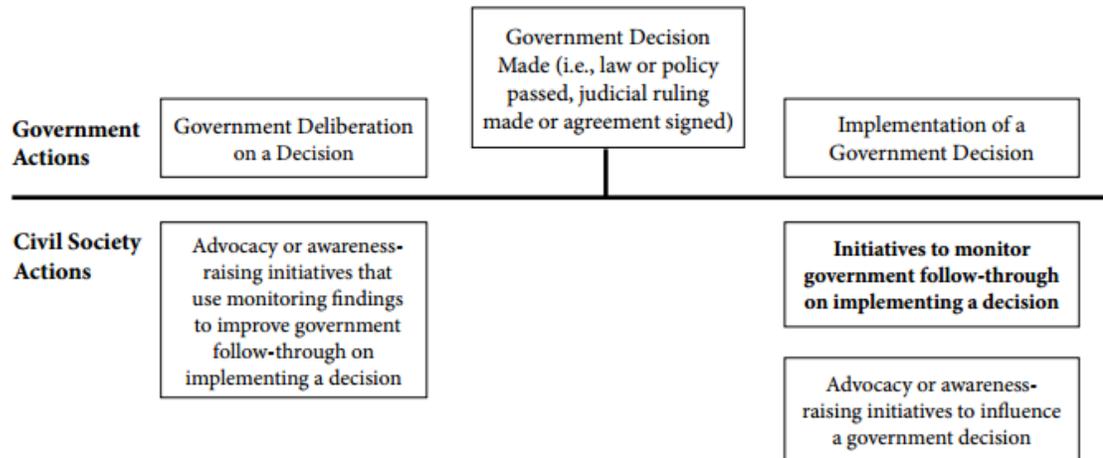


## Zimbabwe: Monitoring Government Follow-Through

Adopted from the National Democratic Institute's *Political Process Monitoring: Activists Tools and Techniques*



### *Purpose*

Often, civil society organizations monitor how well governments implement official decisions. This type of political process monitoring—what this guide refers to as monitoring government follow-through—has occurred around several different processes, including the execution of power sharing agreements, domestic violence policies, electoral reforms and constitutional reform. Monitoring government follow-through can be an effective oversight method that can prompt government responsiveness by publicly revealing whether official decisions have resulted in promised changes.

While some groups design initiatives for the specific purpose of monitoring government follow-through, other groups combine this type of monitoring with advocacy or awareness-raising campaigns in order to influence government decisions in the first place. Once that decision has been made, groups then monitor their government to see if it is executing that decision effectively. Monitoring government follow-through can provide information on how well a decision is being implemented, which could strengthen a group's subsequent advocacy or awareness-raising initiatives.

NDI supports initiatives to monitor government follow-through in order to:

- increase public awareness of the extent to which governments implement and enforce decisions;
- increase pressure on governments to comply with decisions;
- increase implementation and enforcement of decisions; and
- improve governance.

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This section lays out how groups can monitor government follow-through on implementing decisions and draws primarily from the experience of NDI’s Zimbabwean partner, the Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism (CISOMM). CISOMM, a coalition of 30 Zimbabwean CSOs, formed after the signing of a power-sharing agreement by Zimbabwe’s ruling political party, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front, and the two opposition party factions of the Movement for Democratic Change. This power-sharing agreement, called the Global Political Agreement (GPA or the Agreement), emerged as a means of forming an inclusive government that would be able to resolve the protracted political and socio-economic crisis facing the country. Recognizing the Agreement’s potential for helping to restore democracy, human rights and rule of law, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) facilitated CISOMM’s creation to monitor the implementation of the GPA. This initiative was intended not only to support government accountability and transparency, but to act as a confidence-building measure for the people.

### The Monitoring Preparation Stage

Coalitions are often necessary when monitoring national government follow-through on decisions that extend across issue areas and geographic regions. Coalitions combine the strengths of organizations with varied interests, expertise and geographical reach. When the government decision addresses more than one issue area, coalitions are more likely than a single organization to mobilize the expertise and resources needed to ensure that information can be collected over a sufficiently large geographical area and encompass the entire scope of a decision.

Coalitions are not always necessary when monitoring initiatives concern the execution of local government decisions that affect limited geographical areas and populations. This precludes the need for the wide reach of a coalition. Even when monitoring the implementation of national government decisions, a coalition may not be necessary if the decision addresses one issue area. For instance, an organization carrying out an issue-based advocacy campaign might monitor the implementation of a decision related to its campaign, but its expertise in that issue area would preclude the need for the support of a coalition. Likewise, when monitoring national-level, multi-faceted government decisions, some groups have decided to focus only on the part of the decision that falls within their area of expertise and interest.

During the monitoring preparation stage, groups have focused primarily on developing a strategy and tools. However, when working as a newly-formed coalition, groups must also focus on the development of the coalition. They have done this through a series of steps:

- Organize a workshop or meeting to bring together a group of representatives from interested CSOs—either disparate groups or members of a coalition—to conceptualize a monitoring project.

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- Develop and sign an MoU to clarify the roles, responsibilities and mutual expectations of the coalition members.
- Establish a clear vision and goal for the coalition.

Both individual groups and coalitions have prepared for monitoring government follow-through on implementing decisions by:

- determining the goals, objectives and results for the monitoring project;
- developing a strategy, work plan, timeline and reporting mechanisms to guide the project's activities;
- developing benchmarks based on the government's outlined plan for implementing the decision. If there is no implementation plan, develop a reasonable one based on the political context and government capacity. These benchmarks will guide the coalition's monitoring activities;
- creating standard monitoring tools, such as a monitoring worksheet, so that information will be collected uniformly; and
- assigning specific roles and responsibilities for collecting and analyzing information.

In Zimbabwe, a majority of CISOMM's members had not previously engaged in government monitoring activities, but they had the willingness to learn and apply techniques introduced through a series of consultations with NDI. During the first meeting, CISOMM determined that it would monitor the implementation of seven sections of the GPA—economic recovery, humanitarian and food assistance, constitutional reform, political transition and justice, institutional transformation, and respect for human rights. The members divided themselves into seven clusters, each one agreeing to collect information on a different section of the GPA. The coalition then set benchmarks based on the implementation plan outlined in the GPA and created monthly workplans for their monitoring activities.

### *The Data Collection Stage*

When collecting data for the purpose of monitoring government follow-through, groups have used the standard tools developed during the preparation stage to uniformly capture information from a variety of sources. Whether managed by a coalition or a single organization, the volunteers and staff members collecting information have used the same data collection tools in order to ensure that the same type of information is collected through the same methods—even if the issue areas are different. This makes it easier to sort and analyze the data once it is compiled. Making the data collection methods and tools as uniform as possible also adds rigor to the research and therefore increases the legitimacy of the findings.

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The CISOMM coalition members monitored the government's progress in implementing the GPA by examining government press releases, conducting key informant interviews and organizing informal dialogues with experts on the seven sections of the GPA. To ensure that monitoring was carried out uniformly, CISOMM developed a standard reporting tool to record the extent of the government's compliance with the seven targeted GPA sections. In March 2009, the coalition members came together to share and analyze the information that they had collected through monitoring. They then compiled their findings and analyses into two reports, which were produced in April and May 2009.

Coalition member organizations have carried out monitoring activities independently, periodically compiling and analyzing the data based on the implementation-benchmark guidelines. These findings are then presented to the rest of the coalition during regularly held meetings in order to compile the information and share experiences while collecting the data. This information can then be organized and analyzed by a smaller group of the organization's staff. Groups have collected data by:

- examining government press releases;
- monitoring media coverage of the decision and its implementation;
- conducting key informant interviews with citizens;
- organizing informal dialogues with experts on the decision's issue areas; and
- holding meetings and roundtables with legislators to exchange information.

### *Resulting Products and Initiatives*

In most cases, individual groups and coalitions have used the compiled information and analyses to produce monitoring reports. Based upon the data collected from various stakeholders, these reports comment on how well the government has been implementing its decision—highlighting both successes and implementation gaps. They have also provided recommendations for addressing the gaps in follow-through. However, these reports have not been viewed as end products.

Whether working as a coalition or independently, groups have used the report findings to support other initiatives aimed at creating concrete change. Some of these initiatives include ongoing activities that began when the government was deliberating on the decision. Groups may have advocated for the passage of a law or policy, the signing of an agreement between public officials or a judicial ruling. Coalition members have often used the information outlined in the reports to advocate for better implementation of a government decision. Groups have also publicized the reports through press conferences, the Internet, newspapers, private discussions and larger roundtable discussions. These measures can raise awareness at the local, national and even international levels about the government's progress in implementing its decision. Groups have used these awareness-raising campaigns to apply the pressure of public scrutiny so the government would be moved to do a better job implementing its decision.

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In an attempt to create meaningful change based on its findings, CISOMM publicized the findings of its two monitoring reports through press conferences, the Internet, newspapers and discussions with Zimbabwean leaders. The reports became valuable tools during efforts to raise awareness on the implementation of the GPA and advocate for GPA-mandated reforms. CISOMM's monitoring reports were not only some of the most detailed assessments of the GPA implementation, but also proved to be valuable sources of objective information in a highly polarized environment.

One initiative to monitor government follow-through can also lead to other monitoring initiatives aimed at holding governments accountable. If a group or coalition finds that the lack of or mismanagement of funding is a primary reason why a government decision is not being well-implemented, then a budget-related monitoring initiative may be a good follow-on project. Since budget monitoring, budget advocacy and expenditure tracking initiatives are usually carried out at the local level, groups monitoring local government follow-through might find these types of monitoring projects particularly interesting. Groups have also applied what they've learned in one initiative monitoring government follow-through to monitoring other government decisions. This has occurred at the national level, but could also be done by groups working at the local level.

By mid-2009, attention in Zimbabwe had shifted away from the GPA to focus on the adoption of a new constitution before elections slated for May 2011. In response, ZLHR, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) and the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)—three of the organizations heavily involved in monitoring the constitutional reform section of the GPA—came together to form the Independent Constitution Monitoring Project (ZZZICOMP). The ZZZICOMP members have used the knowledge, skills and experience gained through monitoring the GPA to monitor the constitutional revision process, which is the largest project of its kind in Zimbabwe.

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