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ZIMBABWE

Report of the Peer Review of the National Statistical System

18-22 March 2019



The contents of this report constitute advice and recommendations provided by Directors general or Deputy directors general (the “Peers”) of the African Statistical System (ASS) to their counterparts (“Peer”) from a National statistical system (NSS) of the African Union Member States (the “Reviewed country”) in response to their request for assessment.

“The reviewed countries committed themselves to publish (or allow the publication of) the Peer Review Reports and ensure their discussion among the NSS partners” (see Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, www.austat.org).

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The Pan African Statistics Program (PAS) is meant to assist the African Union Commission in improving its statistical operations, as well as those of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the National Statistical Institutes. One of the aims of the PAS is to improve statistical dissemination.



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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUSTAT	African Union Statistics Divisions
BPM	Balance of Payments Manual
CPC	Central Product Classification
CPI	Consumer price index
DSSB	Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board
E-GDDS	Enhanced General Data Dissemination Standard
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GFS	Government Finance Statistics
ICT	Information and communication technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities
IT	Information technology
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSDP	National Summary Data Page
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSS	National Statistical System
NSSA	National Social Security Authority
PAS	Pan-African Statistics Programme
RCZ	Research Council of Zimbabwe
SDDS	Special Data Dissemination Standard
SNA	System of National Accounts
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ZIMRA	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

Foreword

The peer review of the National Statistical System (NSS) of Zimbabwe is the 14th in a round of such reviews carried out by the African Union Commission (AUC), as part of the Pan-African Statistics (PAS) Programme in 2018-2019, funded by the EU through Eurostat. All African Union Member States were invited to express interest in having a peer review under the Programme of which 16 countries replied positively and are included in this round of peer reviews. The peer reviews are prepared by the Statistics Division (AUSTAT) in the Department of Economic Affairs at the AUC, and Expertise France, which is assisting AUSTAT with the management of PAS Programme.





The peer reviews under the PAS Programme are carried out according to a Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, which was prepared under the auspices of the AUC through the PAS Programme and agreed among the statistical authorities of AU member states. The Manual prescribes that the peer reviews shall be carried out through preparations involving fact finding and documentation, visits to the participating countries and their NSSs, and report writing. The peer review of Zimbabwe was prepared by the submission of documentation and filling in of questionnaires by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, ZIMSTAT. According to the Manual, the peer reviews are conducted by a team of three senior statisticians, two peers and an expert. The peer review team visiting Zimbabwe was composed of Ms. Malebogo Kerekang, Deputy Statistician General, Statistics Botswana, Chair, Ms. Set Fong Cheung Tung Shing, Acting Deputy Director, Statistics Mauritius, Deputy Chair, and Mr. Hallgrímur Snorrason, former Director General of Statistics Iceland, as expert.

The Zimbabwe peer review visit was conducted in the period 18-22 March 2019. The visit involved meetings with the management and staff of ZIMSTAT, members of the ZIMSTAT Board, and representatives of the most important institutions of the NSS, including the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, several government ministries, representatives of various other producers and users of official statistics and data providers, and representatives of international agencies. All the meetings were held at ZIMSTAT. The agenda of the peer review visit is at Annex 1.


The peer review visit was prepared by ZIMSTAT in cooperation with the peer review team. The peer review team would like to acknowledge these preparations, the documentation submitted, and information given. The discussions with ZIMSTAT and the various other participants in the peer review were professional, open and conducted in a friendly spirit. The peer review team would like to express its gratitude to the Acting Director-General, the country coordinator, management and other staff at ZIMSTAT who participated in or assisted with the peer review, for their discussions, their assistance, warm reception and hospitality. The team also wishes to thank representatives of other institutions, with whom the team met and discussed, for their useful discussions, information and friendly reception.

1

Executive summary

The peer review of the national statistical system (NSS) of Zimbabwe was carried out in March 2019 as part of the Pan-African Statistics (PAS) Programme. The review involved the study of documentation submitted by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, ZIMSTAT, and a visit by a peer review team to Harare where the team held meetings with ZIMSTAT and representatives of various NSS stakeholders. The peer review followed the Manual on Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, issued by the African Union Commission.





ZIMSTAT is the central agency in the Zimbabwe NSS and the main producer of official statistics. Other important producers are the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe which is responsible for balance of payments and monetary statistics, the Ministry of Finance and Economy, and the ministries responsible for health, education, labour and agriculture. The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, the National Social Security Authority and the Registrar General are important providers of data for official statistics. ZIMSTAT and the generation of official statistics are governed by the Census and Statistics Act of 2007. The Act provides for the establishment of the NSS which is to be led and coordinated by ZIMSTAT.

The peer review revealed that official statistics in Zimbabwe are carried out in a strenuous environment of economic instability, shortage of funds, and mistrust of statistical measurements. Despite such adversities, ZIMSTAT is found to be a principled institution, employing hard-working, committed and dedicated staff. ZIMSTAT has been able to uphold regular statistical operations in several domains and carry out large scale ad-hoc surveys despite constraints of funding and subsequent lack of skilled staff. ZIMSTAT and the Reserve Bank exercise professional independence in line with international guidelines. It is of particular importance that the latest international concepts, standards and classifications are, to a large extent, applied across the whole of the NSS. ZIMSTAT engages frequently with the main stakeholders of official statistics and collaborates closely with some of the main NSS partners and data providers. The stakeholders consider ZIMSTAT to be a professional and trustworthy institution.

The peer review also found that Zimbabwe official statistics face serious challenges and that there is both scope and need for their improvement and development. Limited resources constitute the main challenge and constraint for Zimbabwe official statistics. Apart from that, there is a need for strengthening the integration of the NSS and the cooperation of ZIMSTAT and the NSS partners on both medium term and annual work planning. The Statistics Act is found to be a weakness, mainly in the sense that it is not fully in line with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and lacks provisions on issues like professional independence, work programmes and the mandate of ZIMSTAT to access and use administrative data. The peer review also finds that quality management should be enhanced, and dissemination practices need to be advanced. On the whole, the peer review reveals that there is a need for modernisation and advancement of the operation of Zimbabwe's official statistics.

2

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

Both the annual and the medium term (five year) activity plans, including the forthcoming NSDS, should cover the entire statistical activities of the NSS.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The medium term plan should be changed from covering a fixed five year period to becoming a rolling five year plan which is drawn up every year.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The annual and the rolling medium term plans should be drawn up jointly by the main producers of official statistics and main data providers; thus the planning processes will become the main instruments for operationalising the NSS as an integrated network for the generation of official statistics.

RECOMMENDATION 4

ZIMSTAT, being the coordinator of the NSS should strengthen the cooperation and coordination of NSS institutions by establishing and operating a high level cooperation and coordination committee.

RECOMMENDATION 5

ZIMSTAT should publicise its operations and increase awareness of its role as a professionally independent agency, closely following international standards and practices.



RECOMMENDATION 6

ZIMSTAT should strengthen its collaboration with main international development partners, e.g. through establishing and operating a joint committee that meets a few times a year, discussing ZIMSTAT's work programmes and the organisation of various donor-funded projects within them as well as other issues of mutual interest.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Census and Statistics Act should be revised to be fully in line with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics. The Act should include main issues like definition and operationalisation of an integrated NSS, provisions on the professional independence of ZIMSTAT and its Director-General, provisions on work programmes and their funding, utilisation of administrative data for statistical purposes, and improved provisions on confidentiality of individual source data.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Government of Zimbabwe should sign and ratify the African Charter on Statistics at the earliest opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION 9

ZIMSTAT should seek to negotiate and sign formal memoranda of understanding with ministries and agencies on their collaboration on collecting, standardising, utilising and delivering data, including administrative data, and producing statistics.

RECOMMENDATION 10

ZIMSTAT should increase its visibility and come out strongly to publicise its methods, standards and figures, and its professional independence.

RECOMMENDATION 11

ZIMSTAT needs larger resources in order to allow it to increase its number of skilled staff in key areas, obtain appropriate modern IT tools, and deliver the critical statistical output for planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation.

RECOMMENDATION 12

ZIMSTAT should prioritise increasing its staff for IT, NSS coordination and for analysis of its surveys and statistics.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Government should consider implementing the AU recommendation on financing statistical operations in Member States.

RECOMMENDATION 14

ZIMSTAT should publish on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board all the documents (metadata, national summary data page, advance release calendar) for data categories falling under its purview in e-GDDS and, as the national coordinator, request other concerned institutions to do same.

RECOMMENDATION 15

ZIMSTAT should publish revision and correction policies. As a first stage, ZIMSTAT should ensure that its staff follow the guidelines and later on encourage the other producers of official statistics to do the same.

RECOMMENDATION 16

ZIMSTAT should plan and gradually implement a framework for systematic quality control. The other data producers are advised to make use of that development as suitable for their statistical activities.

RECOMMENDATION 17

ZIMSTAT should increase its utilisation of international technical expertise to review its methods and procedures in order to ensure their quality and that they follow best international practices in the different domains.

RECOMMENDATION 18

ZIMSTAT should make a concerted effort to modernise its practices, e.g. in data collection, ICT, dissemination etc.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The ZIMSTAT Board should act on the provision in the Census and Statistics Act of establishing a Code of Practice for setting out professional standards and ethics for all producers of official statistics.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Census and Statistics Act should be amended by introducing in it a clear mandate for ZIMSTAT to have access to and utilise administrative records and registers held by ministries and public institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 21

The Census and Statistics Act should be amended by introducing in it a clear obligation for ministries and public institutions that hold and maintain administrative records and registers to make such data available to ZIMSTAT for statistical purposes. These institutions shall also be obliged to organise their administrative records and registers in such a way that facilitates their maximum use for official statistical purposes.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Census and Statistics Act should stipulate that ministries and other public authorities which hold and maintain administrative records and registers or plan to establish such registers shall consult ZIMSTAT on the organisation of new registers and the renewal of or change in existing registers, in order to ensure their best use for statistical purposes. ZIMSTAT should be authorised to request that changes be made in registers for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATION 23

Legislation pertaining to ministries and public institutions that hold and maintain administrative records and registers should be cleaned of any legal obstacles to granting ZIMSTAT access to or allowing ZIMSTAT to use their administrative records and registers for statistical purposes.

RECOMMENDATION 24

ZIMSTAT should introduce, operate and disseminate an advance release calendar for its regular releases of statistics in accordance with international recommendations and practices. This can be done gradually, starting with the regular releases for the CPI, foreign trade and GDP.

RECOMMENDATION 25

ZIMSTAT should without delay improve the operationality of its website.

RECOMMENDATION 26

ZIMSTAT should at the earliest moment obtain and introduce on its website an inter-active database.

RECOMMENDATION 27

ZIMSTAT should make all effort to make anonymised microdata available for analysis and research.

RECOMMENDATION 28


ZIMSTAT should initiate and lead a joint project of the main NSS institutions of developing a central data depository which should incorporate microdata from all producers of official statistics."

3

Introduction

The peer review of the NSS of Zimbabwe was the 14th in a series of African peer reviews, planned to be conducted in 2018-2019 under the PAS Programme. The peer reviews are based on a common approach and methodology agreed among the Heads of NSIs of AU member states. The objective of the peer reviews is to aid the participating countries in continuing to develop their NSSs through assessing their current situation, benchmarked against the African Charter on Statistics, the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and recommended international practices of official statistics.





The methodology for conducting the African peer reviews is set out in a *Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa* which was produced and released under the auspices of the PAS Programme. The main modes of conducting the peer reviews are the following:

- The peer reviews are to be conducted through visits of designated peer review teams to each participating country, with discussions in meetings between the teams, the NSIs and NSS stakeholders.
- The length of the peer review visits to each country shall be five days.
- The peer reviews shall be based on documentation submitted by the countries under review, mainly a short description of the NSI and the NSS, statistics acts and related legal instruments, available statistical policy documents, and a self-assessment questionnaire based on the Eurostat Snapshot tool.
- The peer review discussions and meetings shall involve main producers of official statistics, data providers, and main users such as ministries, central bank, research institutions, business organisations, international organisations, and the media, as mainly relevant in each country.

Furthermore, the *Manual* specifies that the peer reviews shall focus on five major themes based on the African Charter on Statistics or the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The themes are:

- Organisation and coordination of the NSS
- Institutional environment
- Quality
- Statistical processes
- Dissemination

Under each theme, a list of issues shall be addressed as specified in the *Manual*.

The *Manual* also contains a model agenda for the peer review visits and sets out instructions for the reporting of the peer reviews.

The peer review of Zimbabwe was conducted in accordance with the Manual during the period 18-22 March 2019 in Harare. The documentation for the review was prepared in advance by ZIMSTAT, which is the national statistical agency of the country and the main producer of official statistics. ZIMSTAT also prepared the agenda for the peer review visit. The peer review team started its work by discussions with the Acting Director General and management of ZIMSTAT. There followed meetings with members of the ZIMSTAT Board, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Hospitality, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), National Social Security Authority (NSSA), Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ), University of Zimbabwe Department of Statistics, and representatives of UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank (the representative of UNFPA was unable to meet with the peer review team but submitted inputs which have been considered by the team).

At the end of the peer review visit, the team presented and discussed its main findings and recommendations with the Acting Director General and management of ZIMSTAT. This report has benefited much from questions and discussions at that final meeting.

4

Organisation and management of the NSS and official statistical activities in Zimbabwe





4.1 The National Statistics System

The NSS is defined in the Statistics Act as the group of all stakeholders involved in the production of official statistics, as producers, researchers or data providers, their relationship and the rules governing the designation of producers of official statistics. The main producers of official statistics are ZIMSTAT, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, climate and Rural Resettlement, Ministry of Environment Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Department of Registrar General, Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, Research Council of Zimbabwe, National Social Security Authority, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Development and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

According to the Statistics Act, ZIMSTAT shall coordinate and supervise the NSS, develop and promote the use of statistical standards and appropriate methodologies in the NSS as well as to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistical information alone or in cooperation with other Government ministries and institutions. Thus, there is a sound legal basis for the cooperation of stakeholders of official statistics within an organised and integrated NSS. Despite that, the NSS appears to be rather a loose concept, not well recognised or integrated. Nevertheless, there is considerable cooperation between ZIMSTAT and some of the main stakeholders in official statistics as discussed further below. Moreover, ZIMSTAT has been successful in promoting the use of up-to-date international standards and classifications in the NSS institutions.

4.2 Statistical legislation – governance of official statistics

Official statistics in Zimbabwe are carried out on the basis of the Census and Statistics Act from 2007 (hereafter the Statistics Act). The Statistics Act lays down the main principles and rules for the official statistics, including the operation of the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, now commonly referred to as ZIMSTAT, the conduct of census and surveys, mandate to collect data, rules of confidentiality of source data, and dissemination of statistics. In most respects, the Statistics Act is based on the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics although it carries no reference to these. However, the Act is not fully in line with international practices. Zimbabwe has not signed the African Charter on Statistics.

The Statistics Act establishes Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, now known as ZIMSTAT, as the core institution responsible for official statistics in the country. Apart from the functions outlined above, ZIMSTAT shall provide a focal point of contact with international agencies on statistical matters. ZIMSTAT is managed by a Board which consists of the Director-General, a representative of the Ministry responsible for official statistics, and not more than eight members, at least half of whom shall be women, appointed by the Minister. The Board members shall be chosen for their knowledge and experience in statistics, information technology, economics or related fields of expertise and their professional qualifications.

The Board shall ensure that ZIMSTAT fulfils its functions and that the profile of statistics is commensurate with its role in national development. Thus, the Board has the following functions:

- to promote and protect the credibility, integrity and impartiality of official statistics
- formulate and monitor the implementation of policies for coordination of the NSS

- monitor compliance with best practices and international recommendations on production of official statistics
- promote and safeguard the professional independence of ZIMSTAT
- formulate and monitor the implementation of policies pertaining to the organisation and management of ZIMSTAT
- approve the corporate plans, work plans and budgets of ZIMSTAT for submission to the Ministry responsible for finance.

According to the law, the Board, with the approval of the Minister, appoints the Director-General of ZIMSTAT. The Director-General shall be responsible for the following:

- managing the operations and property of the Agency
- supervising and controlling the activities of ZIMSTAT employees
- hiring part-time staff

Apart from this, the Board may assign the Director-General other functions as the Board thinks fit. According to the Statistics Act, the Board is responsible for employing such staff as are necessary for the operations of the Agency. The Board may, however, delegate that authority to the Director-General.

4.3 Strengths of the official statistics

The peer review revealed that official statistics in Zimbabwe are carried out in a strenuous environment of economic instability, shortage of funds, and mistrust of statistical measurements. Despite such adversities, ZIMSTAT is found to be a principled institution employing hard-working, committed and dedicated staff. Thus, ZIMSTAT has been found to exercise professional independence in line with international guidelines, e.g. by standing firm on its unemployment and inflation statistics despite wide criticism from various private sector stakeholders. Furthermore, ZIMSTAT has been able to uphold regular statistical operations in a wide range of areas and carry out heavy ad-hoc surveys despite the constraints of limited funding and the subsequent lack of skilled staff in several domains. Also, ZIMSTAT has a statistical infrastructure at national, provincial and district levels.

Of particular importance is that ZIMSTAT has managed to promote the use of up-to-date international concepts, standards and classifications to the extent that these are used across the whole NSS. This does not only apply to the institutions producing official statistics but even to key institutions providing administrative data for that purpose. Thus, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority classifies its tax data in accordance with ISIC rev. 4. Here, a reference can in particular be made to the ZIMSTAT production and promotion of a Compendium of concepts and standards that is generally followed by NSS institutions. Another case in point is that the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, which is the central bank of the country, applies fully modern concepts, standards and classifications in its production of monetary and balance of payments compilations.

ZIMSTAT as a rule engages quite considerably with main the stakeholders of official statistics. This is e.g. done through user-producer workshops which are held when new statistical collections and activities are being planned and strategic plans are being prepared. In planning and preparing surveys or projects, ZIMSTAT and the relevant ministries or institutions collaborate closely. ZIMSTAT also operates technical groups with the participation of relevant stakeholders on the implementation of specific surveys and operations. Furthermore, ZIMSTAT cooperates with several NSS institutions that provide data for statistical purposes or supply their own official statistics. A very recent and important development in this respect is the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between ZIMRA and ZIMSTAT on exchange of data between the two institutions.

The collaboration between ZIMSTAT and the NSS institutions is seen as very positive. The main stakeholders are found to place considerable trust in the operations and statistics of the Agency. Thus, ZIMSTAT is perceived by the collaborative institutions as professionally robust, impartial, and trustworthy.


ZIMSTAT follows international programmes and initiatives development issues and cooperates regularly with international development agencies. ZIMSTAT has fully embraced the UN and the data for development initiative which may have sustained some of its key surveys.

5

Issues and recommendations

5.1. Organisation and coordination of the NSS

The Statistics Act recognises the existence of the NSS and charges ZIMSTAT with the responsibility of coordinating and supervising it as well as collaborating with NSS institutions. The peer review discussions have shown that ZIMSTAT has good relations with many ministries and other important collaborative institutions and data providers. However, the cooperation with these institutions is mainly governed by specific joint tasks, not least surveys carried out by ZIMSTAT in cooperation with relevant line ministries, often funded by international development agencies. There is also cooperation between ZIMSTAT and other producers of official statistics and data providers concerning deliveries of data or statistics, but always on a one-to-one basis. ZIMSTAT has also a good record in convening user/producer seminars on statistical needs as well as operating technical committees on specific statistical undertakings. Nevertheless, the idea of an integrated and operational NSS is hardly recognised by the institutions which are by law expected to be parts of it. The peer review team is of the opinion that this needs to be corrected and that the NSS needs to be strengthened.



Every five years, ZIMSTAT draws up a plan for its main activities in the coming five years as part of the NSDS. It also prepares every year internal work plans for the coming year. ZIMSTAT maintains that the NSDS activity plan is prepared based on the needs expressed by each collaborating institution at user-producer workshops held as part of the process of preparing the NSDS. However, the peer review meetings seemed to bring out that this is not really recognised by the NSS institutions. These institutions are not much aware of the NSDS, neither the preparatory work nor the final activity plans, and it is unclear if they see themselves as participants in the NSDS or find themselves bound by it. The peer reviewers also heard the criticism that the NSDS was basically confined to ZIMSTAT activities.

The peer reviewers are of the opinion that ZIMSTAT should develop and implement a project to operationalise the NSS as an integrated and well-coordinated body for producing, developing and improving official statistics. They believe that this may not least be accomplished by involving the NSS institutions much more in the medium term and the annual planning of statistical activities. In that connection they encourage ZIMSTAT to reconsider its planning cycle, changing the medium term planning horizon from being for a fixed period of five years to becoming a rolling, dynamic plan, drawn up annually for the coming five year period. The peer reviewers recommend that the main NSS institutions producing official statistics and/or providing data for these should be closely involved in the planning processes of both the medium term plan and the annual work plans.

In addition to this, the peer reviewers are of the opinion that for the strengthening of the NSS, two factors need to be involved; more active and continuous coordination mechanism than currently applied and increased awareness of the NSS, its legislative basis as well as other associated instruments that are of strategic nature, such as the NSDS. The peer reviewers also find that ZIMSTAT could make better use of its cooperation with international development agencies, both to strengthen its activity planning and the cooperation on donor-funded projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Both the annual and the medium term (five year) activity plans, including the forthcoming NSDS, should cover the entire statistical activities of the NSS.*
- 2. The medium term plan should be changed from covering a fixed five year period to becoming a rolling five year plan which is drawn up every year.*
- 3. The annual and the rolling medium term plans should be drawn up jointly by the main producers of official statistics and main data providers; thus the planning processes will become the main instruments for operationalising the NSS as an integrated network for the generation of official statistics.*
- 4. ZIMSTAT, being the the coordinator of the NSS should strengthen the cooperation and coordination of NSS institutions by establishing and operating a high level cooperation and coordination committee.*
- 5. ZIMSTAT should publicise its operations and increase awareness of its role as a professionally independent agency, closely following international standards and practices.*
- 6. ZIMSTAT should strengthen its collaboration with main international development partners, e.g. through establishing and operating a joint committee that meets a few times a year, discussing ZIMSTAT's work programmes and the organisation of various donor-funded projects within them as well as other issues of mutual interest.*

5.2 Institutional environment

(African Charter principle 1,3,and 5)

5.2.1 Legal framework

The Statistics Act was passed by the legislative assembly in 2007 and came into effect in 2009. While the Act is based on the UN Fundamental Principles on some main issues, it has no reference to the Principles and is not fully in line with international recommendations or practices as regards statistics acts. The peer reviewers are of the opinion that the Statistics Act needs to be based solidly on the Fundamental Principles and that should be stated explicitly in the Act. They are also of the opinion that the Act should be fully in line with the African Charter on Statistics. Zimbabwe has not yet signed the Charter. The peer reviewers believe that signing and fully embracing the African Charter would strengthen Zimbabwe's official statistics and augment their benefits from African statistical cooperation.

The Statistics Act is quite heavy on administrative provisions and procedures but rather lean on statistical principles and procedures. Furthermore, the peer reviewers find that the Act contains several grey areas which need to be clarified. They recommend that the following issues be treated explicitly in the Statistics Act:

- The definition and operationalisation of an integrated NSS
- The professional independence of ZIMSTAT and its Director-General should be unambiguously stipulated
- The Act should contain clear provisions on the work programmes of ZIMSTAT and official statistics and their funding
- The mandate for ZIMSTAT to utilise administrative data and the obligation of public institutions to furnish ZIMSTAT with administrative data for statistical purposes should be provided for; this is treated in detail under Statistical Processes in section 4 below.
- Provisions on confidentiality should be brought fully in line with the Fundamental Principles and recommend international practice.


RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Census and Statistics Act should be revised to be fully in line with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics. The Act should include main issues like definition and operationalisation of an integrated NSS, provisions on the professional independence of ZIMSTAT and its Director-General, provisions on work programmes and their funding, utilisation of administrative data for statistical purposes, and improved provisions on confidentiality of individual source data.

8. The Government of Zimbabwe should sign and ratify the African Charter on Statistics at the earliest opportunity.

5.2.2 Increasing and formalising cooperation

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the Statistics Act does not contain a clear mandate for ZIMSTAT to access and utilise administrative statistics nor a clear obligation for public institutions collecting and holding administrative data to make such data available to ZIMSTAT for statistical purposes. While the Act has not been amended in this respect, the peer reviewers would like to emphasise the benefits of ZIMSTAT having formal agreements with its main partner NSS institutions on the use of data and collaboration on the production of statistics. In several countries of the world, many NSIs have come to base their cooperation with other producers of official statistics and with main data providers on formal memoranda of understanding (MoUs). Such MoUs may specify the exact statistics to be produced and/or delivered to the NSI, the exact data to be delivered to the NSI, the frequency and times of delivery, the method of access or of submission of the data as well as specific conditions for use, in particular on confidentiality of the data.



ZIMSTAT and ZIMRA have recently signed an MoU on exchange of data for statistical purposes. The peer reviewers find this to be a very positive step; it ensures that ZIMSTAT will gain access to tax microdata, which is important for national accounts purposes, this spells out mutual obligations in this respect, and it is a formal, binding instrument. The peer reviewers would like to encourage ZIMSTAT to reach collaborative agreements with partner agencies and to make such agreements binding by signing MoUs on the collaboration as described above. This will facilitate data sharing arrangements while waiting for the revision of the Statistics Act which may take considerable time to be realised.

RECOMMENDATION

9. ZIMSTAT should seek to negotiate and sign formal memoranda of understanding with ministries and agencies on their collaboration on collecting, standardising, utilising and delivering data, including administrative data, and producing statistics.

5.2.3 Professional independence

Most public agencies acknowledge ZIMSTAT's professional independence but especially those that collaborate closely with the ZIMSTAT. These agencies are aware of the role of ZIMSTAT as the custodian of official statistics and go an extra mile of delivering data and passing information to ZIMSTAT for publication. Others do not see ZIMSTAT as professionally independent as they associate that with the influence of Government funding of the statistical operations. Due to shortage of ZIMSTAT resources and lack of confidence in some of its statistics, some private sector agencies produce statistics parallel to ZIMSTAT's. While alternative statistical information may often be of value to users for comparison purposes, the current private sector statistical activities, which more often than not are not based on recommended standards, methods and best practices, may compromise ZIMSTAT's professional independence and trustworthiness. For this reason, the peer reviewers recommend that ZIMSTAT makes an extra effort to increase the transparency of its operations and methods and to proclaim its professional independence.

RECOMMENDATION

10. ZIMSTAT should increase its visibility and come out strongly to publicise its methods, standards and figures, and its professional independence.

5.2.4 Adequacy of resources

Owing to the current budget situation in the country, ZIMSTAT suffers from a lack of funds. It is struggling to carry out its obligatory operations, the coverage and frequency of some of its statistics are inadequate, the quality of the statistics is suffering, and modernisation is held back. ZIMSTAT needs added resources to increase its number of staff, to purchase modern IT equipment, update its software, and to maintain and improve its office space and furniture.

Currently, appropriations to ZIMSTAT are determined and set out in the annual budget of the central Government. But the appropriations are not treated as binding but are subject to cuts at the discretion of the Government. So although ZIMSTAT's planning period is annual it can never rely on the determined budget as it normally does not receive all the funds stipulated there and only receives confirmation of availability of funds for its operations on a monthly basis. This creates a great deal of uncertainty about the operations of the Agency and is bound to have a negative impact thereon, both on the regular surveys and other operations carried out every month and on the larger, occasional surveys which have been planned long ahead of their implementation.

In addition, the use of modern technology, including robust systems and equipment has proved to have substantial benefits, especially timely release of results. Whilst ZIMSTAT is moving in that direction, it will be important to fast-track the process. There is need for ZIMSTAT to set the pace in the development of databases especially for administrative data so that these can be accessed for statistical purposes.

Strengthening of the IT tools and operations is a precondition for improvements and modernisation of ZIMSTAT's statistical production and deliveries of statistics. For strengthening the NSS cooperation and coordination as discussed and recommended above, ZIMSTAT needs to devote more staff for those tasks. Moreover, the peer reviewers have been made aware of the lack of statisticians to carry out analysis of its surveys. This is holding back the necessary analysis and hence the full use of the statistical findings. The peer reviewers encourage ZIMSTAT to prioritise these areas.

The African Union Executive Council at its sitting of 25-26 January 2018 requested AU Member states to allocate 0.15% of their national budgets to finance statistics (Decision EX.CL/Dec.987(XXXII)). The peer reviewers recognise that this may be difficult in the present circumstances but would like to encourage the Government to embrace this target.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. ZIMSTAT needs larger resources in order to allow it to increase its number of skilled staff in key areas, obtain appropriate modern IT tools, and deliver the critical statistical output for planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation.

12. ZIMSTAT should prioritise increasing its staff for IT, NSS coordination and for analysis of its surveys and statistics.

13. The Government should consider implementing the AU recommendation on financing statistical operations in Member States.

5.3 Quality

(African Charter principle 2)

In the NSDS 2 (2016-2020), the Government of Zimbabwe recognised the need for good quality statistical information to identify development issues, inform policy design and measure development outcomes that target priority areas of national poverty reduction and economic development. Government thus agreed that it is crucial to ensure that ZIMSTAT and the other producers of official statistics are sufficiently capacitated to produce the required high-quality statistics, non-conflicting, reliable, relevant and timely national statistics which are the bedrock upon which sound policies for effective management of the economy are based.

The implementation of the latest international classifications and standards (e.g. SNA 2008, BPM6, GFS 2014, ISIC Rev 4, CPC 2.1) and the existence of the Compendium of Statistical concepts and Definitions are evidence of improved quality. But the quality can be further improved.

5.1.1 Participation in the IMF e-GDDS

Zimbabwe's participation in the Enhanced General Data Dissemination System (e-GDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in November 2002 was a decisive step taken towards improvement of quality. The e-GDDS framework can be used as a stepping stone for subscribing to the special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) to which the country aspires to upgrade. As e-GDDS participants, countries are encouraged to post some of their most important statistics on the National Summary Data Page (NSDP) on the Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB) of the IMF and to publish metadata for all the data categories. The participating countries are also recommended to apply an advance release calendar.

The availability of documentation on methodology and sources underlying statistics is key to users' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the data. Publication of an advance release calendar and dissemination of an NSDP and main metadata will support ready and equal access to all users (African Charter Principle 4). According to the information for Zimbabwe posted on the DSBB, ZIMSTAT is the country coordinator for the participation in the e-GDDS. Despite the recommendation, there is no NSDP for Zimbabwe posted on the DSBB. There is, however, some metadata, mainly on the application of standards and availability and frequency of statistics, but this metadata is lean and has not been upgraded since 2013. Furthermore and despite the recommendation, ZIMSTAT has not developed any advance release calendar.

The peer reviewers are of the opinion, even it is only recommended in e-GDDS, that ZIMSTAT should prepare – or update as relevant – metadata for all data categories falling under its purview, publish an advance release calendar, and disseminate an NSDP for the country. As national coordinator of the participation in the e-GDDS, ZIMSTAT should request the other producers of the relevant official statistics, the Reserve Bank and the Ministry of Finance, to contribute to the information for Zimbabwe on the DSBB.

RECOMMENDATION

14. ZIMSTAT should publish on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board all the documents (metadata, national summary data page, advance release calendar) for data categories falling under its purview in e-GDDS and, as the national coordinator, request other concerned institutions to do same.

5.3.2 Establishing revision and correction policies

ZIMSTAT has a clear time schedule for the publication of the first estimates and revisions of national accounts but no such time frame exists for the other statistics. Moreover, for correction of published statistics, no written policies or guidelines have been established and it is assumed that all staff are aware of actions to be taken when errors are discovered.

The peer reviewers are of the opinion that for transparency and as part of its quality endeavours, ZIMSTAT should write out and establish revision and correction policies that are published on the website and ensure that staff follow these guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

15. ZIMSTAT should publish revision and correction policies. As a first stage, ZIMSTAT should ensure that its staff follow the guidelines and later on encourage the other producers of official statistics to do the same.

5.3.3 Establishing a framework for systematic quality management

ZIMSTAT has so far not developed structured quality management of its processes and outputs. There is no quality handbook in place and documentation on quality observance and control is only produced for surveys undertaken but is not published.

The peer review team is of the opinion that ZIMSTAT should plan and implement systematic quality management. This can be done gradually, starting by entrusting quality work (quality culture, quality awareness, quality control) to a specific manager or a working group, to be extended by embedding quality control into the work of the different sections of the institution.

Quality reviews of specific processes and/or outputs could also be gradually introduced, leading to regular compilation of quality reports of surveys, processes and outputs. It is further recommended that the other data producers be involved in the process. Hence, the peer reviewers make the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

16. ZIMSTAT should plan and gradually implement a framework for systematic quality control. The other data producers are advised to make use of that development as suitable for their statistical activities.

5.3.4 Specific measures to enhance quality

In the peer review discussions, various issues were raised regarding quality and opportunities to enhance the quality of the operations and output of ZIMSTAT. It was pointed out that ZIMSTAT might not be taking full advantage of having access to international expertise to review its methods and procedures and make sure that the recommended international practices were being fully applied. The peer review meetings also revealed that there might be some resistance to adopting modern methods and practices, such as in data collection, in ICT, analysis and dissemination. It was acknowledged, however, that delays in modernising operations were no less caused by lack of resources and uncertainties about the resource situation.

The Statistics Act provides that the ZIMSTAT Board shall compile and establish a Code of Practice containing professional standards and ethics for all producers of official statistics. This has not been done so far. Experience from around the world indicates that the existence and application of such codes are invaluable to enhance the awareness of the need for statistical producers to continuously observe the need for applying established statistical principles, ethics and recommended practices in a transparent manner. Hence, the peer reviewers encourage the Board to prepare and establish the Code of Practice for official statistics of Zimbabwe, based on similar codes in other countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. ZIMSTAT should increase its utilisation of international technical expertise to review its methods and procedures in order to ensure their quality and that they follow best international practices in the different domains.

18. ZIMSTAT should make a concerted effort to modernise its practices, e.g. in data collection, ICT, dissemination etc.

19. The ZIMSTAT Board should act on the provision in the Census and Statistics Act of establishing a Code of Practice for setting out professional standards and ethics for all producers of official statistics.

5.4 Statistical processes

(African Charter principle 3)

USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

As already mentioned, the Statistics Act makes no direct reference to access to or the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. There is no direct provision that mandates ZIMSTAT to access data held by ministries and public institutions and no direct provision that obliges ministries and public institutions to grant ZIMSTAT access to their administrative data. It seems, however, to be understood by ZIMSTAT management that the Agency is mandated to access administrative data. Moreover, ZIMSTAT already receives considerable administrative data the most important of which is data generated by the management information systems of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, data from the Revenue Authority (foreign trade and now tax data), and civil registration data from the Registrar General. In the international statistical fora, increased use of administrative data has been advocated in recent years. The main reasons are the much lower cost of collecting data directly from administrative records than through field surveys and the ensuing reduction in the response burden.

The peer reviewers are of the opinion that the production of official statistics in Zimbabwe might be markedly strengthened by increased use of administrative data. There may be two preconditions for that: On the one hand, there is a need for inserting a clear provision in the Statistics Act that ZIMSTAT has the mandate to obtain access to and/or utilise administrative records for statistical purposes. On the other hand, there is a need for introducing into the Statistics Act a provision that obliges holders of administrative data to make their administrative data available for official statistical purposes and to organise their administrative records and registers so as to maximise its use for official statistics. It would also be necessary to remove from existing legislation any obstacles in specific laws to the use of administrative data for official statistical purposes.

Thus, as part of the overall revision of the Statistics Act recommended above, the peer reviewers make the following detailed recommendations on establishing decisive provisions in the Act on the utilisation of administrative data for statistical purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. The Census and Statistics Act should be amended by introducing in it a clear mandate for ZIMSTAT to have access to and utilise administrative records and registers held by ministries and public institutions.

21. The Census and Statistics Act should be amended by introducing in it a clear obligation for ministries and public institutions that hold and maintain administrative records and registers to make such data available to ZIMSTAT for statistical purposes. These institutions shall also be obliged to organise their administrative records and registers in such a way that facilitates their maximum use for official statistical purposes.

22. The Census and Statistics Act should stipulate that ministries and other public authorities which hold and maintain administrative records and registers or plan to establish such registers shall consult ZIMSTAT on the organisation of new registers and the renewal of or change in existing registers, in order to ensure their best use for statistical purposes. ZIMSTAT should be authorised to request that changes be made in registers for this purpose.

23. Legislation pertaining to ministries and public institutions that hold and maintain administrative records and registers should be cleaned of any legal obstacles to granting ZIMSTAT access to or allowing ZIMSTAT to use their administrative records and registers for statistical purposes.

5.5 Dissemination

(African Charter principle 4)

5.5.1 Advance release calendar

As discussed above, ZIMSTAT has not established an advance release calendar for informing its users of future releases of statistical findings. In the peer review discussions it was argued that this was hardly feasible due to lack of resources. It was also pointed out that it is common knowledge that the CPI is always released at the middle of each month.

The argument that ZIMSTAT lacks resources to operate a release calendar refers presumably to the uncertainty that prevails around the funding of the operations of ZIMSTAT from one month to the next. Thus, it might not be appropriate to establish an advance release calendar if the releases planned there cannot be ensured. The peer reviewers take a different view in this regard and recommend that ZIMSTAT and other producers of official statistics, not least the Reserve Bank and the Ministry of Finance, adopt the practice of planning and announcing in advance when the main indicators are to be published. They recommend that the advance release calendars are rolling plans, published several months ahead of the planned releases, and posted on the websites of ZIMSTAT and the other producers. They also recommend that the release calendars are developed gradually, starting with the releases that are already published regularly, like, in the case of ZIMSTAT, the CPI, monthly foreign trade releases, and the releases of the main GDP aggregates and indicators.

The operation of an advance release calendar is recommended and standard international practice to fulfil the need of users, ensuring that they have advance knowledge of intended releases and are all informed at the same time. But operating advance release calendars has also been found to have another important advantage in that it is a very useful instrument to plan and regulate the work in each unit and department of the statistical office. In addition, this is of benefit to staff members, not least employees with families, as they will have much better knowledge of the rhythm and pressure of work at any given time and be better able to plan their life.

On these grounds and referring to international practices and experience, the peer reviewers recommend the following.

RECOMMENDATION

24. ZIMSTAT should introduce, operate and disseminate an advance release calendar for its regular releases of statistics in accordance with international recommendations and practices. This can be done gradually, starting with the regular releases for the CPI, foreign trade and GDP.

5.5.2 Improving the ZIMSTAT website

At the time of the preparation and conduct of the peer review, the ZIMSTAT website was barely operational. There were difficulties in both accessing the website and opening the different webpages. This situation needs to be corrected without delay.

The website is reported to be quite rich in content. However, for statistics and data it only carries fixed tables and there is no interactive database which allows users to make their own tables. The peer reviewers would like to point out that standard interactive webbases are available at no or little cost and that providing users with such a tool would greatly enhance the usefulness of the ZIMSTAT website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

25. ZIMSTAT should without delay improve the operability of its website.

26. ZIMSTAT should at the earliest moment obtain and introduce on its website an inter-active database.

5.5.3 Making microdata available

ZIMSTAT has received both financial and technical assistance from the World Bank in anonymising microdata from its surveys. There have, however, been delays in making this microdata available for analytical and research purposes. Disseminating or granting access to anonymised microdata is an important part of the services that a national statistical office may offer and of great importance for researchers.

RECOMMENDATION

27. ZIMSTAT should make all effort to make anonymised microdata available for analysis and research.

5.5.4 Establishing a central data depository

According to the Statistics Act, one of the functions of ZIMSTAT is to develop and maintain a comprehensive national statistics database. This has not yet been accomplished. The peer reviewers recommend that ZIMSTAT takes the initiative and leads a joint project of main collaborating institutions to develop such a database. The central data depository should include microdata from all producers of official statistics.

RECOMMENDATION

28. ZIMSTAT should initiate and lead a joint project of the main NSS institutions of developing a central data depository which should incorporate microdata from all producers of official statistics.



Annex 1

Agenda for the Zimbabwe Peer review



Time	Venue	Activity
March 17th, 2019		
		Initial meeting of peer review team
March 18th, 2019		
09:30 - 09:45	ZIMSTAT	Courtesy call to the Acting Director General
10:00 - 12:00	ZIMSTAT	Meeting with ZIMSTAT Senior Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the programme of the peer review visit • Discussion of the methodology and focus of the peer review • Description of the statistical system of the country • Theme 1 – Organisation and coordination of the NSS • Theme 2 – Institutional environment • Theme 3 – Quality
14:30 - 15:30	ZIMSTAT	Meeting with selected ZIMSTAT managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 – Organisation and coordination of the NSS • Theme 3 – Quality • Theme 4 – Statistical processes • Theme 5 – Dissemination
March 19th, 2019		
09:00 - 09:30	ZIMSTAT	Meeting with representative of the Board of Directors
10:30 - 12:00	ZIMSTAT	Meeting with producers/users of statistics in the NSS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Finance and Economic Development • Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement • Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Wel-fare • Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education • Ministry of Local Government, Public Works, and Na-tional Housing • Ministry of Health and Child Care • Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Hospitality In-dustry • Ministry of Industry and Commerce • Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
March 20th, 2019		
10:00 - 12:00	ZIMSTAT	Meeting with selected stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) • Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) • National Social Security Authority (NSSA) • Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) • Registrar General (RG) • Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) • University of Zimbabwe Department of Statistics • University of Zimbabwe Department of Economics • University of Zimbabwe Department of Population Studies
March 21st, 2019		
10:00 - 12:00		Meetings with representatives of international development agencies (e.g. World Bank, AfDB, UNICEF, UNDP, USAID, EU, etc.)
14:30 - 16:00		Peer review team: Drafting of preliminary findings and recommendations
March 22nd, 2019		
10:00 - 12:00		Meeting with NSI Head and key staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion of main findings and recommendations
14:30 - 15:30		Meeting with representative of the Board of Directors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion of main findings and recommendations

Participants in the Zimbabwe Peer review meetings

NAME	DESIGNATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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MEETING WITH ZIMSTAT ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL AND MANAGEMENT 18 MARCH 2019

Meeting with Senior Management

T. Mungate	Acting Director General	tmungate@zimstat.co.zw
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G. Makware	Manager – Industrial Statistics	gmakware@zimstat.co.zw

Meeting with Selected Managers

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NAME	ORGANISATION/MINISTRY	DESIGNATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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MEETING WITH NSS STAKEHOLDERS 19 MARCH 2019

Meeting with Producers/Users of Statistics in the NSS

J. Nyandoro	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe	Senior economist	jnyandoro@rbz.co.zw
T. Munyika	Ministry of Environment Tourism Hospitality Industry	D.A.O	tmunyila@gmail.com
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L. Mkwala	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	Deputy Director	lawmkwala@gmail.com
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MEETING WITH NSS STAKEHOLDERS 20 MARCH 2019

Meeting with Selected Stakeholders

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J. Shumbamhini	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority	Director - Research	jshumbamhini@zimra.co.zw
V.M. Zuze	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority	Compliance Manager	vzuze@zimra.co.zw
Nicola Yon	National Social Security Authority	Statistics and Research Officer	mutimurefun@nssa.org.zw
C. Mpofu	Research Council of Zimbabwe	Technical Officer	cmpofu@rcz.ac.zw
S. Mudavanhu	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority	Risk Manager	smudavanhu@zimra.co.zw
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Annex 2

NAME	ORGANISATION/MINISTRY	DESIGNATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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MEETING WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS 21 MARCH

Meetings with Representatives of International Development Agencies

R. Swinkles	World Bank		jnyandoro@rbz.co.zw
R. Tizora	UNICEF		tmunyi@gmail.com
E. Bangwayo	UNDP		itayichidzungu@gmail.com
N. Mupfugami	ZIMSTAT	Manager – NSS Coordination	nmupfugami@zimstat.co.zw

Meeting with representatives of the Board

S. Nyarota		Chairperson – Technical committee	
F. Matarise		Board Member	

NAME	DESIGNATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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FINAL SUMMING-UP MEETING WITH ZIMSTAT ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL AND MANAGEMENT 22 MARCH 2019

Meeting with Senior Management

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