Zimbabwe Transitional Forum

POLICY ANALYSIS REPORT

The Zimbabwe Transitional Forum and the National Transitional Authority Proposal

Prospects for a Managed Democratic Transition

Written for policymakers, international observers, and reform stakeholders.

DATE
22 October 2025

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NTA
A temporary, reform-focused National Transitional Authority

24 months
Target window for the core reform programme

3 domains
Institutional, economic and governance reform

1 Executive Summary

The Zimbabwe Transitional Forum (ZTF) has introduced a structured, non-partisan framework to manage Zimbabwe's transition from entrenched political polarization toward inclusive governance. Central to its initiative is the proposed **National Transitional Authority (NTA)** — a temporary, reform-focused administrative structure intended to restore institutional legitimacy, stabilize the economy, and lay the foundation for credible future elections.

> **This report analyses the ZTF's organizational framework, the NTA's proposed structure and mandates, and the potential opportunities and obstacles for implementation.**

It concludes that while the initiative presents a comprehensive blueprint for reform, its success depends on broad stakeholder buy-in, credible international facilitation, and the establishment of constitutional guarantees to protect its mandate.

2 Background and Context

Zimbabwe's political system remains mired in cyclical crises marked by disputed elections, executive dominance, and institutional decay. Repeated episodes — from the **2008 Government of National Unity (GNU)** to the **2017 military intervention** — have shown that elite-driven settlements, while temporarily stabilizing, fail to produce sustainable reform.

By 2025, the erosion of public trust, ongoing economic collapse, and the marginalization of civic and diaspora voices have generated renewed calls for a structured transition. The **ZTF**, a civic-led network operating within Zimbabwe and abroad, positions itself as a bridge-builder among political actors, civil society, and the international community.

3 Overview of the Zimbabwe Transitional Forum (ZTF)

Nature and Mandate

The ZTF is a **non-partisan, non-profit advocacy organization** promoting democratic renewal, rule of law, and citizen participation. Its constitution establishes:

- A **Board of Directors and Secretariat** for governance and oversight.
- A **membership-driven structure** with accountability and transparency mechanisms.
- **Commitment to civic engagement**, anti-corruption advocacy, and institutional reform.

The ZTF's stated vision — "a just, democratic, and united Zimbabwe" — underpins its role as a civic convener rather than a political competitor.

4 The National Transitional Authority (NTA) Proposal

Purpose

The NTA seeks to provide a temporary governance framework that facilitates political stabilization, implements overdue reforms, and prepares the country for free and fair elections.

Structure

National Steering Committee (NSC)	Central decision-making body composed of representatives from political parties, churches, labor, academia, business, youth, women, and diaspora.
Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs)	Replicate the national structure at provincial levels for mobilization and implementation.
Global Advocacy Committee (GAC)	Engages SADC, AU, and international partners for diplomatic support and resources.

Mandate

The NTA would pursue reforms in three main domains:

Institutional Reforms

Restore the rule of law, strengthen separation of powers, and depoliticize state institutions.

Economic Reforms

Address corruption, stabilize the currency, and implement constitutional devolution.

Governance Reforms

Introduce transitional justice, expand human rights protections, and enable the diaspora vote.

Decision-Making

Consensus-based processes would guide decisions, with dispute resolution mechanisms built around negotiation and mediation.

5 Key Reform Areas and Timelines

The ZTF's documents propose time-bound reform implementation, generally within **24 months** of NTA formation:

Reform area	Action	Timeline
Constitutional Review Commission	Commission established; referendum targeted	**3 months · referendum in 18**
Media and Information Reforms	Establish an independent media commission	**Within 4 months**
Human Rights & Transitional Justice	Create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission	**Within 3 months**
Electoral & Judicial Independence	Legislative amendments to ensure autonomy	**6–9 months**
Security Sector Reform	Policy and legislative overhaul	**Within 12 months**
Diaspora Voting & Civil Society Integration	Policy and legal inclusion	**Within the first year**

6 Strengths and Opportunities

a. Comprehensive Reform Design	The NTA framework integrates political, institutional, and socio-economic reforms, offering a holistic pathway to recovery rather than a single-issue fix.
b. Civic and Diaspora Inclusion	By embedding diaspora voting rights and broad stakeholder participation, it redefines citizenship beyond borders.
c. Non-Partisan Framework	Its civic-led nature positions it as a neutral platform capable of bridging entrenched political divisions.
d. Time-Bound Mandate	The NTA's limited lifespan mitigates fears of a parallel government or indefinite transition.

e. International Alignment	The proposal's emphasis on rule of law, reconciliation, and transparency aligns with SADC, AU, and global governance standards, improving its chances of external legitimacy.

7 Challenges and Risks

a. Political Resistance	Entrenched elites may view the NTA as a threat to existing power structures. Without elite buy-in or regional pressure, implementation is unlikely.
b. Legal Ambiguity	The NTA's constitutional basis is unclear. Establishing it would require legal amendments or negotiated political settlement under SADC oversight.
c. Institutional Capture	Reforms could be undermined if security forces, judiciary, or electoral bodies remain politically controlled.
d. Resource Constraints	The proposal depends on donor and diaspora funding, raising questions of sustainability and financial transparency.
e. Consensus Fatigue	Decision-making by consensus, while inclusive, risks paralysis in the face of ideological or political polarization.

8 Implementation Scenarios

1. Negotiated Transition PREFERRED SCENARIO

- Political parties, under SADC facilitation, agree to form the NTA as a caretaker reform body.
- The ZTF serves as a technical and civic partner, not a governing actor.

2. Civic-Led Advocacy Transition

- The ZTF builds pressure through civic mobilization and diaspora diplomacy, prompting incremental reforms without formal NTA establishment.

3. Elite Resistance / Status Quo Continuation

- The ruling elite rejects the NTA framework. The ZTF's role remains limited to advocacy, with potential for repression or co-optation.

9 Recommendations

For Domestic Stakeholders

- Establish a national dialogue platform to test NTA principles under local consensus.
- Strengthen alliances with faith-based organizations and unions for legitimacy.
- Maintain strict non-partisanship to preserve credibility.

For Regional and International Actors (SADC, AU, UN, Donors)

- Provide technical and diplomatic support for dialogue facilitation.
- Condition engagement and aid on measurable reform benchmarks.
- Support capacity-building for civil society participation and monitoring.

For the ZTF Itself

- Develop a legal framework for NTA activation compatible with Zimbabwe's constitution.
- Build transparent financial structures and clear communication channels.
- Enhance visibility through research publications, media engagement, and diaspora coordination.

10 Conclusion

The Zimbabwe Transitional Forum and its National Transitional Authority proposal offer a viable — though politically delicate — blueprint for national recovery. Its greatest strength lies in its comprehensive vision and civic legitimacy. Its greatest vulnerability is the absence of formal political power and dependence on voluntary cooperation from entrenched interests.

For a country trapped between authoritarian endurance and democratic fatigue, the ZTF's framework reintroduces the idea that transitions need not emerge from crisis alone — they can also arise from organized civic intent.

If sustained, refined, and regionally endorsed, the NTA model could represent Zimbabwe's most coherent roadmap toward constitutional renewal and accountable governance since the 2008 GNU.