



CENTRE FOR LAW
AND DEMOCRACY

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Zimbabwe: Draft Right to Information Law Needs Improvement

The Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) welcomes the fact that Zimbabwe is moving forward to adopt a new law on the right to access information held by public authorities or the right to information, to replace the entirely discredited 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). However, an analysis by CLD of the Freedom of Information Bill, which was provided to local activists and Members of Parliament in September 2019, shows that the new draft Bill needs significant work to bring it into line with international standards.

“It is high time for Zimbabwe to adopt a new, stronger right to information law and we welcome the government’s commitment to do this,” said Toby Mendel, Executive Director, CLD. *“However, the current draft is only very marginally stronger than the 2002 AIPPA and so needs to be substantially reworked.”*

A detailed analysis of the Bill, including an assessment according to the [RTI Rating](#), shows that it only garners 72 points out of a possible 150, just two points more than the current AIPPA, at 70. This would place the Bill in 92nd position out of the 128 countries currently on the Rating, just 8 positions above the 100th placed AIPPA.

Some of the key problems with the Bill are as follows:

- Its scope of coverage of “public entities” is far too narrow.
- The law should include a specific list of categories of information that public entities must publish on a proactive basis rather than just imposing general proactive obligations.
- The procedures for making and processing requests should be far more detailed and precise, and designed to be as user-friendly as possible.
- The regime of exceptions should be narrowed considerably and the public interest override should apply to all exceptions.
- The law should provide for a dedicated and independent oversight body (information commission) rather than allocating this task to the Zimbabwe Media Commission.

CLD’s detailed analysis is available at: <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/zimbabwe-draft-right-to-information-law-needs-improvement/>

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