

COUNTRY FACTSHEET



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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ZIMBABWE 2024

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



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OVERVIEW

Switzerland has actively participated in development cooperation with Zimbabwe, focusing on key sectors to contribute to the country's socio-economic progress. Through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland has directed efforts toward addressing pressing challenges in agriculture and food security, supporting projects that enhance farming practices, boost productivity, and ensure food security. The healthcare sector is also a priority, with projects aimed at improving access to quality healthcare services, addressing health disparities, and combating diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS. Governance and democracy initiatives aim to strengthen governance structures, promote democratic principles, and uphold human rights. Switzerland also supports private sector development projects to stimulate economic growth and create job opportunities, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In times of emergencies, Switzerland provides humanitarian assistance, aligning with the 'leave no one behind' principle of the 2030 Agenda, often collaborating with international organizations for a coordinated approach to Zimbabwe's development challenges.

Context

Zimbabwe has confronted a multifaceted economic, social, and political landscape since the early 2000s. Economic struggles, marked by hyperinflation and disruptions in agriculture from land reforms, have resulted in high unemployment, limited foreign investment, and stagnant

economic growth. Despite a decline in extreme poverty since its peak in 2020, cyclical agricultural production and elevated food prices maintain a significant poverty rate. Persistent inflation, reliance on low-productivity agriculture, slow structural transformation, and periodic shocks like droughts contribute to ongoing poverty and vulnerability. While the adoption of foreign currencies has provided some economic stability, social challenges persist, including inadequate healthcare and education services, widespread poverty, and wealth disparities. The HIV/AIDS epidemic exacerbates these issues. Politically, Zimbabwe has faced prolonged instability and human rights concerns. The 2017 political transition raised hopes for change, but challenges to democracy, political freedoms, and an unsustainable debt to international financial institutions continue to constrain fiscal space and growth potential.

Bilateral relations

After recognising Zimbabwe's independence on 18 April 1980, Switzerland opened a consulate in Harare, which became an Embassy in 1981. The regional office of the SDC was relocated from Pretoria to Harare in 2016 and was integrated to become part of the Embassy. Relations between Switzerland and Zimbabwe have strengthened in recent years. The implementation of economic reforms and democratic principles could pave the way for a further deepening of relations to promote socio-economic development, trade and investment.

Key aspects of diplomatic relations

In 2017, Switzerland and Zimbabwe signed an International Cooperation Agreement on Humanitarian Aid and Technical and Financial Cooperation. The agreement provides for strengthened cooperation for the realisation of humanitarian, technical and financial assistance projects that contribute to sustainable poverty alleviation, democratic development, the promotion of peace, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Switzerland is supportive of Zimbabwe's intentions to clear its debt arrears and normalise relations with the international financial institutions, in order to revive the economy and improve investment in the social sectors.

Economic cooperation

Switzerland is the largest European investor in Zimbabwe. Several Swiss companies have a long-standing presence in the country, producing goods and creating jobs. Since 2001, Switzerland and Zimbabwe are bound by a Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPPA). Swiss farmers who were dispossessed during the 'fast track land reform program' of the early 2000s are yet to be compensated.

SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2023-2026

The overall goal of the Swiss Cooperation Programme for Zimbabwe 2023-2026 is to increase the well-being of the population of Zimbabwe and to reduce their vulnerability to climate change and other shocks, underpinned by citizen engagement and accountable and resilient public institutions. The bilateral cooperation programme is worth over US\$60 million for the next four years.

Cooperation Programmes

Food Security

Switzerland is actively involved in addressing food security challenges in Zimbabwe, with a particular focus on smallholder farmers. The programme emphasizes climate-resilient and nutritious crops, with a goal to benefit women and youth, while promoting climate-friendly agricultural techniques. The initiative also seeks to strengthen connections between rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. Collaborating with the private sector, the programme facilitates access to financial and insurance products, enhances market-relevant skills, and supports vulnerable populations, especially youth and women, in economic development. Key interventions include **promoting drought-tolerant crops, agro-ecological farming practices, and access to clean energy**. Switzerland's approach involves cash transfers to encourage investments in productive activities and improve market linkages.



HIV/Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR)

Switzerland is expanding its approach to SRHR beyond the HIV perspective. The focus is on delivering a broader range of integrated and quality services, with an emphasis on enhancing the healthcare system's capacity. Additionally, Switzerland aims to build resilience among target groups to climate-induced and man-made disasters that hinder poverty reduction. Employing a multi-sectoral strategy, the initiative identifies gaps and strategic entry points for service integration, especially in SRHR, within education systems and communities. The programme also supports shock-responsive social protection and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) systems, advocating for better quality services and increased domestic spending. Switzerland's interventions include **policy advocacy, data generation, and capacity development in health, social protection, and DRR systems**.



Human Rights and Governance

Switzerland is emphasizing the importance of human rights and democratic governance for sustainable development and peace in Zimbabwe and later in Zambia. The initiative aligns with the Guidelines on Human Rights 2021–2024, with a focus on supporting government entities and independent oversight institutions to fulfil their mandates accountably and in respect of human rights. Recognizing that citizens' fundamental rights are crucial for conflict management, economic growth, and human dignity, Switzerland aims to empower communities, especially women and youth, to actively participate in decision-making, including in business and economic matters. Key interventions involve anti-corruption efforts, capacity-building for oversight institutions, and promoting civil society participation in healing, reconciliation, and transparent elections.

Transversal themes: Gender equality, HIV/AIDS, governance, climate change & arts and culture

Switzerland integrates governance, gender, and climate change as key cross-cutting themes in its programmes in Zimbabwe. Governance is not only an outcome but also serves as an entry point for systemic change, collaborating with both governmental and non-governmental actors. Gender equality is a central focus, with efforts aimed at continuous strengthening through policy advocacy, programming, and capacity building, employing gender-transformative approaches. Climate change integration follows the guidance of the CEDRIG tool, prioritizing addressing vulnerabilities, investing in adaptation and mitigation, and ensuring responsive service delivery and social protection systems. Switzerland also emphasizes emergency preparedness and capacity-building for the Zimbabwe government. The initiatives include promoting sustainable environmental management, agriculture techniques, and clean energy, along with a new art and culture programme to engage young people and raise awareness among communities and decision-makers in the country.



Partners

World Food Programme - Africa Centre for Agrobiodiversity - NIRAS - SNV- Food and Agriculture Organisation - United Nations Population Fund - UNICEF - UNESCO - MiET - Ruedi Lüthy Foundation

Impressum

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