

ZIMBABWE GOVERNANCE INDICATORS ANALYSIS

Zimbabwe's current government has verbally committed to the implementation of key reforms in line with the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (ZDERA). These include crucial governance reforms to improve accountability and the protection of constitutionally guaranteed rights. To ensure the government is achieving its promised reforms, the United States Government and other stakeholders have jointly proposed a set of indicators curated from the World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG). To objectively assess the proposed indicators and advise on targets, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Zimbabwe Mission and its Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance commissioned a team of political scientists at the University of Pennsylvania to assess variation on the ZDERA indicators across other countries and establish targets based on cross-country comparison for the governance reforms. The research questions are:

1. What level of improvement constitutes meaningful progress on the agreed-upon indicators?
2. What real-world events and policies lead to changes in the indicators?

KEY INDICATORS TO MEASURE ZDERA PROGRESS

Civil society space: Assesses the extent to which civil society and non-governmental organizations are free to establish and operate and are free from repression and persecution.

Rule of law and justice—impartiality of the judicial system: Assesses the extent to which the judicial system is impartial based on independence of the courts, autonomy of judges, and appointment of judges.

Participation—democratic elections: Assesses the extent to which elections are free and fair and the extent to which election-monitoring bodies and agencies are independent and have operating capacity, including for reporting.

Absence of violence against civilians: Measures the number of violent events against civilians committed by government forces and non-state actors, as well as the levels of political violence in a country.

Government officials are sanctioned for misconduct: Measures whether government officials are investigated, prosecuted, and punished for official misconduct and other violations.

Transition of power is subject to the law: Measures whether government officials are elected or appointed in accordance with the rule of law, whether elections take place, and the integrity of the electoral process.

Right to life and security of person is effectively guaranteed: Measures whether the police inflict physical harm upon criminal suspects and whether political dissidents or members of the media are subjected to intimidation or violence.

Freedom of opinion and expression is effectively guaranteed: Measures whether independent media, civil society organizations, or political parties are free to report on government policies without fear of retaliation.

- What are the potential limitations/weaknesses of these indicators and what are possible solutions to those limitations/weaknesses?

Freedom of assembly and association is effectively guaranteed: Measures whether people can freely attend community meetings, join political organizations, or hold peaceful public demonstrations.

Government does not expropriate without lawful process and adequate compensation: Measures whether the government respects property rights, refrains from illegal seizure, and provides adequate compensation when property is legally expropriated.

Due process of the law and rights of the accused: Measures whether the basic rights of criminal suspects are respected, including the presumption of innocence, access to evidence, non-abusive treatment, and provisions of legal assistance. Also includes the basic rights of prisoners after they have been convicted.

INDICATOR TARGETS

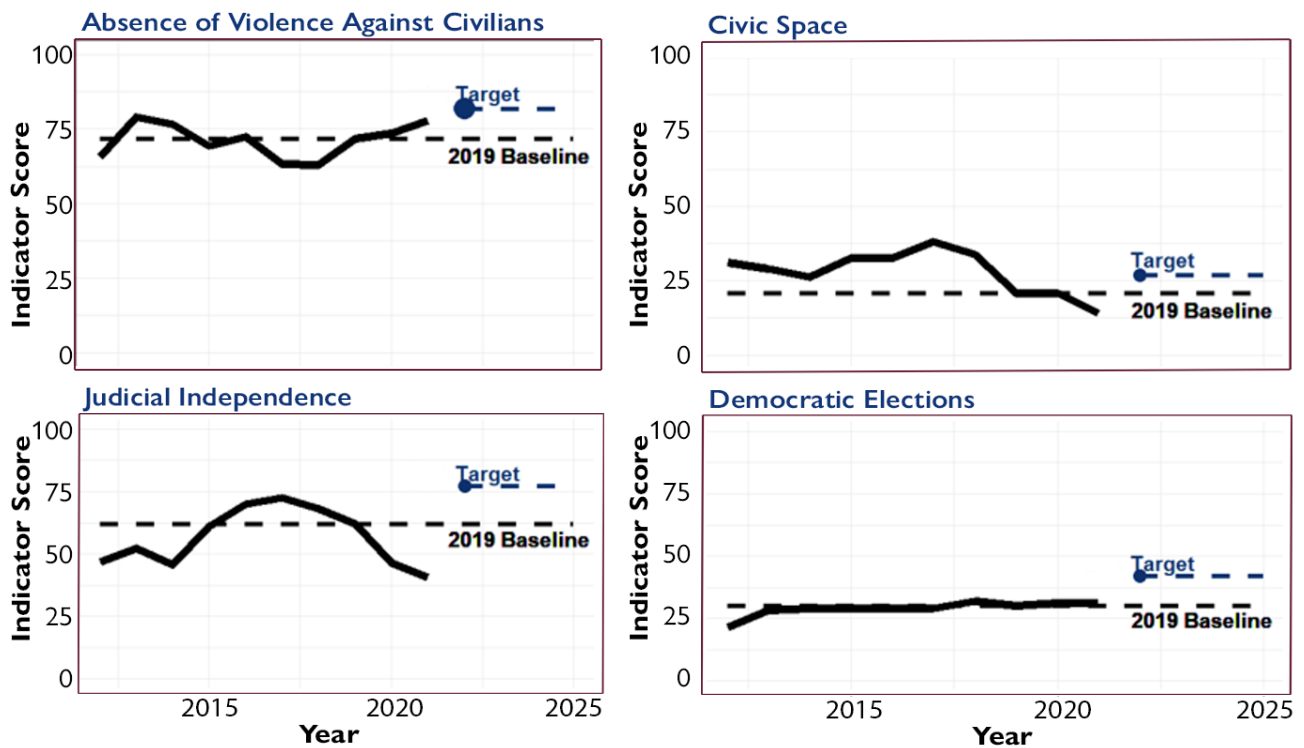
The research team used a two-step process to establish targets. First, the team looked at the trajectories of other countries that had made meaningful improvements on these indicators. They determined a meaningful improvement in this context as being:

- At least a 10 percent increase in the indicator score.
- Sustained for at least five years.

After identifying all meaningful improvements for each indicator across countries, the team then measured the size of these increases as the percentage increase from the country's baseline score. This allowed the team to define small, moderate, and large changes based on the size of increases at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile of increases observed across other countries. Turning to Zimbabwe, targets were set by using the percent increase from their baseline score that would correspond to a small, moderate, or large change.

Figure 1 below shows the target values for each indicator, as well as Zimbabwe's 2019 level for each of the IIAG indicators. The target is based on either the 50th or 75th percentile improvement.

Figure 1. Target values.



Based on Zimbabwe's historical trends and the performance of other countries with similar improvement on the selected indicators, the researchers recommend that for indicators related to **civil society space, impartiality of the judicial system, and democratic elections**, the Government of Zimbabwe's improvement **should be at least as large as the 50th percentile of lasting improvement made by countries that had improved**. For example, its median improvement for civic space was a 30 percent increase, which would place its score at 26.9, comparable to Tanzania in 2019 or Uganda in 2016.

For indicators linked to the **absence of violence against civilians**, Zimbabwe's goal is to decrease its score. Because Zimbabwe's score is relatively high and making large improvements will be difficult, the team recommends targeting a 25th-percentile rather than a 50th-percentile improvement. If Zimbabwe made the 25th-percentile improvement (14 percent), its score would be 81.1, comparable to Ghana in 2020.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDICATOR CHANGE AND REAL-WORLD EVENTS

The indicators used to measure improvements are only available many months after improvements have occurred. To identify potential events that might signal an improvement is occurring in real time, the research team utilized data from the Machine Learning for Peace dataset, which tracks 20 types of domestic political events in 60 countries beginning in 2012. Specifically, the team looked at patterns in the amount of activity on these events during periods of improvement on IIAG indicators and conducted AI-assisted qualitative case studies of media reports on these events. Though the data has a limited ability to predict changes in IIAG scores, it did show several notable patterns:

1. Large increases in reporting on corruption are associated with significant openings of civic space.
2. Large increases in political activism and cooperation are more likely when countries are **not** seeing improvements in democratic elections. This activity often signals mobilization against elections that are perceived as unfair.
3. Government legal actions, particularly prosecution of corruption cases, are more likely when a country is **not** seeing improvements in the absence of violence against civilians.

LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

The chosen indicators have two primary limitations, each of which is highlighted below with its associated mitigation strategy.

- The General Population Poll of the WJP is conducted in Zimbabwe irregularly and has not used a consistent survey sample across years. The last poll took place in 2018 but is included in the data for 2019–2023, giving an illusion of stability even though the annually collected data suggests stark changes after 2019. **The team recommends using only the IIAG indicators or reconstructing the WJP measures with only the expert survey.**
- Both the WJP and IIAG indicators rely on subjective measures of governance based on expert opinion. Expert opinions may overestimate changes as a reaction to major political events. To mitigate this, **the team recommends pairing analyses of IIAG and WJP data with event data to identify major events that may influence subjective scores.**