

ZIMBABWE NATIONAL REPORT TEMPLATE

1. Country details

Name: Zimbabwe
Population: 17.30 million
GDP: \$12.80 billion USD
PDL: \$495.00
% population below PDL: 72.3%
No. of practising lawyers: 1721 (1660 legal practitioners and 61 commerce lawyers)
Legal Aid Directorate statistics: 2017 – 7098 cases handled
2018 - 8151 cases handled

2. Legal Aid Organisation / Authority

The Zimbabwe legal aid model is situated within Government. It falls under the Justice Ministry. We call it a Directorate. It comprises of Government salaried staff. The governing legislation provides for recompense but we have not used the provisions because the salaried layers do the legal work adequately.

3. Budget and spend

Although our legislation establishes a legal aid Fund there has not been any government allocation of money to specifically support legal aid. Its budget is subsumed in the Justice Ministry's allocation.

4. Scope, Caseload and Eligibility

The governing legislation opens legal aid assistance/representation to all Zimbabwean indigent persons in respect of civil matters; criminal matters and other legal related matters such as administration of estates and employment law. We do not classify legal aid services in terms of initial advice and secondary. The primary consideration is to determine whether our client has a triable and enforceable legal claim.

We have not done a study to determine the proportion of population that requires legal aid services. However, we have established legal aid centres in all our provincial towns. We are establishing centres in selected districts throughout the country. Our aim is to establish a legal aid centre wherever there is a court in our country.

Means tested contributions are part of our financial scheme for supporting the provision of legal aid services. The governing legislation exempts a legal aid litigant from paying the other side's legal expenses.

5. Quality Assurance

Our legal aid lawyers are drawn from the same law schools as lawyers in private practice. Our basic quality assurance checklist are the Court Rules.

We have not received any complaints as a Government-sponsored legal aid service provider.

There are other non-State legal aid service providers who are partly regulated by the Law Society of Zimbabwe but these entities operate as Civil Service Organisations. Generally, there are no special considerations as to experience, special exams or limits of the number of cases when providing legal aid services. The most important qualification required is a Law Degree.

6. Public Legal Education

Our service is accessible by the public. These are walk-in clients. We raise public awareness by exhibiting and explaining our services at selected national public events. Our decentralisation programme to the districts is intended to provide legal aid services to the needy in the remote parts of our country. We have not yet designed a programme to assist those that may require special attention. There have been a few Needs Assessment Studies which have been conducted by non-State legal aid providers. At the moment efforts are being made to bring together all the legal aid service providers so that they can be co-ordinated.

7. Alternative sources of legal services

Alternative sources of legal services exist in our jurisdiction. For instance, we have a Women's legal organisation that was set up to assist women on legal matters. We have other organisations that focus on children who come in contact/conflict with the law. In this report we are unable to provide the statistics. Each organisation keeps its statistics. Some service providers do not charge their clients any legal fees. As for our Directorate our clients are required to make a payment which we call a "contribution".

Legal insurance schemes do exist in our jurisdiction. Currently, a legal framework is being developed for this aspect. We also have trade union organisations that represent workers' legal challenges. We have a few university law clinics. We have recently introduced a Paralegal Programme at one of our universities.

8. Holistic legal services

Efforts are currently being made by the Ministry in consultation with the various legal aid service providers with a view to co-ordinate these various players. We have a one-stop shop facility which we term "Help Desk" comprising of various non-State legal service providers. This "Help Desk" is situated in a number of our magistrates' courts countrywide. We have, as the Directorate established a collaborative framework with one of these CSOs. There are links that we are establishing with health professionals in the area of psychosocial support in our endeavour to provide a holistic assistive legal-medical package.