mawarire under the POSA law only strengthened support for the movement. Thousands of supporters came to the provincial magistrate's court in solidarity with Pastor Mawarire during his trial on 12 July 2016 (Gukurume, 2017). Initially the response from the ZANU-PF government was ambivalent and derisive. However, the Government tried to crush the protests through the intimidation and arrest of protest organisers. The government sought to construe anti-government protestors as dissidents and 'enemies of the state'. Threats against protesting citizens were not only made by the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), but also by the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP). In 2018 Pastor Mawarire stood for elections in Harare, but lost.

Interviews with these new movements shed interesting light on changing civic space, the fragmentation of civil society, and the lack of synergies between many established NGOs and these new movements. A member of #ThisFlag said:

*Besides dealing with establishment [government] we had to deal with an almost jealous civic society. Envy. Like we had stolen their limelight, and doing it with much less – we had no donor support! In civic society [NGO] lenses we had not consulted 'the professionals' or done things the way they were supposed to be done. We had no logframe. Some were supportive, some human rights lawyers for sure, but not the majority.<sup>15</sup>*

The new Constitution and the fact that ZANU-PF did not resume the repressive tactics used between 2000-2008, has also enabled these movements to continue. However, in August 2016, the Government drafted a cybercrime bill that criminalised cyber activism, thereby closing off any possibility for people to use social media to mobilise politically. The Bill makes it easy for the Government to target its perceived political opponents who mobilise protests through social media. The effects of the Bill on civil society organising are yet unclear.

### 3. From changes in civic space to SDG outcomes

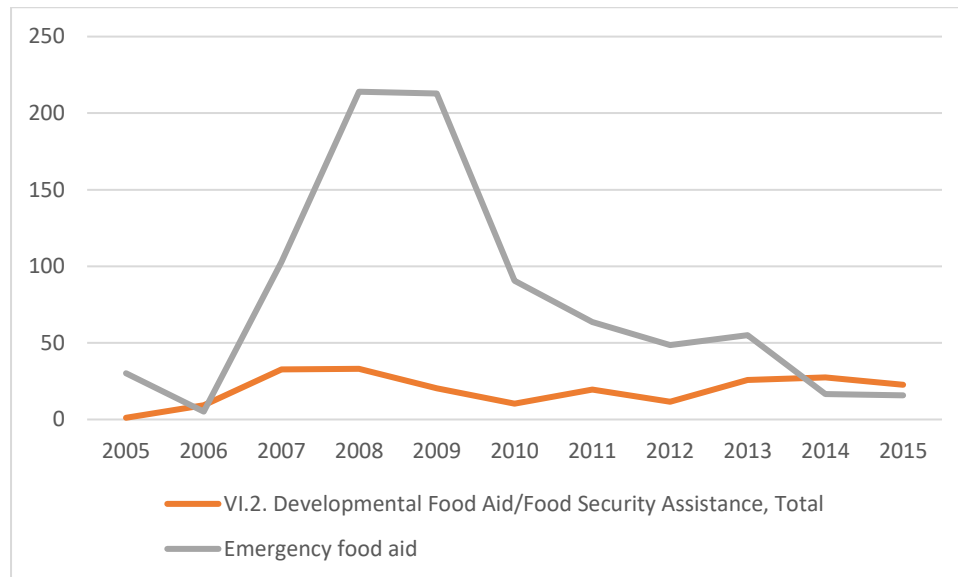
#### SDG1 and SDG2 - poverty, hunger and nutrition

Poverty, hunger and nutrition have been persistent problems in Zimbabwe since Independence in 1980. Existing literature and the findings from this study suggest that while civic space was severely restricted between 2000 and 2008, the Government allowed humanitarian organisations to deliver relief. This mitigated hunger and malnutrition, but politics still interfered with their work. During this period there was no space to hold government accountable for mismanagement of economic resources that produced the crisis. The GNU period offered more openings for collaboration with government, especially MDC-T controlled ministries, and more space for civil society to access communities and deliver services. After 2013, the Government resorted to bureaucratic measures that limited the operations of civic actors, rather than using direct harassment or violence.

Food aid increased steadily after 2002 when the country started experiencing droughts, the effects of which were reinforced in several areas by limited agricultural productivity as the result of the land reforms (see Figure 2). Despite the heavy crackdown on civil society during 2000-2008, there was space for humanitarian food aid distribution to continue. During the peak of the crisis, the WFP distributed a total of 342,000 tons of food aid in 2008, and a further 244,000 tons in 2009. The total number of reported beneficiaries was 7 million in 2008 at the peak of the Zimbabwe crisis, going

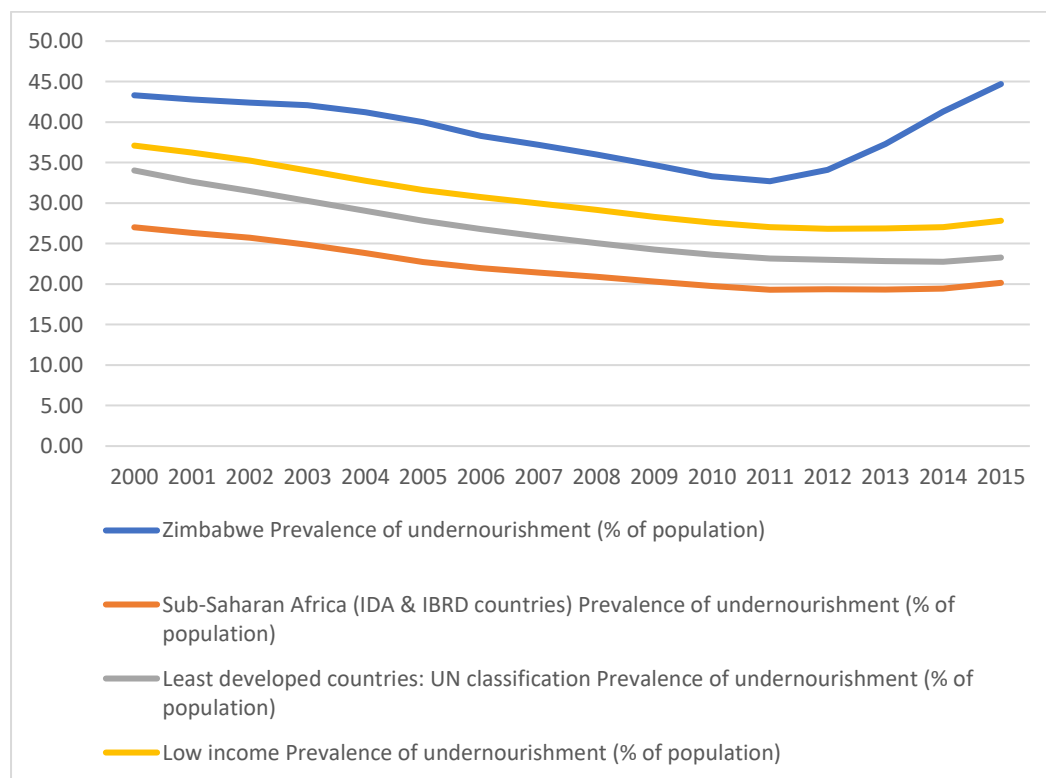
down to 5.3 million in 2009. As conditions stabilised under the GNU, the volume of food aid distributed fell to 83,000 tons in 2010, and then to 46,000 tons in 2011 and 37,000 tons in 2012. The number of beneficiaries dropped to 1.8 million in 2010. Over the 32 months between May 2008 and the end of 2010, the WFP spent USD 600 million on food, mostly on the Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme, as well as USD 2 million distributed as cash transfers (WFP, 2012a: 8, 24).

Figure 2 Development and emergency food aid (DAC countries) to Zimbabwe (in USD millions, current prices)



Source: 3 OECD DAC QWIDS

Figure 3 Prevalence of undernourishment, Zimbabwe and comparators



Source: 4 World Development Indicators

Figure 3 graphs the prevalence of undernourishment in Zimbabwe compared to other countries in the region and at comparable levels of development. During the GNU, social protection programmes with developmental aims were established, and funding for food aid declined after 2011 (Chinyoka & Seekings 2016), reflecting a shift in donor priorities rather than in the domestic civic space. It shows that Zimbabwe has had a consistently higher proportion of the population facing undernourishment than in other countries, and while this figure had declined, the situation worsened again after 2011, with the drought affecting the wider southern African region.

Table 3 Prevalence of child wasting and stunting in Zimbabwe, 1990-2015

Prevalence of wasting in children under five years (%)				Prevalence of stunting in children under five years (%)			
1990–94	1998–2002	2006–10	2011–15	1990–94	1998–2002	2006–10	2011–15
5	9	4	3	29	34	35	27

Note: Figures are rounded. Source: 5 International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); Welthungerhilfe (WHH); Concern Worldwide, 2016, "2016 Global Hunger Index Data", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LU8KRU>, Harvard Dataverse, V1; accessed April 22, 2018

Zimbabwe continued to make (slow) progress to reduce child wasting and stunting over the period (see Table 3), yet the effects of El Nino and two consecutive seasons of limited rainfall were disastrous for successive harvests, pushing vast numbers of Zimbabweans back into severe food insecurity, peaking in Zimbabwe in 2016 as the numbers of families facing hunger doubled within an eight-month period. The 2016 Rural Livelihoods Assessment estimated that 4.1 million rural people were food insecure that year. The Government responded with domestic and international appeals for food aid. Over the period October 2015 through to May 2017, Government distributed more than 550,000 tons of maize grain to food insecure households, and the UN with NGO partners imported and distributed 39,423 tons of maize grain between February 2016 and May 2017 (WFP 2017). The most common form of support received by households was food (59 per cent) followed by crop inputs (34 per cent) and the highest proportion of households receiving food were in Matabeleland North (69 per cent) and Matabeleland South (67 per cent).

However, national level data and trends do not show the fine-grained detail of the political challenges to delivering food aid, or the strong state on who has access to food aid. From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, the Government had responded to drought with food-for-work and school feeding programmes. The ZANU-PF government shifted to discretionary food aid after 2000 when facing a political challenge from the opposition, as food aid is more easily controlled and used for party patronage and therefore for building political support (Chinyoka and Seekings 2016).

The ZANU-PF government has also preferred agrarian welfare regimes (addressing risks of poverty primarily through agricultural production), thus favouring farm input subsidy programmes and at times even resisting cash transfer programmes (Chinyoka 2017). Interviews with humanitarian actors confirmed the widespread involvement of ZANU-PF agents in the allocation of relief and also farming inputs.<sup>16</sup> In rural areas the identification of beneficiaries for relief and farming inputs is usually controlled by the *sabhuku* (village head), who is appointed and usually associated with ZANU-PF (McGregor 2013; Oosterom 2019). The politicisation of distribution processes appears frequently in the media, and have been documented by human rights organisations.<sup>17</sup>

In 2002, the Government spent heavily on food relief, but as conditions worsened it slowly ceded control over food aid to donors, with WFP becoming involved in 2002 (Chinyoka & Seekings 2016). In 2004 President Mugabe expelled WFP and humanitarian actors, claiming that the harvests were sufficient and food aid was no longer required. It was however believed it did not want these actors to access rural areas during the 2005 election period (ibid). After the 2005 elections, the Government allowed food aid to resume. However, between 2006-2008 it became critical of food aid, claiming that the land reform process of the early 2000s had been successful in stimulating agricultural production and alleviating poverty (ibid). Yet the crisis deepened, and more people needed humanitarian aid. By 2008 nearly 7 million people –more than half the population – received donor-funded food aid, mostly during the peak hunger period of November through March (ibid.).

During 2000-2008 any civil society activity in communities could be interpreted by state agents as mobilisation for the opposition. While Government needed external actors involved in food aid, the message was clear: activities had to be limited to food aid distribution. In 2003, the Government issued the 'Policy on operations on non-governmental organisations in humanitarian and development assistance' that set out registration and clearance requirements at different levels of Government, as well as reporting requirements.<sup>18</sup> In the words of a Harare participant: '*If you're giving out goats and maize, you're government's friend. If you're asking, 'why are you poor', then not.*'<sup>19</sup> Organisations thus had to carefully frame their activities as strictly humanitarian. Even so, if some areas were considered 'sensitive' or 'politicised' then international NGOs could decide to withdraw due to protection and duty of care standards.<sup>20</sup> In the early 2000s, agencies faced challenges accessing the large numbers of ex-farm workers that were displaced due to the land reforms:

*Many [ex-farm workers] were inaccessible, large areas were cordoned off from NGOs. From government side you were given the impression that trying to assist them was implying that the Government was failing them. And donors would say "you cannot work on contested land" as they disagreed with the violent evictions and land reform. Many farms were on the red zone. You could not get money from government, nor from donors to assist these farm workers.*<sup>21</sup>

In terms of collaboration with the state during 2000-2008, clearly NGOs could not question accessibility restrictions, or the acute vulnerability of ex-farm workers who got displaced. The same applied to the conditions of residents of informal settlements that were uprooted in eviction campaigns.<sup>22</sup> In sum, during periods of increased political risk humanitarian organisations thus faced problems accessing certain geographical areas as well as certain 'politically sensitive' population groups, like farm workers.

The interviews indicated that it became relatively easier for humanitarian NGOs to access communities during the GNU period (2009-2013), including in previous 'no-go' areas. However, interviewees stated that some areas remained very difficult to access, and that humanitarian organisations had been unable to access certain localities in election years, saying they were 'cordoned off' for political reasons. One respondent recalled that ZANU-PF took over the food distribution months before the election and distributed bags bearing the picture of their candidate.<sup>23</sup> When food aid is funded by countries like Russia and China it is likely to be channelled to ZANU-PF supporters, according to one respondent.<sup>24</sup>

One respondent explains what happens on the ground, and the inability of civil society to challenge partisan food distribution in this context:

*Whilst the national government would have signed an MOU with the donor, when you go to the field level now, you have to deal with the chief and his own organogram and his*

*councillors. They are the ones who decide who gets the food. While you [as civil society] are pushing that the food is for vulnerable communities, it's the local people that define who is going to be vulnerable, so you find that the process is politicized. The chief or whoever is responsible for distribution, is the one who comes up with the list and gives whomever they deem fit to benefit. The [civil society] organisers can only do so much in terms of controlling the community processes otherwise you will have trouble working in those areas.<sup>25</sup>*

When specific areas, population groups (like ex-farm workers or displaced informal dwellers), and individuals who support the opposition are *systematically* deprived of food aid for a period of time, this is likely to have a negative impact. The extent of the impact may be measured when specific areas or communities were excluded entirely, if data on such areas exist.

After 2013, as donors became hesitant to support a ZANU-PF government, support for food aid declined. One respondent indicated she worked on a programme of USD 50 million during the GNU, but funding reduced to USD 5 million in 2016-2017. In areas like Hwange and Binga the organisation is now thinly-spread, while she felt a majority of households remains in need of humanitarian assistance. Rather than a direct impact of the ZANU-PF government on civic space, the indirect, deterring effect it had on the willingness of donors to fund humanitarian aid is now a major challenge. At the same time, humanitarian actors concur with other civil society organisations that it has become increasingly difficult to obtain clearance for activities and establish Memoranda of Understandings with district administrators, with procedures having become more complicated and cumbersome than in the past.<sup>26</sup>

Representatives from NGOs implementing food security programmes gave similar responses to those delivering humanitarian aid. During the crisis period 2000-2008, essential farming inputs were lacking.<sup>27</sup> It was hard for NGOs to access communities and some localities were entirely inaccessible. Their programmes involved transfer of technical know-how and inputs, and conditions did not allow for using or mentioning rights-based approaches. Transfer of capital and farming inputs was politicised in similar ways, and action to strengthen accountability was impossible. Accessibility improved during the GNU, and NGOs were able to collaborate more easily with the Ministry of Agriculture and extension officers.<sup>28</sup> Food security organisations also reported that bureaucratic processes became more cumbersome after 2013. One respondent recalled the organisation decided to withdraw from two districts post-2013 after efforts to get permissions produced no result, ending their activities with 2,000 beneficiaries.<sup>29</sup>

## SDG 8 Economic development

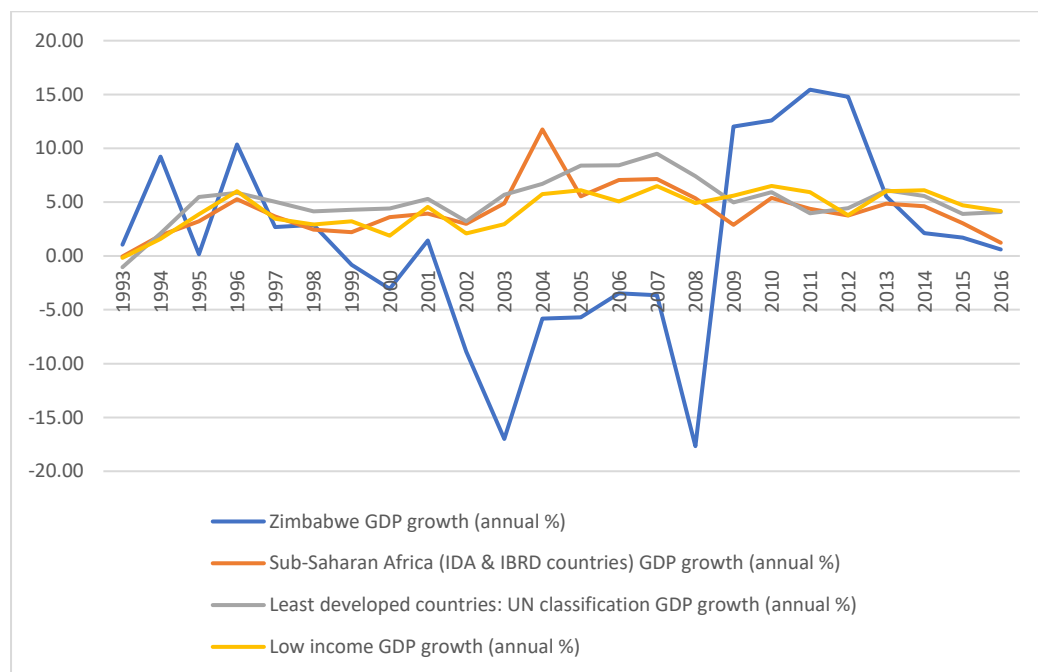
This section discusses the opening of civic space during the GNU period, and its contribution to the achievement of economic stabilisation and some recovery in its short tenure. It should be noted that this likely to have owed less to the effect of increased involvement of civic actors than to the increase in donor funding, as many international aid trusted the MDC more than ZANU-PF (Dorman 2016); these changes are also likely to owe the improvements in the economic climate for foreign investment and domestic economic activity at this time.

As has been noted, the economic crisis was largely the result of economic mismanagement. ZANU-PF had been able to redirect resources such as land s and access to diamond mines to ZANU-PF elites and networks in order to maintain its position in power, including to war veterans and the military (McGregor 2003; Marongwe 2011; Saunders 2011, 2014). The ZANU-PF Government failed to demonstrate commitment to the rule of law and protection of private property rights, while foreign investors prefer countries where property rights are respected, and the judiciary is independent (Magure 2012). Authoritarian governance and the lack of civic space resulted in economic crisis,

which was then compounded by the political crisis that escalated in 2008 due to excessive election violence and hyperinflation, after which a Government of National Unity (GNU) was negotiated through the involvement of SADC. Throughout the early 2000s these conditions were compounded by a drought affecting much of the region.

The effects of the decade of economic crisis have been vast. The World Bank noted it had compromised basic service delivery, public sector capacity, infrastructure maintenance and the investment climate for the private sector (World Bank 2013). Figure 4 illustrates the fluctuations in economic growth over the crisis of 2000-2008, the period of stabilisation and improvement during the GNU period, and the decline from 2013 onwards.

Figure 4 GDP growth, Zimbabwe and comparator regional averages



Source: 6 World Development Indicators

Until the early 2000s, civil society and media had mobilised to protest government actions and its impact on the economy. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, mass protests were mobilised by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and other civil society organisations over the worsening economic crisis, deepening poverty levels and shortage of basic commodities. It was out of this civic movement that a political movement developed, and the MDC was formed. The state responded with a violent crackdown on the protests from 2000 onwards, and legal restrictions on civic space. What emerged from both workshops and all the interviews was that many civil society actors shifted their focus to documenting the violations of political and civic rights, a shift which was also influenced by donor priorities; as a result, economic issues shifted into the background. Unions had been severely weakened during these difficult years.

The independent media continued to try to report on macroeconomic conditions, well into the crisis period. The Daily News, a private newspaper established by local and foreign businessmen in 1999, vigorously supported the MDC, and became a strategic conduit for ventilating political discontent occasioned by economic hardships resulting from the negative effects of ESAP. Its readership increased to 100,000 compared to that of the state-owned The Herald at 90,000. This led to

increased targeting by the Government, including two separate incidents in which The Daily News' offices (April 2000) and printing press (January 2001) were bombed, and in both of which cases the Government was the primary suspect. Furthermore, journalists, reporters and the editor of the newspaper were arrested and harassed on numerous occasions. The newspaper was eventually shut down by the Government in 2003 under AIPPA for failing to register with the Media and Information Commission (Chari, 2010; Ndlovu, 2015; Willems, 2004).

The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act was passed by Parliament in October 2007, five months before the 'harmonized elections' of 28 March 2008, and gazetted as law the same month. The Act effectively required that all foreign-owned businesses and all businesses owned by white Zimbabweans and permanent residents valued at a prescribed amount cede a controlling 51 per cent share to black Zimbabweans. Shortly after the regulations were gazetted, the Government threatened journalists not to write 'negatively' about the Indigenisation regulations.

During the GNU, between 2009-13, the relative political stability, the adoption of a multi-currency regime, and economic reforms helped with the economic recovery and improved incentives for the private sector (World Bank 2013). Re-engagement of international donors assisted in sectors such as basic service delivery and social protection. The improvement in the overall economic development was thus not an effect of improvement in civic space alone. However, involvement of civil society in policies targeting special needs groups like the urban poor (next section) and social protection policy is believed to have enhanced the quality of government approaches. This civil society involvement was an immediate effect of the opening of civic space.

During the GNU, NGOs involved in advocacy at national level put their efforts into the drafting of the Constitution and related legislation. It was here that space emerged and a constructive 'fit' between civil society and the GNU developed accordingly. No exhaustive account of civil society activism is available of this engagement, but it is known that the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) and the Labour Economic Development Research Institute (LEDRI) were prominently involved. However, civil society has engaged in a limited way on macroeconomic issues. For instance, while the Indigenization Act of 2008 is believed to have deterred international investors and been an impediment to economic recovery (also after 2013), workshop participants noted that that policy had not been on the radar of NGOs. Workshop participants recalled that during the GNU a deal to revive Ziscosteel (a large company employing 1,000s) fell through and that they, as civic organisations, 'did not make the right noise about this'.<sup>30</sup> In the words of one participant: 'We're disjointed: human rights organisations and work done by economic civil society organisations, if they exist',<sup>31</sup> indicating silos within civil society itself, and the fact that few CSOs focus on matters of national economic policy. From the interviews, it seemed that the limited focus on economic policies was not because this was not a priority, because of the great risk involved in engaging on these issue. One exception to the lack of focus on economic issues and economic governance is the extractive industries sector, in particular diamonds for which human rights organisations and NGOs have reported on human rights violations in mining areas, the need to channel profits to communities, and legislation that allows individual panning.<sup>32</sup>

Journalists and other independent media actors did engage on economic issues by trying to debate policies like the Indigenization Act, price controls, the introduction of the Bond note (surrogate currency in response to cash shortages), and effects of the land reform. Respondents said that while the space for free and independent media opened up during the GNU there were still instances of surveillance, and journalists still felt the need to self-censorship or tone down any reporting that went against the Government's stance.<sup>33</sup> Also during the GNU, policy contradictions and inconsistencies around the controversial indigenization programme remained detrimental to the attraction and retention of private investment (Magure, 2012:75).



By 2012, with elections scheduled for 2013, the coalition Government became increasingly fractious, undermining the fragile reforms (World Bank 2013). The World Bank notes that the emergence of new sources of revenue and rents, generated by political stability, has put additional stress on often-politicized institutions (ibid). As noted above, economic conditions worsened as industries closed, unemployment rates rose to 80 per cent, and the informal sector rapidly expanded (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018). This was also confirmed by participants. By 2015 the country again experienced cash shortages, as well as fuel shortages and price volatility. The Government introduced the Bond note in 2016 in order to have cash circulating in the economy without leaving the country. While intended to have the same value as a US dollar, commodity prices were soon adjusted to higher prices for customers paying in Bond notes. Fuel shortages returned.

Participants in this study considered the political elites' preoccupation with factional politics and the succession struggle an explanation for the lack of a proactive Government policy on economic recovery. In addition, the dominance of ZANU-PF allows it to continue to focus on enriching its supporters, disregarding the negative impact on the population, as will be elaborated below. One journalist, who reports on economic issues, said 'It has become a common phrase to say that the country is on auto-pilot. But I tell my friends, it isn't even on auto-pilot because then at least a plane knows where it's going.'<sup>34</sup>

The new urban movements, rather than conventional civil society organizations or labour unions, were the groups that mobilised over the state of the economy, unemployment, commodity prices and fuel shortages, as well as the Bond notes. These includes the actions by #ThisFlag (led by Pastor Evan Mawarire) and #ThisGown (by unemployed graduates) and #Tajamuka (led by activist Promise Mkwanzani, building on pre-existing networks and associations of urban informal vendors). Concerned over informal trade, vendors mobilised over fuel prices and shortages. The movements blame what they view as Government malpractice and corruption for the stagnation of the economy, and for actively disempowering citizens economically in order to prevent political mobilisation:

*The Government isn't interested in the genuine economic freedom of the people. The only economic activity it wants is what benefits them. Its steers away from economically empowering people in Zimbabwe, because it would lead to people wanting other things, and them being concerned about other things. (...) Then the Government introduced SI64 [legislation] of 2016 on import bans that affects informal trade. That is an attack on citizen who are already struggling! People were breeding quail in their backyards out of economic frustration, then the Ministry of Health banned it. You can see the pattern! The sense became: the more we try to survive the more we are forced to die. The government will ban it or tax it.*<sup>35</sup>

Members of these movements claim that their protests and interactions with, for instance, Government ministries and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe has *delayed* certain actions (like the introduction of the Bond note) or tempered them (implementation of the import ban). On the other hand, respondents felt that this government was not at all interested in economic progress for the country and did not care about developing sound policies. Also, activists indicated that the nature of civic space was such that: 'From 2013 to 2017, any response to protest would be admitting a weakness. They [government] could not bring themselves to do it.' Members of the movements believed that, due to their protests, the new political leadership after November 2017 was very aware of economic grievances in society, which must have partly prompted its focus on economic recovery, as in this view:

*This new [Mnangagwa] government has realised that if they don't fix [the] economy they have no mandate with Zimbabweans. That's why the new government is acting on it right away, it will give them the vote [in 2018].*

One clear outcome from both workshops is that there is very limited NGO engagement in policy advice or advocacy on macroeconomic issues, while all participants recognised that the economic conditions and government inertia had had a major impact on everyday life and poverty of ordinary Zimbabweans. This is partly the result of how the 'fit' between civil society and state developed: human rights work developed in response to gross human rights violations during the crisis period. During this period organisations were preoccupied with documenting violations and pursuing court action, within existing formal institutional channels. As a consequence, civil society did not focus on economic or financial policies and did not build the expertise for engagement. Whilst humanitarian relief could address the negative impact of droughts and the economic crisis on vulnerable populations, formal civil society had neither the capacity nor the space to address government malpractice and corruption with regards to macro-economic development. Staff from international organisations reflected that another reason why economic issues were not at the centre of civil society action include a) a lasting 'chill effect' and legacy of the more violent repressive period that discouraged civil society critiques on economic policies, and b) the possibility that many civil society organisations believe that the democratic deficit and political climate needs to be addressed first, as this is at the root of the economic problems.

### SDG 10 Inequality

One aim of this study was to look deeper into regional inequalities in economic development, for which the study looked at the Matabeleland region. The study could look at indicators for regional inequalities through desk research to some extent, but since the overall scope of the study was to focus on national development outcomes, it was not able to cover historical trends, nor to investigate alternative pathways to inequality, e.g. whether relative deprivation is caused by differences in climate, disproportionate effect of droughts, concentration of economic activity, etc. Finally, whilst the team looked at the ways in which civic space is controlled in Matabeleland, the number of interviews and additional data collection were not enough to establish whether the extent of state control and surveillance over civic space is indeed stronger compared to other regions.<sup>36</sup> This report can therefore not offer a conclusive answer to the question of to what extent relative deprivation of the region can be attributed to the nature of civic space, specifically.

In recent years, the Zimbabwe Bureau of Statistics (ZimStat) conducted several poverty assessments in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank (ZimStat 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b). These reports confirm that indeed both Matabeleland provinces (North and South) are poorer than other regions, with Matabeleland North experiencing the highest poverty rates of the country at 86 per cent (ZimStat 2015). Relative deprivation is however not limited to Matabeleland provinces: poverty rates in Manicaland at 71 per cent is close to that of Matabeleland South; and poverty rates in Hurungwe (88 per cent) district in Mashonaland West and Muzarabani district (88 per cent) in Mashonaland Central are higher than the overall poverty rate of Matabeleland North (ibid). Matabeleland's capital Bulawayo is, after Harare, the least poor area in the country (ibid.) (see Table 4).

*Table 4 Provincial poverty and food poverty estimates*

Province	Small area estimation poverty prevalence (%)	Small area estimation food poverty prevalence (%)
Bulawayo	37	7

Manicaland	72	23
Mashonaland Central	76	27
Mashonaland East	67	21
Mashonaland West	73	28
Matabeleland North	86	43
Matabeleland South	74	25
Midlands	69	24
Masvingo	66	18
Harare	36	6

Source: Adapted from *ZimStat (2015) Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas*

Data on food poverty shows a different pattern of deprivation: although Matabeleland North stands out as most deprived, Matabeleland South is on a par with provinces in central and north-west Zimbabwe, and food poverty in several districts in Mashonaland East is worse than in Matabeleland North (ZimStat 2016b).

A 2014 ZimStat study showed that 41 per cent of households in Matabeleland North had access to electricity and 50 per cent in Matabeleland South, compared to 54 per cent in Mashonaland Central, 57 in Mashonaland East, and 59 in Mashonaland West (ZimStat 2014:25). Manicaland has less electricity with 46 per cent. The analysis of these and other development statistics could be more fine-grained by further examining differences between districts within provinces, service delivery across districts and provinces, and for instance checking these against election outcomes. This was however not possible within the scope of this study.

It is a challenge to establish to what extent higher levels of deprivation in Matabeleland are the effect of the nature of civic space and deliberate actions by the state. It seems most likely the way the state has dealt with the region has contributed to its poverty, but in interaction with other factors. For instance, one ZimStat report flags drought as major factor for poverty prevailing in Matabeleland North (ZimStat 2015), and this was also highlighted by workshop participants in Bulawayo. There is some discussion on economic decline in Matabeleland, specifically deindustrialisation in Bulawayo, which was once a vibrant economic centre (Huni 2015; Madonko 2016; Mawowa 2011). The period of Gukurahundi violence in the 1980s led to capital and investment flight, as well as an exodus of skilled workers to neighbouring countries, which contributed to economic decline (Huni 2015). Also, our workshop participants stated that Gukurahundi had major negative impacts on the economic situation of the region, from which it had not recovered before the effects of ESAP started to be felt.

Evidently, national developments like the effects of ESAP in the 1990s, the financial crisis in the late 1990s and subsequent economic crisis in the 2000s have negatively affected the Matabeleland region as elsewhere (Section 2). One academic stated that the regime has long 'given up' on Matabeleland as an opposition stronghold and that during the 1990s and 2000s levels of political violence could even be considered lower compared to Mashonaland provinces, where ZANU-PF wants to prevent losing votes to the opposition and therefore maintains a high level of surveillance and intimidation.<sup>37</sup> Instead, this respondent argued, the regime's strategy for Matabeleland from the mid-2000s was to exclude it from economic resources, stop investing in industrial zones etc. Huni (2015) points at water shortage in Bulawayo district which, he argues, is not due to lack of rainfall but investment in infrastructure. Similarly, lack of investment in roads and electricity have undermined Bulawayo's industries (ibid). Some of the economic policies may have affected Matabeleland disproportionately such as the SI-64 ban on imports, because the region depends on cross-border trade with South Africa.<sup>38</sup> If civil society was actively prevented from holding the state accountable over the *deliberate* economic exclusion of Matabeleland, this is most certainly a civic

space issue. To establish the extent to which the state has privileged other parts of the country through investments and funds would merit further research.

The lack of Government recognition of the violence and absence of Government support for a reconciliation process have led to deep-rooted resentment in the region. The Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP) was established in 2014 to protect the interests of the Ndebele provinces that together constitute Mthwakazi (referring to the old kingdom) and MRP members have staged different actions to demand recognition for Gukurahundi.<sup>39</sup> The workshop discussions and interviews with Matabeleland-based civil society organisations show strong sentiments about being actively undermined by the state, and also neglect by donors. Participants said '*Kutsho ukuthi asisobantu*' that is, 'It means we are not (seen as worthy) human beings.' Specifically, they felt that the land reforms did not benefit Ndebele people; that the Indigenisation Act has not had the desired effect in the region; and the Presidential Input Scheme for the agricultural sector does not respond to the needs of Ndebele farmers and is politicised.<sup>40</sup> Participants also claimed that when farms and game conservancies were redistributed in the Land Reforms, elites from Mashonaland or local elites who support the ruling party were the prime beneficiaries. The politicisation of land distribution during the reforms has been discussed in the literature, while exact figures are hard to establish because of lack in transparency (Shonhe 2018). Furthermore, politicisation of schemes is also discussed in the media.<sup>41</sup> Politicisation of land allocation and farming inputs happens in different parts of the country, and it is difficult to say whether this happens disproportionately in Matabeleland. Participants also pointed out that there are challenges with voter registration in the region, which could be for political reasons, and that this would eventually influence the imbalance in allocation of government funds. Participants want social inclusion, which could be achieved by a genuine devolution of power and funds to authorities in Matabeleland districts, provided that civil servants are also Ndebele.

Workshop participants gave a few examples that illustrate their claim that issues from the Matabeleland region are 'tribalized' and Ndebele voices ignored. For instance, ZimRights could screen a movie in Harare for the commemoration of the 2008 Election violence, whereas the organiser of a Gukurahundi exhibition that same week, Owen Maseko, was arrested. Secondly, out of the eight members of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission only one is Ndebele, and the government has refused to honour the request to declare July 1<sup>st</sup> 'Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Day.'<sup>42</sup> There is a sense that the ZANU-PF regime fears that the grievances over Gukurahundi may one day again lead to organised resistance, and therefore any action concerning this needs to be suppressed. Participants highlighted the fact that almost all government offices, Head of Police, Head of Intelligence and Head of the army stationed in Matabeleland are Shona as confirmation of this idea.<sup>43</sup>

Participants highlighted a number of reasons why CSO activities are challenging in Matabeleland. Some of these challenges have an ethnic dimension as Ndebele staff in CSOs find it difficult to communicate with Shona speaking officials, whom they feel are in the majority in public offices. It is for instance difficult to organise MOUs with Rural District Councils (RDCs) because district offices are staffed by mainly Shona people. Participants feel that officers external to the regional have 'no interest' in the local development of the Matabeleland region. Again, CSOs feel that RDCs suspect CSOs of an ethnic conscientization agenda, and development and advocacy work is 'tribalized' or 'trivialised and dismissed as unnecessary' by officials. As elaborated in sections on SDG 1, SDG 2 and SDG 8, participants described their difficulties in accessing certain communities, close monitoring by local authorities, and the politicisation of food aid distribution. Participants from different CSOs stated that CSOs were not allowed to access flood victims in Tsholotsho district after the extreme rainfall in 2016-7. Heavily affected by the Gukurahundi violence in the 1980s, Tsholotsho is considered a politically sensitive area. The CSOs were told that 'human rights awareness and

activism had no relevance to assisting flood victims' and that emergency assistance to this area was the prerogative of the Government. From the evidence it is however not clear whether the barriers faced by CSOs are relatively more challenging in Matabeleland compared to other provinces.

To conclude, the findings indicate the complications in attempting to attribute regional inequalities to changes in civic space. Participants argued there is systematic and systemic exclusion and trivialisation of the region as its resources are used for other regions. However, whereas ZimStat reports show Matabeleland North is definitely the poorest part of the country, Matabeleland South does not show equally poor figures, and other parts of the country score worse on certain development outcomes (ZimStat 2014, 2015, 2016ab). This is not to say that the state does *not* deliberately undermine Matabeleland: it could be that Matabeleland South has mitigating factors ranging from better agricultural to proximity to Bulawayo and trade opportunities. From the present study, we can confidently say that inequalities are likely to increase or be sustained under conditions of civic space closure. More work is needed to establish whether restrictions on civic space are more severe in Matabeleland. Furthermore, more research could look in-depth at the district level and trace how the state has dealt with all poorest districts in the country, beyond the Matabeleland region. A study would need to explore a range of factors that have contributed to poverty in the region, alongside civic space.

### SDG 11 Inclusive cities

This section discusses the overlap between SDG 1 on poverty and SDG 11 on inclusive cities, mainly focusing on the ways in which civil society tried to support impoverished urban populations and tried to hold the Government accountable for undermining the ability of urban residents to secure housing and livelihoods.

The Government was confronted with an increasing urban population and high levels of youth unemployment in the wake of the ESAP and the post-2000 economic decline and drought, which saw rapid growth in the urban population and the informal economy (Kamete 2010). This rapid urbanisation put immense pressure on housing and livelihoods, and saw a rapid growth in the numbers of people involved in the informal economy. During the crisis years the state increasingly clamped down on what it considered 'spatial unruliness' (Kamete 2008) through periodic clean-up campaigns and evictions of informal settlement dwellers, traders and vendors. Some evictions created new informal settlements when large numbers of people were forcibly relocated ((Bratton & Masunungure, 2006). In 2005 Operation *Murambatsvina* led to the violent destruction of informal infrastructure and approximately 700,000 urban residents lost their homes and/or livelihoods, which led to a UN special investigation (Tibaijuka 2005). It is also argued that this violent clampdown was intended to undermine the urban support base of the opposition (Bratton & Masunungure, 2006). Civil society organisations responded by documenting human rights abuses and filing court cases, especially after Operation *Murambatsvina*. Another response was the emergence of Community-Based Organisations that started to construct houses, operating like self-help organisations at settlement level. Some of these CBOs developed into larger organisations and could undertake policy-influencing activities during the GNU (ZINAHCO).

As for SDG 1 and SDG 2, during the GNU period civil society had more scope to collaborate with Government, there was more donor funding available and it was easier to reach informal settlements than previously. Representatives from NGOs working on housing and poverty in urban informal settlements noted that the GNU offered much better avenues for them to engage different Government actors, mainly the city councils and the Ministry of Local Government. This was in part due to the more open political environment, and partly due to the MDC-T having positions in government department relevant to urban poverty. An initiative by Slum Dwellers International (SDI) created a platform with the Ministry of Local Government and Harare City Council (HCC) for policy

dialogue, and HCC was the first city council to launch a slum upgrading strategy. The GNU produced the revised National Housing Policy, adopted in 2012, and NGOs had played a strong role for the inclusion of community-based organizations into the policy.<sup>44</sup> Other organisations played a role in the development of the Guidelines on Local Authority and Housing Cooperatives Partnerships.<sup>45</sup>

In terms of implementation, it became easier to do slum-upgrading activities such as construction of houses and infrastructure than previously. More donor funding was available, some of which directly targeted urban informal settlements. The Gates Foundation donated USD 5 million for a low-cost housing programme starting in 2010, implemented jointly by Dialogue on Shelter, Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and the City of Harare in Dzivarasekwa Extension, to build houses and extend services. As of 2015, 60 out of the 480 houses under the project had been successfully completed, while the rest were at various stages of construction. Slum Dwellers International (SDI) raised USD 100,000 for slum upgrading in 67 settlements in Harare, starting in 2011. As of November 2015, 1,399 houses and 372 toilets had been constructed, boreholes were provided to the necessary areas, and there were 480 direct beneficiary families in Dzivarasekwa Extension.

Upgrading activities were also enabled by a better economic environment. As one respondent says:

*We did more during the GNU period because of the signals that were coming from the economic environment as a country. Things started improving. Besides the political space, we had the US dollar, so the environment was stable in economic terms. (...) In general, we did so well given what was happening at the macro economic and political level in the country.*

There is some documentation that corruption and mismanagement of government funds has severely impacted on the access to clean water and sanitation facilitations of especially millions of urban residents, which has adversely impacted their right to health (Human Rights Watch 2014). Corruption had continued during the GNU, including in MDC-T ranks (Dewa, Dziva & Mukwashi 2014), and is likely to have increased after 2013 as there was less control over public funds. As economic recovery stalled after 2013, the shrinking of the formal economy pushed people into the 'kukiya-kiya economy' (doing multiple informal economy activities, of which some border on illegal activities), especially in cities (Jones 2010). Periodic protests by networks and associations of informal vendors in response to the cracking down of vending space have been met with fierce police action, and the involvement of the army at times. In 2016 the courts stopped the army from intervening following a ban on the import of second-hand clothing and other commodities, but city councils did continue with less aggressive 'clean up' campaigns.

Following the GNU, NGOs working on urban informal settlements first and foremost noted the decrease in donor funding as impacts on their work, followed by lack of Government interest in improving urban informal settlements at the national level, and the politicization of land ownership. Relationships to city councils that had developed during the GNU could not be sustained, while at national level politics interfered with collaboration built with the Ministry of Local Government. One respondent narrates:

*Soon after 2013, things again started taking a decline in many respects like politics, economics etc. We had a one-party scenario where ZANU-PF was now in charge. (...) Post GNU, that's when we had [Ministers] Kasukuwere and Chombo during that time. We were not making significant strides in terms of that central government space. In my personal view, Kasukuwere in particular and his officials had very key roles in their party and that probably could have had a bearing in terms of their mandate as ministers of local government. For instance, Kasukuwere was the [ZANU-PF] commissar and that was very crucial and partisan. I think half the times he would forget he is wearing his official jacket as*

*a minister, I think naturally he found himself being dealing more possibly with politics rather than issues of delivering his mandate as a minister. I think with [Minister] Chombo it was better because of the period he was involved ... but I don't think in terms of really having that passion and understanding of what the sector was all about.*

However, at City Council level these organisations could build on the relationships that were formed during the GNU:

*Soon after the GNU period, our focus has mainly been on the local government sphere. Our slum upgrading project started around 2012 and that's when we started doing work with the city. (...) We have used a targeted approach where we established a partnership with a given local authority. On the basis of that partnership, you work out an agreement which allows you to do certain activities and this is outside the policy environment [national politics]. You still have your restrictive policies in place, but then you have the city of Harare which has agreed to undertake a Harare slum upgrading program which allows innovations that are not even within the policy documents at national and city level. So you are essentially working yourself around restrictive policies and legislation*

The tension between a ZANU-PF government and largely MDC-controlled city councils generates challenges for slum upgrading. On the one hand, ZANU-PF wants to make the MDC look unprofessional by saying it endorses informality. On the other hand, when Harare city council recently organised a clearance of combi taxis with the support of the army and police, the national Government reversed the decision.

## 4. Conclusions and implications

### Summary of the findings: how changing civic space impacts on specific SDG outcomes

The ZANU-PF government repressed political opposition and civic actors and simultaneously acted to damage the country's economy, leading to the protracted economic crisis period of 2000-2008. Grave human rights violations and repression of civil society, the media and the political opposition characterized this period. This report has shown how this situation affected the focus of the work of civil society: there was no opportunity to engage on economic policy as people were preoccupied with civic and political rights violations; in addition, all avenues for policy engagement were closed. The study also finds that the period of restricted civic space had real effects on the ability of CSOs to reach their target groups, while it remains difficult to establish the exact impact this has had. Development outcomes were thus affected in two main ways: the state's negligence and policy choices enabled an economic crisis that impoverished the majority, while it also restricted civil society from accessing vulnerable populations. Different poverty measures and figures on nutrition show the negative impact on the country's population at the national level.

During the Government of National Unity (GNU), there was more direct and open engagement of civil society with government processes. Although everyone who was interviewed agreed that the GNU period was a period of relative relaxation, a level of surveillance and intimidation persisted. The GNU period also presented new challenges to formally organised civic organisations and NGOs as they found it difficult to contradict or disagree with MDC officials in government positions, feeling this would discredit the people they wanted in power. Although civil society could not be very critical there was more space to influence and thus help shape better policies, especially those related to basic services. The economy stabilised and started to recover. Poverty indicators improved, whereas severe droughts and climate conditions contributed to a sharp rise in malnutrition.

For the period 2013-2017, the findings show that both donors and civil society actors were initially shocked over ZANU-PF winning the elections, and confusion about how to engage prevailed. Due to the Constitution some openness remained, but the scope for policy influence narrowed. Surveillance and intimidation continue, but complicated and excessive bureaucratic measures are now the primary means used to restrict civil society operations directly. All political parties are preoccupied with internal factionalism, with the Government lacking a clear vision for economic development and the opposition being too weak and fragmented to object. The economic recovery has been reversed to some extent, but in the recent period, new urban movements have been spearheading popular protests rather than the conventional civic actors of CSOs and unions.

The sections on the selected SDGs show a number of key links between the nature of civic space and development outcomes:

- In terms of the 'fit' between civil society and the state, the Zimbabwe study shows the changes in the dynamics between the two. When opposition mounted in the late 1990s the state increased repression, after which civic organisations focused on governance and human rights. As the space was forged open following SADC's interventions in 2008/9 civil society changed to engagement, especially on the Constitution, while it had also been weakened by years of oppression. With formal avenues for policy engagement closing after 2013, informal movements have entered the scene, enabled by availability of the internet.
- A repressive regime that is unrestrained is capable of diverting economic resources, and has few incentives to develop sound economic or development policy. For the macro-level,



there is compelling evidence that restrictions on civic space enable and are enabled by an increasingly predatory state, with adverse effects on overall economic development (SDG 8), and on poverty, hunger and nutrition levels (SDG 1, SDG 2).

- The evidence indicates that ZANU-PF has deliberately prevented civil society from supporting Zimbabweans to address hunger and poverty (SDG 1 and SDG 2), by denying or complicating access to specific areas and households within communities considered disloyal. The politicization of humanitarian, food, and agricultural development aid is likely to have affected poverty, hunger and nutrition; however, the effects cannot be measured due to a lack of data on the issue. More research is needed at the local level to establish the impact on excluded populations and groups.
- With regards to regional inequality (SDG 10) and the situation of Matabeleland specifically, it is likely that inequality is sustained or increased where civil society is unable to challenge corruption and exclusion. More research is needed to establish whether and the extent to which the ZANU-PF regime has been more repressive in some (notably, the Matabeleland regions) than in other regions; excluded from budget allocations and investments (e.g. in infrastructure, industries, agricultural schemes); and how exclusionary practices interact with other factors such as civil society to cause or worsen regional inequalities.
- During a period of relative openness, during the GNU, better socio-economic policies could be developed because of active engagement by civic society. The political stability and confidence in a coalition government led to re-engagement of donors, and therefore the GNU government had funds to promote recovery. At the same time, the introduction of the US dollar helped stabilize the economy and, in combination with political stability, this led to the re-engagement of investors.
- One finding about an indirect effect of the restricted civic space between 2000 and 2008 is that there is currently a lack of NGOs that has the expertise and capacity to engage the state on macro-economic policies, and hold it accountable over how the national budget is allocated across the different regions of the country to mitigate inequalities (SDG 10).
- Non-formalised civic movements that have recently emerged have mobilised for economic issues, which may have prompted the new ZANU-PF leadership to prioritise economic recovery to a certain extent. These new movements mobilise online and on the streets, and directly confronted the Government over malfunctioning and corruption.

### Gaps and limitations

As noted, this study lacked the resources or data for a detailed comparison of different sub-national locations. For Zimbabwe, such research would very likely to provide a more fine-grained account of how civic space is controlled at district level, and the development outcomes locally. However, this would require some investment of time and resources to access remote or conflict-affect regions which were difficult to reach during the Mugabe period; it remains to be seen whether civil society is able to access such areas in future. A second limitation was that the focus on poverty, hunger, and related indicators meant that few representatives from the private sector and investors could be interviewed, and so no clear understanding of how different business interests (for instance, mining or agro-industry) views the openness or otherwise of civic space.

### Implications for policy and practice

The main implications for policy and practice that lead from this study in Zimbabwe and its focus on poverty and economic developments are:

- There is a need to document how formal and informal restrictions on civil society actors force them to downsize operations or relocate, and assess how this has affected their

coverage of populations in need. This can help build a compelling case of how narrowing civic space has detrimental effects on aid delivered through civil society actors.

- The study has highlighted sectors that merit closer attention in Zimbabwe. There is a need for civil society actors to scrutinize government budgets and budget allocations to hold the government accountable over persisting regional inequalities; and a need to build the knowledge and capacities of civil society actors to debate and influence macro-economic developments (including price stability, availability of cash) as this has a big impact on everyday life, especially the poor.
- Civil society has played an important role in shaping the equity and inclusiveness of development in Zimbabwe when there was space to do so, and merits support to help them identify communities in need, map how these communities are excluded, and seek to address their exclusion through development activities and advocacy.

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<sup>1</sup> The Movement for Democratic Change, the main opposition party, emerged in 1999/2000 under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai. After disagreements within the party it split into two parties in 2005, with the larger faction led by Tsvangirai named MDC-T, and that under the leadership of Welshman Ncube named MDC-N. MDC-N participated in the 2008 election under the leadership of Arthur Mutambara as MDC-M, and as such joined the GNU.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-zimbabwe-2018/52025/eu-election-observation-mission-presents-final-report-zimbabwe-2018-harmonised-elections-23\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-zimbabwe-2018/52025/eu-election-observation-mission-presents-final-report-zimbabwe-2018-harmonised-elections-23_en) [accessed April 30 2019].

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/zimbabwe-elections-and-human-rights> [accessed April 30 2019].

<sup>4</sup> War veterans are the people who participated in the liberation war, and known as a cadre that is loyal to ZANU-PF. See McGregor (2002), 'The politics of disruption'.

<sup>5</sup> Zimbabwe: NGO bill 'Unacceptable' | Pambazuka News," 2004, "Zimbabwe," 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, informal settlement organisation, 26.03.2018 – No.9.

<sup>8</sup> 'Zimeye.net Dzamara Mliswa Activist Found Dead in Suspected CIO Murder'. Access 16.04.2018 [www.zimeye.net/2016/06/13/dzamara-mliswa-activist-found-dead-in-suspected-cio-murder-2/](http://www.zimeye.net/2016/06/13/dzamara-mliswa-activist-found-dead-in-suspected-cio-murder-2/).

<sup>9</sup> Interview, human rights organisation, 04.04.2018 – No 10.

<sup>10</sup> Interview, human rights organisation.

<sup>11</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>12</sup> Bulawayo workshop.

<sup>13</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>14</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>15</sup> Interview, active member of #ThisFlag.

<sup>16</sup> Harare workshop; interview with humanitarian organisation.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/zimbabwe-farming-input-scheme-presidential-special-program/1549931.html>; see also [www.newsday.co.zw/2018/04/partisan-food-distribution-cases-soar/](http://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/04/partisan-food-distribution-cases-soar/); and see [http://veritaszim.net/sites/veritas\\_d/files/ZHRC\\_Consolidated\\_Food\\_Aid\\_Report\\_August\\_2016.pdf](http://veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/ZHRC_Consolidated_Food_Aid_Report_August_2016.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/policy-operations-non-governmental-organisations-humanitarian-and-development>.

<sup>19</sup> NGO representative from service delivery programme, Harare workshop.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, humanitarian organisation 26.03.2018 – No.5.

<sup>21</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>22</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>23</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>24</sup> Interview humanitarian actor, 26.03.2018 – No. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, humanitarian actor, 26.03.2018 – No.5

<sup>26</sup> Outcomes of workshop in Harare and Bulawayo.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, food security actor, 20.03.2018 – No. 6

<sup>28</sup> Interview, humanitarian actor, 26.03.2018 – No.5.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, food security actor 20.03.2018 – No.6.

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<sup>30</sup> The government-run company ZISCO employed 5,000 workers at its peak. It closed in 2016 and laid off all its workers without benefits. The new President, Mnangagwa, was quick to prioritise the revival of ZISCO as part of his first 100 days in office, potentially building on a deal struck in August 2017 with a Chinese investor. During the GNU a deal fell through due to 'bickering' within the unity government. Newsday, 15.01.2018, 'Mnangagwa vows to resuscitate Ziscosteel', accessed 16.04.2018 on [www.newsday.co.zw/2018/01/mnangagwa-vows-to-resuscitate-ziscosteel](http://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/01/mnangagwa-vows-to-resuscitate-ziscosteel).

<sup>31</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>32</sup> Harare workshop.

<sup>33</sup> Informal conversation, journalist.

<sup>34</sup> Informal conversation with a journalist.

<sup>35</sup> Member of the #ThisFlag movement.

<sup>36</sup> Specifically, respondents in both workshops mostly had experience in one of the regions and could not compare levels of repression. Participants in the Bulawayo workshop could elaborate a range of strategies through which the regime controls and limits civil society, which were not notably different from other regions.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, UK-based academic 18.03.2018

<sup>38</sup> Bulawayo workshop

<sup>39</sup> <https://mthwakazirepublicparty.org/>; see also about the protests: [www.voazimbabwe.com/a/zimbabwe-mbonisi-gumbo-mthwakazi-republic-party/4187147.html](http://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/zimbabwe-mbonisi-gumbo-mthwakazi-republic-party/4187147.html)

<sup>40</sup> Bulawayo workshop

<sup>41</sup> This article by VOA Zimbabwe (2012) states that farmers supporting the MDC in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland East were excluded from the Presidential Input Scheme:

<https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/zimbabwe-farming-input-scheme-presidential-special-program/1549931.html>

<sup>42</sup> Bulawayo workshop.

<sup>43</sup> Bulawayo workshop.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, representative of urban poverty NGO 26.03.2018 – No.9.

<sup>45</sup> See ZINAHCO: <https://www.housinginternational.coop/members/zimbabwe-national-association-of-housing-cooperatives-zinahco/> [accessed April 30 2019].