



Political Party and Campaign Finance

in Zimbabwe

The main purpose of regulating political party and campaign finance is to ensure *transparency* in how political parties and election campaigns raise and spend money,¹ stop *corrupt practices*,² limit the *impact of money* on the electoral process,³ and *counteract abuse of public resources*.⁴

Situation in Zimbabwe

Political finance in Zimbabwe is governed by the Political Parties Finance Act. The act, amongst other things, regulates permitted (citizens, permanent residents, companies, and associations) and prohibited (all others) sources of funding. This is consistent with the approach internationally, as more than 95 percent of countries place certain limitations on who can make financial contributions to political parties and election campaigns, and in some cases how much they can contribute or how much political parties and election campaigns can spend.⁵ Public funding is available to political parties that reach over 5 percent of the vote in the preceding general election, similarly to provisions in other African countries. Globally, about two out of three countries also provide public, or state, funding to political parties. However, in Zimbabwe, there are no spending limits, no compulsory requirement to report contributions and spending, and no requirement to publish financial reports. Moreover, there is no institution that has a

mandate to oversee political finance regulations. In comparison, globally, more than 90 percent of countries require financial reporting by political parties, candidates, or both. All political finance regulations require enforcement to be effective. Both the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the African Union Convention on Combating and Preventing Corruption (AUCC) highlight the importance of transparency in political finance. In comparison to Kenya, Sierra Leone and Germany, for example, the current political finance regulations in Zimbabwe give insufficient focus to transparency.

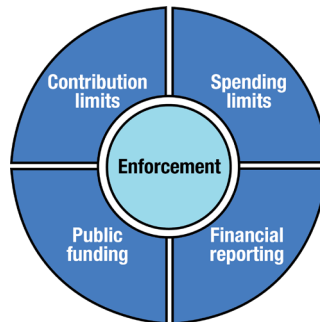


Fig 1: Aspects of Political Finance Regulations: The four types of political finance regulations used in many countries around the world

Given the above, during the 2018 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe, international observers concluded that “there is a complete lack of reporting requirements and transparency mechanisms... undermining the ability of candidates to campaign on a level playing field,” and recommended that the authorities should “develop regulation of political party financing to promote accountability and transparency and as a key step towards creating a level playing field between political parties.”⁶ Transparency International suggests that legislation should be passed, including at a minimum:⁷

- Annual reporting requirements for registered political parties on income, spending, assets, and liabilities;
- Post-election reporting requirements for political parties and candidates (in cases where reporting is required by nominating political parties only, it should include information on their candidates’ campaign finances) on incomes, spending, assets, and liabilities;
- Sanctions for non-compliance with reporting requirements; and
- Requirements for the receiving public institution to publish in a timely manner all financial reports received from political parties/candidates.

Abuse of Public Resources

A common problem in many countries including Mali, Russia, and Togo has been ruling parties’ monopolization of state media; utilization of state institutions’ assets for electioneering logistics; intimidation of opposition supporters by security forces to prevent them from attending rallies; and denial of political rally permits to opposition parties. There are reports that such abuses also took place in Zimbabwe’s 2018 harmonized elections. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) noted that government buildings, vehicles, and food aid were used for campaign purposes.⁸ Similarly, the “Zimbabwe International Election Observation Mission Final Report” by the International Republican Institute (IRI)

publication/recommendations_on_political_financing_for_open_government_partnership
8 See <http://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ZESN-REPORT-ON-PRE-ELECTION-POLITICAL-ENVIRONMENT-AND-OBSERVATION-OF-KEY-ELECTORAL-PROCESSES.pdf>, page 8-9, and Issue 3 Pre-Election Long Term Observer (LTO) Update <http://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ISSUE-3-PRE-ELECTION-LONG-TERM-OBSERVER-LTO-UPDATE.pdf> page 2-4.

1 United Nations Convention Against Corruption Article 7.3, African Union Convention on Combating and Preventing Corruption Article 10.2, SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2015) Article 13.2.6.f.

2 African Union Convention on Combating and Preventing Corruption Article 10.1.

3 SADC Parliamentary Forum, Norms and Standards for Elections in the SARC Region, Part 3, Article 6.

4 SADC Parliamentary Forum, Norms and Standards for Elections in the SARC Region, Part 2, Article 3.

5 Calculated from <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database>. Unless otherwise noted, statistics regarding regulations in this document are calculated from this source.

6 European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) Final Report, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_eom_zimbabwe_2018_-_final_report.pdf page 23 and 3.

7 See <https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/>

and National Democratic Institute (NDI) also noted that “the Electoral Act does not address the use of state resources [which] is detrimental to the electoral process as it disrupts the playing field, creates an unfair advantage for incumbent parties, and undermines public trust in the legitimacy of the process.”⁹

International experiences show that while formal regulations, such as banning the increase of public sector salaries or subsidies during pre-election periods, may serve to reduce abuse of public resources, the effective monitoring of abuses is particularly important.

The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre¹⁰ suggests that legislation should be passed, including at a minimum:

- Clear bans on the use of public resources in favor of any political party or candidate;
- Regulations on how public institutions should engage with political parties and candidates ahead of elections, including the

- provision of space for campaign rallies and for advertising;
- Regulations on how public institutions should prevent and counteract abuse of their resources, including food aid, use of security forces, and public employees’ time;
- Regulations on, and careful monitoring of, reporting by state-owned media; and
- Sanctions against violations, which must be easy to enforce.

Oversight

The Political Finance Oversight Handbook suggests that creating rules for money in the political process is not sufficient in itself, and public oversight institutions have crucial roles to play in ensuring compliance by political stakeholders and avoiding impunity by instigating sanctions against violators.

Currently, “neither ZEC nor any other independent authority is mandated to oversee respect for campaign finance provisions.”¹¹

The Handbook suggests that legislation should be passed, including at a minimum:¹²

- A clear mandate given to an independent and resourceful public institution;
- Sufficient powers given to this institution to investigate potential violations, based on complaints, referrals or the identification of possible violations by the institution itself;
- A requirement for other entities to cooperate with the responsible institution; and
- The right for the institution to issue by-laws or regulations on related matters and, if suitable, to propose legal amendments to Parliament.

Additional IFES Resources

1. [TIDE Political Finance Oversight Handbook](#)
2. [Unfair Advantage: The Abuse of State Resources in Elections](#)
3. [Abuse of State Resources Research and Assessment Framework](#)
4. [Political Finance and Gender Equality](#)
5. [Controlling Money in Politics: An Introduction](#)
6. [Political Finance Regulation: The Global Experience](#)

Resources available at www.ifes.org

9 See https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-10-29_final_zieom_report.pdf page 32. The imbalance between parties was also highlighted in the NDI/IRI report, page 32.

10 See <https://www.u4.no/publications/milking-the-system-fighting-the-abuse-of-public-resources-for-re-election.pdf>

11 EU EOM page 23.

12 See <https://www.ifes.org/publications/tide-political-finance-oversight-handbook>

Table 1: Summary of Political Finance Regulations in Zimbabwe

Provision	Regulation content	Comment
Permitted sources	Citizens and permanent residents, companies, and associations	Foreigners are banned from fundraising, though not from campaigning
Prohibited sources	All others	The prohibited sources are similar to those in most African countries
Public funding	If party received over 5 percent of the vote in the preceding general election	Public funding exists in 57 percent of African countries
Spending limit	None	Spending limits for political parties exist in 19 percent of African countries, such as São Tomé and Príncipe and Sudan, while 31 percent have such limits for candidates, including Botswana and Nigeria. Fifteen percent of African countries use spending limits for both parties and candidates, including Kenya and Tanzania
Reporting of contributions and spending	Not compulsory by law	Reporting of political party and campaign finance is necessary to achieve the transparency called for by UNCAC and AUCC
Publication of submitted financial reports	Not compulsory by law	Transparency in political finance requires the publication of financial reports submitted by political parties and candidates. See footnote 7 above.
Oversight mandate by public institution	Not compulsory by law	Lack of regulation in this area makes it difficult to know if parties and candidates are complying with rules. See footnote 12 above.