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> " There is tremendous intellectual talent in Zimbabwe which we train and develop to complete outsourced work for international clients."
> —*Manager, Zimbabwean IT company*

> " Changes in the economic environment and information control policy are the solution to Zimbabwe's troubles."
> —*CEO of ISP, Zimbabwe*

In recent years Zimbabwe has been wracked by economic and political turmoil, exacerbated in particular by the land settlement crisis. A significant depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar, fuel shortages, high inflation, political instability, and the threat of HIV/AIDS are having detrimental effects on Zimbabwe's overall national development as well as the nation's Networked Readiness, in which it ranks seventieth.

Concerns from prominent players in the ICT industry highlight the country's inability to find foreign currency to pay for bandwidth and equipment as well as the growing loss of skilled ICT professionals (Ranking in IT Brain Drain: 62). In the midst of these troubles, and following lengthy legal disputes, a handful of successful ICT companies have emerged in Zimbabwe. These pockets of innovation, although enjoyed only by a small minority, can be found in the wireless and ISP markets.

In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that Zimbabwe Post and Telecommunications Company's (PTC) monopoly in the provision of fixed telecommunication services was unlawful. Plans to privatize PTC have been discussed over the last several years, but the government's announcement in October 2001 that it was reverting to a command-and-control economy may hinder further progress toward privatization. Earlier, the government offered telecommunications licenses for US$320 million (fixed), US$100 million (mobile), and US$4 million (ISP). Some observers regarded the high license fees as a means of protecting PTC's monopoly.[1] In addition, there is no independent telecommunications regulator to ensure affordable prices and high standards (Ranking in Effect of Telecommunications Competition: 62). Interestingly, PTC is one of the few African national telecommunications operators to offer Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

Roughly 2 percent of the population has access to a landline, while less than 0.4 percent has Internet accounts.[2] Since the late 1990s, the private sector has responded to the demand for ICTs through provision of cellular services. There are three GSM operators, with a total subscriber base of 300,000 or almost 2.5 percent of the population.[3] Several initiatives to deploy telecenters in rural areas are underway (Ranking in Public Access to the Internet: 73).

Zimbabwe's strongest asset may lie in the nation's 88 percent literacy rate, the highest on the African continent (Ranking in Social Capital micro-index: 67).[4] Substantial investments in the educational system from 1980 to 2000 increased secondary school attainment appreciably[5] (although overall enrollment has dropped significantly since 1998, following the decision to charge tuition to attend schools). Foreign NGOs are improving Internet connectivity in schools as well as in health centers. For example, Healthnet Zimbabwe enables health professionals to share information on controlling diseases. Another ICT initiative initially supported by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), and now a nonprofit ISP, is the Zimbabwe Academic and Research Network (ZARNet), which provides connectivity to a host of educational institutions and marginalized communities (Ranking in Internet Access in Schools: 71).

There has been very little incorporation of ICTs into everyday Zimbabwean life. E-commerce and e-government are still virtually nonexistent in the country. While the opposition party received international acclaim and attention for its use of the World Wide Web and e-mail to generate political support during the 2000 elections, it is unclear what domestic impact this campaign had.

Key Facts

Population	12,600,000
Rural population (% of total population) 1999	65.40 %
GDP per capita (PPP)	US$2,697
Global Competitiveness Index Ranking, 2001–2002	75
UNDP Human Development Index Ranking, 2001 (adjusted to GITR sample)	72
Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants	1.91
Telephone faults per 100 main telephone lines	223.00
Internet hosts per 10,000 inhabitants	2.31
Personal computers per 100 inhabitants	1.19
Piracy rate	59.00 %
Percent of PCs connected to Internet	1.38 %
Internet users per host	9.65
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	0.17
Cell phone subscribers per 100 inhabitants	2.44
Average monthly cost for 20 hours of Internet access	US$23.02

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Networked Readiness Index	**70**
Network Use component index	**68**
Enabling Factors component index	**70**
Network Access	**66**
Information Infrastructure	74
Hardware, Software, and Support	58
Network Policy	**71**
Business and Economic Environment	69
ICT Policy	72
Networked Society	**65**
Networked Learning	58
ICT Opportunities	71
Social Capital	67
Networked Economy	**67**
e-Commerce	67
e-Government	74
General Infrastructure	60