



## ZIMBABWE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

*"Refuse, Resist and Report Corruption"*

---

SUNDAY MAIL ARTICLE

### **ZACC to Build on Improvement in Corruption Perceptions Index**

**By Commissioner John Makamure**

Zimbabwe has witnessed an improvement in the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) as the country forges ahead with measures to curb corruption and realise objectives of its economic development thrust as clearly enunciated in the Transitional Stabilisation Programme and Vision 2030. The CPI is an index published annually by TI since 1995 which ranks countries "by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys".

The country achieved a CPI score of 24 out of 100 in 2019, up from 22 out of 100 in 2018. The country's CPI ranking correspondingly increased from 160 out of 180 to 158 out of 180 countries. Although we are still ranked one of the most highly corrupt country, we at ZACC view this development as significant in that the country has been in the doldrums for a very long time as far as incidences of corruption are concerned. We will celebrate these small gains and build on this going into the future. The Commission will leave no stone unturned to ensure consistent improvements in our ranking.

What is important to note is that while Zimbabwe recorded some improvement, more than two-thirds of countries – along with many of the world's most advanced economies – are stagnating or showing signs of backsliding in their anti-corruption efforts, according to Transparency International.

More than two-thirds of countries scored below 50, with an average score of only 43. Since 2012, only 22 countries have significantly improved their scores, including Estonia, Greece and Guyana. A total of 21 have significantly declined, including Australia, Canada and Nicaragua.

As already highlighted, the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, with a constitutional mandate to combat and prevent corrupt, will not allow Zimbabwe to backslide in its anti-corruption drive.

However, for this to happen certain key enablers must be in place. First and foremost is political will. The Commission does not doubt political will by His Excellency President Emmerson Mnangagwa. He managed to put in place the necessary institutions to fight corruption and went a step further to grant ZACC arresting powers and significantly increased budgetary allocation to the Commission as part of efforts to enhance its capacity.

We would however like to see such commitment replicated at other lower levels of the political establishment. Politicians across the political divide must be champions of anti-corruption in words and deed. They must preach the gospel of anti-corruption at each and every meeting that they participate in, and clearly demonstrate that they are people of high moral standing and integrity.

A related enabler is the Government strictly adopting a zero tolerance policy on corruption? If there is a double standard in the society, where minor corruption is tolerated or private sector corruption is tolerated, then it is impossible for the society to become a genuinely clean society.

The corruption prevention strategy aims at reducing corruption opportunities in government departments and public institutions. The general principle is to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability in all government businesses. The most corruption-vulnerable areas are public procurement, public works, licensing, public services delivery, law enforcement and revenue collection. These should be the priority areas to introduce corruption prevention reform as success would undoubtedly enhance government revenue and reduce wastage, hence providing the government additional resources to tackle the poverty problem.

There is no single solution in fighting corruption. A review of some good practices will illustrate the importance of key enablers to changing public perception and winning the war against corruption.

Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) adopts a three pronged approach: deterrence, prevention and education. As a result, the Commission consists of three separate departments: the Operations Department to investigate corruption; the Corruption Prevention Department to examine the systems and procedures in the public sector, to identify the corruption opportunities and to make recommendations to plug the loopholes; and the Community Relations Department to educate the public against the evil of corruption and to enlist its support and partnership in fighting corruption.

The three prongs are equally important, but ICAC devotes over 70% of its resources to the Operations Department. The reasons are that any successful fight against corruption must start with effective enforcement on major targets, so as to demonstrate to the public the government's determination to fight corruption at all costs, as well as to demonstrate the effectiveness of the anti-corruption agencies. Without that, the public would be reluctant to come forward to report corruption. Successful enforcement assists in identifying problem areas for corruption prevention review and can clear any human obstacle in the review. The successful enforcement stories also provide a basis for public education and deter other corrupt officials.

Fighting corruption is a very difficult task, because you are confronting people who are probably very intelligent, knowledgeable and powerful. Thus anti-corruption agents must be very professional. The ICAC ensures that its staff is professional in its diverse responsibilities – the Operations Department has professional investigators, intelligence experts, computer experts, forensic accountants and legal experts. The Corruption Prevention Department has management/technical experts and the Community Relations Department pools together education, ethics and public relations experts. Apart from professionalism, each ICAC staff

member is expected to uphold a high level of integrity and to possess a passion and sense of mission in carrying out his or her duties.

To enlist the support of the entire community to fight corruption, the ICAC has a very wide range of education strategies. They include (1) media publicity to ensure effective enforcement cases are well publicized, through press releases, media conferences and interviews, as well as TV drama series based on successful cases; (2) media education – use of mass media commercials to encourage the public to report corruption; promote public awareness of the evil of corruption and the need for a fair and just society, and as deterrence to the corrupt; (3) school ethics education programmes, starting from kindergarten up to university; (4) The ICAC Club, which accepts members who wish to perform voluntary work for the ICAC in community education; (5) In partnership with the business sector, the ICAC set up an Ethics Development Centre as a resource centre for the promotion of a business code of ethics; (6) corruption prevention talks and ethics development seminars for public servants and the business sector; (7) corruption prevention best practices and guidelines publications; (8) organize exhibitions, fun fairs, and television variety shows to spread the message of a clean society; and (9) wide use of websites for publicity and reference, youth education and ethics development.

On investigative power, apart from the normal police power of search, arrest and detention, ICAC has the power to check bank accounts, intercept telephone communication, require witnesses to answer questions under oath, restrain properties suspected to be derived from corruption, and hold the suspects' travel documents to prevent them from fleeing the jurisdiction. Not only are they empowered to investigate corruption offences, both in the Government and the private sector, they can investigate all crimes which are connected with corruption.

The ICAC cases are prosecuted by a select panel of public prosecutors to ensure both quality and integrity. The judiciary of Hong Kong is a strong supporter of fighting corruption, which ensures that the ICAC cases are handled in courts by highly professional judges with absolute fairness. The conviction rate for ICAC cases is very high, around 80%.

ZACC is looking at all these good practices with a view to adopt those that are relevant to the country's socio-economic context. The new ZACC is determined to raise the bar as far as the anti-corruption fight is concerned.

**Commissioner John Makamure is the ZACC Spokesperson and Chairs the Committee on Prevention, Public Education and Corporate Governance.**

**[john.makamure@gmail.com](mailto:john.makamure@gmail.com). ZACC Toll Free Line: 08010101; Landline: + 263 242 369602/5/8**

