

# Africa's Quest

Issue 1 | 2026

---

*Fueling conversations that drive change*

**Rediscovering  
the Middle**

# Editorial Note

**Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Africa's Quest*, a magazine for shared ideas and suggestions on Africa's ongoing quest for an inclusive society.**

As Editor, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to introduce a space that is intentionally open: open to diverse voices, open to contestation, and open to rethinking how civic engagement, philanthropy, communities, and economic development intersect in our contexts.

This first edition is anchored in our Big Bet for 2026, "*Rediscovering the Middle*." At its core, this idea challenges us to reconsider where agency lies, who holds it, and how it is exercised. It asks us to look beyond the norm — be it in politics or economics — but instead focus on the grey areas, which we are calling the "middle."

At the core of the idea of the middle is a reimagining of subjects that we have taken for granted and at times assumed settled for us, to bring back the idea of citizens and their communities at the centre of politics and challenging us to reimagine a better deal for all.

For contributors to this issue — both internal and external — this platform presents a fertile terrain for exploration. What does civic agency look like in contexts of political and economic precarity? What models of local philanthropy increase corporate and individual participation in social development initiatives? And critically, how do livelihoods frameworks intersect with these questions in ways that are both inclusive and sustainable?

This magazine does not seek to provide definitive answers. Instead, it offers a curated conversation — one that is analytical, reflective, and, at times, deliberately uncomfortable. We invite contributions that interrogate assumptions, surface contradictions, and propose alternatives grounded in evidence and experience.

As you engage with this inaugural issue, we encourage you to approach it not as a static publication, but as a living dialogue. The "middle" is not fixed; it is constantly being negotiated in communities, institutions, and everyday interactions. Our task — collectively — is to understand it better, strengthen it intentionally, and, where necessary, reimagine it entirely.



**Emeldah Takaona**

Communications Officer, SIVIO Institute

## THE BIG QUESTIONS

- What does civic agency look like in contexts of political and economic precarity?
- What models of local philanthropy increase corporate and individual participation in social development?
- How do livelihoods frameworks intersect with these questions in ways that are both inclusive and sustainable?

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Same Problems, Different Flags — p.3
- From Reluctance to Response — p.6
- Our First Quarter in Review — p.9
- African Citizens Watch — p.11

*"The 'middle' is not fixed; it is constantly being negotiated in communities, institutions, and everyday interactions."*



ANALYSIS

---

# Same Problems, Different Flags

Why Citizens in South Africa and Zimbabwe Feel  
Let Down by the Government

By Eddah Jowah and Nolwazi Ndlovu

# Same Problems, Different Flags

## Why Citizens in South Africa and Zimbabwe Feel Let Down by the Government

By Eddah Jowah and Nolwazi Ndlovu

**Citizens in Zimbabwe and South Africa are speaking with clarity about what they expect from their governments — and they are defining for themselves what success should look like.**

In Zimbabwe, decades of economic hardship and governance failures have sharpened demands for basic services. In South Africa, persistent inequality, unemployment, and declining trust in institutions dominate public sentiment. What unites these voices is a simple truth: citizens want governments that listen, act, and deliver in ways that are visible in their everyday realities.

Our Citizens' Perception and Expectations (CPE) research is a nationwide survey of ordinary citizens to find out how they feel about the performance of the government. The 2025 CPE Survey in Zimbabwe drew insights from 2,006 respondents across all ten provinces, while the South Africa CPE Survey engaged 3,156 respondents across nine provinces. Together, these reports reveal frustration and disappointment amongst citizens. This article draws on insights from both reports to unpack the dominant trends shaping citizen expectations in [South Africa](#) and [Zimbabwe](#).

### What did we find?

#### Low Levels of Public Participation in Public Processes

Citizen participation in decision-making remains strikingly poor in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, especially at the central government level. This signals a governance architecture that is still closed to the people it claims to serve. In South Africa, only 12% of citizens said that they had participated in any policy formulation processes, while in Zimbabwe, only 25% had participated. In South Africa, 55% of citizens felt that they have no room to make an input in policy processes, while in Zimbabwe, 63% of respondents shared similar sentiments. This reflects not just apathy but a systemic exclusion of citizens from shaping decisions that directly affect their lives. For citizens and elected officials to truly find each other, engagement must move beyond symbolic consultations to tangible mechanisms that embed citizen voices in governance. Without this shift, governments risk perpetuating a cycle where policies are designed in isolation.

#### SOUTH AFRICA

**12%**

participated in any policy formulation process

**55%**

participated in any policy formulation process  
felt they have no room to make an input in policy processes

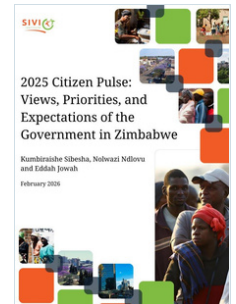
#### ZIMBABWE

**25%**

participated in any policy formulation process

**63%**

participated in any policy formulation process  
felt they have no room to make an input in policy processes



Zimbabwe Citizen Pulse  
CPE Survey 2025



South African Voices  
CPE Survey 2025

### Dissatisfaction with Local Government

In Zimbabwe, more than half of citizens (60%) rated their local government performance as medium, while 32% rated it low and 7% rated it high. Disaggregated by location, the trend remained consistent, with medium ratings dominating across peri-urban (58%), rural (60%), and urban (62%) areas. However, in South Africa, 70% of respondents ranked their municipalities’ performance as low, with only 2% rating them high. This pattern held across provinces and locations, with 74% of peri-urban, 73% of rural, and 67% of urban residents giving low ratings. The findings show a clear pattern: in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, citizens are not satisfied with the performance of their local government. While Zimbabwe’s ratings lean toward “medium,” this still reflects a sense of limited delivery and unmet expectations. In South Africa, most citizens rank their municipalities as “low,” pointing to a deeper crisis of confidence. What makes these results particularly significant is that local government is the most immediate and daily platform through which citizens interact with the state. It is where service delivery, accountability, and responsiveness are most visible in everyday life. When this level of government fails to deliver, it is not only disappointing but also erodes trust in governance more broadly. In South Africa, citizens’ top priorities for local government were job creation (57%), water and sanitation (44%) and reducing crime (38%). In Zimbabwe, the priorities are clean water supply (52%), functioning clinics (37%) and road maintenance (36%). When asked about what hinders the performance of local government, 69% in South Africa identified corruption as the primary hindrance, followed by incompetence of office holders (13%) and nepotism (6%). Zimbabwe had a similar finding, corruption (35%) was on top of the list, followed by incompetent office holders (19%) and inadequate resources (15%).

### Local Government Ratings — "Low" Performance



**SOUTH AFRICA — LOCAL**

- Job creation (57%)
- Water and sanitation (44%)
- Reducing crime (38%)

**ZIMBABWE — LOCAL**

- Clean water supply (52%)
- Functioning clinics (37%)
- Road maintenance (36%)

**PRIMARY HINDRANCE**

- Corruption SA: 69%, ZW: 35%
- Incompetence of office holders
- Nepotism & inadequate resources

### Dissatisfaction with the Central / National Government

Across both countries, the surveys point to a troubling stagnation in government performance. Citizens acknowledge pockets of progress. In South Africa, overall Government of National Unity (GNU) performance was rated low by 71% of respondents, a striking signal of dissatisfaction. On specific indicators, 33% said government performance remained stagnant. Zimbabweans note improvements in infrastructure and international reengagement, but the dominant perception is that governments are failing to deliver on the fundamentals. In Zimbabwe, 50% of citizens rated the national government’s performance as ‘medium’. An average of 46% highlighted that government performance in key areas has remained the same. In both contexts, citizens are clear about the priorities that the national government should focus on.

**SOUTH AFRICA — NATIONAL**

- Employment creation (80%)
- Tackling corruption (53%)
- Price stability (23%)
- Healthcare delivery (21%)

**ZIMBABWE — NATIONAL**

- Employment creation (58%)
- Tackling corruption (43%)
- Healthcare delivery (38%)
- Resuscitating industry (24%)

For citizens in both countries, underperformance in key sectors is not seen as a problem of inadequate resources. In South Africa, when asked if the national government has enough resources, 63% of respondents expressed that resources are adequate. In Zimbabwe, 82% said resources are adequate. Citizens believe the real barriers to development lie elsewhere, namely, the incompetence of office holders and ineffective leadership. In South Africa, the top suggestion for resource mobilisation was curbing corruption, cited by 79% of respondents, while in Zimbabwe, 32% of respondents suggested that the national government could mobilise resources by cutting expenditure. This points to a widespread perception of overspending and misallocation, where citizens believe resources exist but are squandered through bloated costs, inefficiency, or priorities that do not serve the public. Both perspectives converge on a critical expectation that governments must demonstrate competence, integrity, and accountability if they are to meet citizens' demands for responsive governance.

In the surveys, citizens are clear about what they want national and local governments to prioritise. These priorities have been consistent. In South Africa, citizens emphasise employment creation, dealing with corruption, price stabilisation, healthcare delivery, clean water and sanitation, and reducing crime. In Zimbabwe, jobs, healthcare, tackling corruption, access to clean water and road maintenance remain the core demands. These are not extravagant asks. They are the basic expectations of any functioning state. The lesson for governments is clear: citizens do not need grand political slogans or ambitious blueprints that take years to materialise. They need practical action.

### What Citizens Are Asking For

#### → Real Jobs

Economic policies that create real jobs, not just stability on paper. In both countries, unemployment and informal work dominate, leaving citizens without security or dignity.

#### → Reducing Corruption

South Africans place corruption at the centre of their concerns, reflecting how deeply it permeates institutions. Zimbabweans also highlight overspending and waste as evidence of poor leadership.

#### → Decent Public Health Services

Healthcare remains a universal demand across both countries — a non-negotiable baseline expectation.

#### → Genuinely Open Policymaking

Citizens want to be heard, not as an afterthought, but as partners shaping decisions that affect their lives.

#### → A Laser Focus on Service Delivery

Access to water, electricity, housing, and local services is the first point of interaction between citizens and office holders, and often the true measure of government performance.


### Conclusion

From a citizen's lens, true change is measured in the everyday. People are not moved by figures or lofty growth targets. Citizens experience governance through water in their taps, medicine in their clinics, functioning industries that provide decent jobs, electricity that lights their homes, and streets that are safe from crime. Good governance is not abstract; it is lived. It should capture and reflect the voices of the people it serves. Citizens are clear: their expectations are basic, but they are non-negotiable. They want governments that listen, act, and deliver. Decisions must be shaped by those who live with their consequences, not imposed from above. The lesson is simple, yet profound development is not about slogans or blueprints that gather dust. It is about dignity in daily life. Until governments place citizens' voices at the centre of policymaking and service delivery, trust will remain fragile in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. But when leaders embrace this truth, they unlock the possibility of governance that is not only effective but transformative. And the question that lingers is unavoidable

---

*"If policies are not aligned with citizen priorities, who are they really being made for?"*

---



OPINION

---

# From Reluctance to Response

The Slow Rise of Local Giving for GBV Survivors

By Emeldah Takaona

# From Reluctance to Response

## The Slow Rise of Local Giving for GBV Survivors

By Emeldah Takaona



*We Are One Fund fundraising events — bringing together corporate and individual givers in solidarity against GBV*

**Across Zimbabwe and parts of Southern Africa, a subtle but important shift is underway in how communities respond to gender-based violence.**

In societies where formal giving to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has historically been limited, often shaped by distrust, economic constraints, and a preference for informal or kinship-based support systems, there is emerging evidence of a gradual reorientation. Corporations and individuals are beginning, albeit cautiously, to participate in social development through structured giving, particularly in response to pressing social issues such as gender-based violence (GBV).

This shift is neither accidental nor uniform. It is shaped by a convergence of local experience, institutional innovation, and a growing recognition that community-level crises require collective responses that extend beyond the state.

*Understanding the Context: A Culture of Giving, but Not Always to Institutions*

Research on philanthropy in Africa consistently highlights a paradox: giving is not absent; it is simply differently configured. Within societal structures, individual donors, religious organisations, and informal networks play a pivotal role in mobilising resources to address critical social needs, often outside formal NGO channels. As Tendai Murisa’s notion of “ephemeral philanthropy” illustrates, communities continuously mobilise resources in response to lived realities—often spontaneously, relationally, and outside institutional frameworks, yet remaining central to social resilience and survival (Murisa, [2023](#)).

However, this model presents limitations when addressing complex, systemic issues such as GBV. Unlike episodic needs, GBV requires sustained funding for survivor support services, legal assistance, psychosocial care, and long-term reintegration - areas where informal giving mechanisms often fall short.

It is within this gap that we are beginning to witness a new pattern of giving emerge through our collective giving initiative – We Are One Fund.

## We Are One Fund: The Role of Convenings and Social Fundraising

The We Are One Fund, an initiative of SIVIO Institute, is a collaborative funding platform designed to support 15 organisations working with survivors of gender-based violence in Zimbabwe. These organisations provide essential services such as safe shelter, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and emergency care, often with limited and unpredictable resources.

The Fund brings together contributions from individuals, corporates, and partners, pooling them to ensure more consistent and impactful support reaches those on the ground. Beyond funding, it also promotes awareness, collaboration, and shared responsibility in addressing GBV.

Ultimately, the We Are One Fund represents a more coordinated approach—moving fragmented efforts to a unified response that strengthens services and contributes to safer, more resilient communities.

Recent We Are One Fund social fundraising events, including a men's dinner and a music concert, offer important insights into how giving behaviours in Zimbabwe are evolving. These events were not merely fundraising platforms; they are carefully constructed social interventions designed to reshape perceptions around both GBV and philanthropy.

One of the most notable lessons from these convenings is the importance of framing. By positioning GBV not only as a women's issue but as a societal and economic concern, the We Are One Fund has been able to engage demographics, particularly men and corporate actors, who have traditionally remained peripheral to such causes. The men's dinner leveraged peer influence and social accountability, creating a space where giving is both a personal commitment and a public statement.

Similarly, the music concert demonstrated the power of cultural capital in mobilising support by creating a relaxed atmosphere for engagement while highlighting the urgent crisis of GBV.

## Corporate Participation: From CSR to Strategic Social Investment

Another emerging trend, as learned through the We Are One Fund, is the gradual shift in how corporates engage with social causes. Traditionally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Zimbabwe has been characterised by ad hoc donations, often aligned with branding or compliance requirements. However, recent engagements suggest a move towards more strategic and issue-based participation.

Within the philanthropy ecosystem mapped by SIVIO Institute, business corporates are identified as important—yet underutilised—actors, with significant potential to contribute to community development (SIVIO Institute, 2025). Of note, community foundations have expressed a strong desire to deepen engagement with corporate actors, recognising their capacity not only to provide funding but also to influence norms and mobilise additional resources.

Understanding unique corporate priorities and aligning fundraising efforts with the corporate planning and budgeting cycles, together with early, strategic engagement, is key to unlocking corporate giving. As such, fundraising for social causes such as GBV response must be approached as a long-term engagement strategy rather than a transactional ask, with careful attention to corporate decision-making timelines.

In the context of GBV, we are beginning to see corporates making strategic decisions to partner with the We Are One Fund under specific pillars. This reflects corporate giving as an investment in social stability and economic resilience.

## Individual Giving: Small Contributions, Collective Impact

While corporate giving is evolving, the most significant shift may be occurring at the level of individual giving. Evidence from community philanthropy research indicates that individuals remain central to the ecosystem, both as donors and as mobilisers of resources (SIVIO Institute, 2025).

Experience from various targeted campaigns, including traditional and digital media, and social events undertaken by the We Are One Fund, has seen individuals giving and pledging financial solidarity to support GBV survivors. This represents a departure from traditional one-to-one assistance towards collective financing mechanisms that enable scale and sustainability.

Importantly, these contributions are often modest in monetary terms but significant in symbolic value. They signal a willingness to engage with formalised systems of giving and to trust frontline organisations to manage and allocate resources effectively.

The progress we note is consistent with findings from the Global Philanthropy Environment Index (2026), which recognises a growing interest in local giving across Africa, driven by increased awareness, digital platforms, and the visibility of impact.

### *Challenges and Tensions*

Despite witnessing positive trends, the shift towards structured giving remains fragile. Several challenges persist. Economic constraints cannot be overlooked. In contexts of high unemployment and income insecurity, discretionary giving competes with immediate household needs. While social fundraising events are effective entry points, sustaining giving beyond these moments requires robust systems for donor engagement, feedback, and impact reporting.

### *Spotlight: The We Are One Fund, A Quarter of Impact*

Informed by our experience through AfricaGiving, we remain committed to generosity. One of our signature initiatives, the We Are One Fund, has remained steadfast in its mission to mobilise resources supporting frontline organisations combating gender-based violence (GBV) in Zimbabwe in partnership with the British Embassy and DAI.

This quarter, the initiative saw major milestones. We released our first We Are One Newsletter, capturing the spirit of solidarity and funding drives from the past year. We also convened a Men's Corporate Leadership Dinner on 26 February, a pivotal gathering that brought male leaders into the heart of the conversation and raised US\$59,630 in individual and corporate donations, demonstrating the power of engaging men as champions in this fight.

We also welcomed new corporate partners, Premium Leaf Tobacco, Simbisa Brands, Southland Regional, Green Fuel and Ox Prop, joining our first partners, Telco and Nyathi Travel. Their in-kind and financial support underscores the growing confidence in our mission to build a sustainable ecosystem of corporate solidarity against GBV.

Recognising that meaningful change thrives on voice and capacity, we convened 14 communications representatives from partner organisations to the Communicating for Impact training (March 3–5) to sharpen skills in digital storytelling, organisational branding, and fundraising communication. The sessions not only built technical capacity but also deepened confidence in amplifying the stories that drive advocacy and transformation.

Finally, we closed the quarter on a creative note through a Sofar Sounds x We Are One concert at Chapungu Sculpture Park, a soulful Women's Month event that merged music and meaning. With an all-women lineup and proceeds channelled to support GBV response, it was a fitting reminder that art, too, can mobilise compassion.

## *Looking Forward Institutionalising the Shift*

A sobering reality is that external support is no longer guaranteed—if anything, it is diminishing. This moment calls for a deliberate shift inward, where communities, corporates, and individuals recognise their collective agency in funding and strengthening responses to the challenges we face. The question is no longer who will come, but how each of us will contribute to building resilient, locally driven solutions.

The emerging pattern of giving towards GBV survivors points to a broader transformation in how social development is financed. It suggests that, even in contexts where formal philanthropy has been limited, it is possible to cultivate a culture of giving that is both structured and locally rooted.

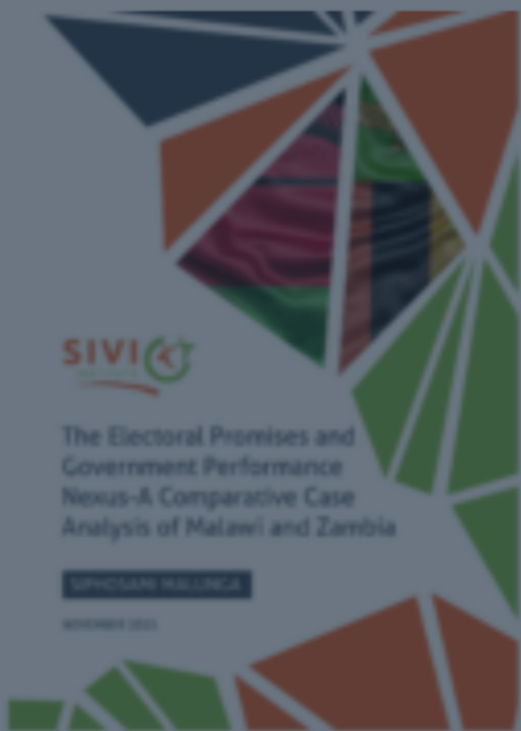
Going forward, equally important is the need to normalise giving as part of civic responsibility. This requires not only awareness campaigns but also visible examples of impact, showing how contributions translate into tangible support for GBV survivors.

Ultimately, the shift we are witnessing is not just about fundraising; it is about redefining the social contract. It is about recognising that addressing issues like GBV is not solely the responsibility of governments or NGOs, but a collective obligation, one that requires participation from individuals, corporates, and communities alike.

---

*Progress may be slow, but it is steady. And in that steadiness lies the potential for lasting change.*

---



NEWSLETTER: January-March 2026

# What Have We Been Up To?

Our First Quarter in Review—highlights across SIVIO Institute's programmes, partnerships, and platforms.



# What Have We Been Up To? Our First Quarter in Review

## ANNUAL REPORT

As tradition would have it, this quarter also marked the release of our 2025 Annual Report. Each year, we reflect on our progress and lessons, taking you through the heart of our work across programmes, partnerships, and platforms. The 2025 edition offers an enriched narrative of impact, highlighting how we continue to strengthen active citizenship, drive policy innovation, and foster inclusive development. Access the full report [here](#).

## AMPLIFYING AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP: THE FIFTH EDITION OF AJIS

We released the fifth volume of our African Journal of Inclusive Societies (AJIS). Since 2021, AJIS has served as an open-access space for African scholars to explore the complex themes of collective action, civil rights, democracy, and philanthropy.

## CENTRE FOR PHILANTHROPY AND COMMUNITIES

### SHAPING THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY

We co-hosted a dialogue unveiling the Global Philanthropy Environment Index ([GPEI](#)) for Sub-Saharan Africa in partnership with the Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI) and the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. The dialogue helped to unpack key challenges, researchers' ground truths, practitioners' wisdom on legal/operational realities, and impact opportunities.

In February, we convened networks of Community Foundations from Malawi and Zimbabwe for a learning exchange in Lilongwe. For the first time, leaders from both countries met in person to exchange experiences on amplifying local giving, fostering accountability, and envisioning a resilient future where philanthropy is shaped by communities themselves.

## OUR 2026 BIG BET: REDISCOVERING THE MIDDLE GROUND

Critical to setting the tone for 2026, we released our Big Bet for the year, a tradition that captures the pulse of our institutional imagination and conviction. Over the years, our Big Bets have evolved: from spotlighting communities as the architects of democracy ([2024](#)) to recognising citizens as the most potent mechanisms of accountability ([2025](#)). This year, our focus is to [rediscover the middle](#), a courageous space where dialogue triumphs over division. We believe the middle ground stands as a site of bridge-building, empathy, and renewed civic courage.

This year's [edition](#) dives into the "politics of belonging" in contemporary Africa, shifting the debate from inclusion as a policy intention to inclusion as a lived practice. With nine (9) scholarly articles from across Southern and Eastern Africa, it interrogates how inclusion and exclusion are actively produced and contested.

### AFRICAGIVING

Before signing off in 2025, we found ourselves in a moment of reflection. In the final edition of our AfricaGiving Newsletter: [Ukarimu](#): Stories of Generosity Across Africa. We stepped back to distil the key lessons from a year of navigating what felt like a perfect storm, widespread donor cuts, shifting priorities, and the urgent need to reimagine how we resource change on the continent. Now, as we kick off 2026, we carry those lessons forward, not just as insights, but as the foundation for our work.

For those encountering AfricaGiving for the first time, it is our platform designed to raise the visibility of African non-profits leading change and link them with potential givers across the continent and beyond. It's an idea whose time has come, born from the belief in the power of African agency to shape its own development story. Explore the full Ukarimu edition on [Substack](#) for these insights and our [Udemy](#) course on individual giving, or read more about the [NGO of the Future](#).

## CENTRE FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

### EXPANDING OUR RESEARCH FOOTPRINT: CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.

A critical component of finding the middle is to centre the voices of citizens in discussions about governance and national priorities. This year, we were able to publish two survey reports capturing Citizens Perceptions and Expectations (CPE) in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The South Africa survey was conducted at a pivotal time, after the formation of South Africa's Government of National Unity. The report provides an empirical baseline of public sentiment, offering key insights into how citizens perceive governance, service delivery, and the nation's trajectory. Explore the report [here](#).

The Zimbabwe report builds on a series of assessments dating back to 2018, and the latest findings continue to highlight citizens' deep concerns about their livelihoods. Across the board, respondents prioritise decent employment, quality healthcare, tackling corruption, and stabilising prices as the most urgent responsibilities for central government. Explore the report [here](#).

### AFRICAN CITIZENS WATCH

This quarter marked significant progress across our regional accountability work. We released an assessment [report](#) for the Government of Botswana, offering a detailed review of the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) administration's performance since December 2024 and highlighting emerging trends in governance delivery.

We published a comparative [analysis](#) of Zambia and Malawi, examining how the two administrations have approached economic reform, social protection, and institutional strengthening, and what their trajectories reveal about leadership styles across the region.

Following the re-election of President Peter Mutharika back into office in 2025, we have updated the Malawi Citizens Watch [Tracker](#) to track 463 promises made by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) ahead of its October 2025 electoral victory. The platform will provide a real-time tracker for citizens for the next five-year term of progress that the Government of Malawi will make in fulfilling these promises. Together, these outputs deepen our evidence base and strengthen the tools citizens can use to demand accountable governance.



FEATURE

---

# African Citizens Watch

Building a New Accountability Movement Across SADC—tracking what governments promise and measuring what they deliver.

# African Citizens Watch: Building a New Accountability Movement Across SADC

Across Southern Africa, citizens are demanding more than political poetry. They want delivery. They want transparency and accountability. They want governments that treat electoral promises as binding commitments. In this shifting landscape, our promise conversion tracker (from manifesto promises into policy actions), African Citizens Watch (ACW), has emerged as one of the region's most ambitious and incredible tools for strengthening democratic accountability.

At its core, ACW is simple but radical: track what governments promise, measure what they deliver, and publish the results for citizens to see. In a region where political pledges often evaporate after inauguration day, this kind of structured, evidence-based monitoring is a quiet revolution.

## *A Regional Lens on Performance*

African Citizens Watch operates as an independent platform that evaluates governments based on their manifesto commitments and major policy pronouncements. It is a scoreboard—one that citizens can use to judge whether their leaders are keeping their word. The platform currently tracks five governments across the SADC region:



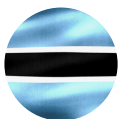
### **Zambia – United Party for National Development (UPND)**

Tracking began in August 2021, following the UPND's electoral victory. Zambia's case has become a reference point for how early enthusiasm, economic pressures, and governance reforms collide in real time.



### **South Africa – Government of National Unity (GNU)**

Since July 2025, ACW has monitored the GNU's complex coalition commitments—an unprecedented governance experiment in South Africa's democratic history.



### **Botswana – Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC)**

Tracking started in December 2024, offering insights into how a long-standing political landscape responds to new pressures for reform and citizen engagement.



### **Malawi – Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)**

Monitoring began in October 2025, capturing the DPP's return to power and the expectations surrounding economic recovery and institutional strengthening.



### **Zimbabwe – National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) and NDS2**

Zimbabwe presents a unique case. With no manifesto produced in the previous election, ACW tracks the government's performance against NDS1 (since November 2023) and is preparing to assess NDS2 from January 2026. This approach highlights how national development strategies can function as de facto social contracts in the absence of party manifestos.

## *From Weekly Updates to Annual Scorecards*

ACW's methodology blends real-time tracking with deep annual assessments. Weekly updates capture the pace of implementation, while the annual reports provide a comprehensive score on the extent to which promises have been fulfilled.

These reports—covering Botswana ([2025](#)), South Africa ([2025](#)), Zambia ([2025](#)), Malawi ([2025](#)), and Zimbabwe ([2024](#))—have become essential reading for journalists, civil society, researchers, and citizens who want to understand not just what governments say, but what they implement.

The platform also offers comparative [studies](#), such as the analysis of Malawi under President Chakwera and Zambia under President Hichilema, helping readers understand governance trends across borders.

## *A Movement, Not Just a Tracker*

What makes African Citizens Watch powerful is not only the data—it's the movement it is quietly building. By standardising how promises are tracked, ACW is:

- Strengthening civic literacy by evaluating leaders based on measurable commitments, not slogans.
- Empowering journalists with a reliable evidence base for investigative stories.
- Supporting civil society to anchor campaigns in verified performance data.
- Encouraging regional benchmarking. Governments can no longer hide behind rhetoric when their neighbours' performance is visible.
- Creating a culture of accountability. Over time, leaders know that their promises will be monitored, scored, and remembered.

This is how accountability movements begin—not with protests alone, but with information that shifts the balance of power between citizens and the state.

## *Voices From the Ground*

ACW's podcast [series](#) brings the tracker to life. Country researchers discuss the stories behind the numbers: the political tensions, economic realities, and governance challenges shaping each country's performance. These conversations help citizens understand not just what is happening, but why.

## *Toward a More Accountable SADC*

Southern Africa stands at a crossroads. Economic pressures, shifting political alliances, and rising citizen expectations are reshaping the region's democratic landscape. In this moment, African Citizens Watch offers something rare: clarity. By turning political promises into measurable commitments, ACW is helping citizens reclaim their role as the ultimate custodians of democracy. It is building a culture where leaders are expected to deliver—and where citizens have the tools to demand it.

In a region hungry for accountable governance, African Citizens Watch is more than a platform. It is a catalyst for a new civic awakening across SADC.

# Write for Africa's Quest

## Contributor Guidelines — Issue 2 and Beyond

*Africa's Quest* is a thought leadership platform that amplifies evidence-based insights, practical experiences, and critical perspectives on civil society, philanthropy, governance, and social impact across Africa.

We publish high-quality, analytical, and accessible content that advances conversations on development and social change, showcases innovations and lived experiences from practitioners, and bridges research, policy, and practice.

### Editorial Focus

We welcome opinion, analysis, and thought pieces evolving around:

#### Civic Engagement

Civil society strengthening, governance, accountability, and public policy

#### Philanthropy & Communities

Community-focused giving, philanthropy ecosystems, and collective action

#### Economic Development

Livelihoods, social innovation, systems change, and community-led development

#### Citizen Engagement

Participatory governance, citizen expectations, and democratic accountability

*Strong submissions offer new insights, practical lessons, or challenge conventional thinking. We do not accept press releases, promotional content, or articles primarily advancing a specific product or service.*

### Submission Requirements

#### → Article

Word document or Google Doc. Word limit: **800–1,200 words**. Include a title and subtitle. Use subheadings for readability and support arguments with evidence, examples, or data. Cite sources using APA referencing style.

#### → Author Details

Full name, designation, organisation or affiliation, social media handles, and an author bio of up to 100 words. Please attach a high-resolution headshot.

#### → Images (Optional)

Suggested images with captions and credits, submitted as JPG, JPEG, or PNG formats.

### PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

- *Africa's Quest* is published **quarterly** — every first Thursday of January, April, July, and October.
- *Full article submissions are due the 24th of January, April, July, and October.*
- Pitch first: email a proposed headline, brief outline, and your background before submitting in full.

### EDITORIAL STANDARDS

- Originality — work must not have been published elsewhere
- Accuracy — all facts and statistics must be verifiable with credible sources
- Fairness — present balanced perspectives; avoid misleading claims
- Inclusion — reflect diverse African voices and experiences
- Disclosure — declare any conflicts of interest or relevant funding

# Africa's Quest

## Issue 1 | 2026

---

## Contact Us

---

+263 776 379 472

---

magazine@sivioinstitute.org

---

### FOLLOW US



SIVIO INSTITUTE · SIVIOINSTITUTE.ORG

*Fueling conversations that drive change*

# Rediscovering the Middle