

## **Abstract**

Free, professional media are vital for a working democracy that promotes good governance. Citizens need media to make informed electoral choices; have effective input into public affairs; ensure the rule of law is upheld and mechanisms for checking power abuses are intact. But in nominal democracies, where key tenets of democracy exist more in the statutes than in practice, media are constrained in their work by strictures from state and non-state actors. With reference to Zimbabwe, this study explores the role of media as a requisite element in nurturing democracy and good governance. It examines key factors that influence media's success, viz. politics, legislation, ownership and business setting, besides internal capacity in respect of technology, training and tooling, all of which impact directly on media's service to society. From candid talks with a section of Zimbabwe's top media players, the study shows that the country's media are hamstrung by the existing legal structure, competing political interests, poor training and not-so-strict adherence to the canons of the journalism profession – the key requisite conditions for developing public-minded media.