MZALENDO

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2026 + 4

STRATEGIC PLAN



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Word from the Chair

When Conrad and I began Mzalendo Trust in 2005, we were driven by a simple but powerful conviction, that democracy works better when citizens are informed, engaged, and able to hold their representatives accountable. What started as a modest, voluntary initiative to make parliamentary information accessible has grown into an institution that has helped and continues to shape Kenya's parliamentary accountability landscape. Looking back at this journey fills me with immense pride and gratitude.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of witnessing Mzalendo Trust evolve alongside Kenya's democratic journey. From the early, rudimentary days of building a platform for parliamentary information to becoming an authoritative, trusted source of legislative data, research, civic technology, and citizen engagement recognised nationally and beyond, our growth has been both remarkable and deeply meaningful. This legacy belongs to the many people who believed in our vision and contributed to making it possible: our staff, partners, supporters, and the citizens whose engagement continues to give our work purpose.

Yet, for me, Mzalendo Trust's story has always been about more than Parliament. It is about people, particularly young people, and their right to shape the democracy they inherit. I remain deeply invested in a Kenya where young people are active participants, confident in their agency, equipped with credible information, and able to shape and influence decisions that affect their lives. Their voices, aspirations, and demands for accountability remind us why institutions like Mzalendo must remain relevant, independent, and responsive and be strengthened

As Mzalendo Trust enters its third decade, the Strategic Plan 2026–2030 represents both a moment of reflection and a renewed commitment to the future. Informed by foresight and scenario thinking, it recognises that the democratic landscape is constantly evolving and that our mandate must remain responsive to changing contexts, emerging opportunities and potential challenges.

As an institution, we are preparing to navigate these alternative futures with agility, strategic clarity and an unwavering commitment to our mission. The task ahead is not simply to make Parliament more visible, but to strengthen the relationship between information, participation, representation, and accountability across the different contexts in which democracy unfolds.

I am confident that Mzalendo Trust's next chapter will be shaped by the same conviction that inspired its founding: that an informed and empowered citizenry is indispensable to a thriving democracy. Having been part of this journey from its beginning, I look forward to seeing this vision advance with renewed purpose and ambition.

Ory Okolloh
Chair and Co-founder, Mzalendo Trust



Foreword

It is a privilege to present Mzalendo Trust's strategic plan for 2026-2030. The plan ushers in our third decade at a moment when both the promise and the fragility of Kenyan democracy demand more of institutions like ours than ever before.

Mzalendo - Kiswahili for patriot - was founded in 2005 on a simple conviction: that citizens cannot hold accountable an institution they cannot see. What Ory Okolloh and Conrad Akunga began as a volunteer-driven website has grown, through two decades of Kenya's democratic evolution, into an independent, non-partisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization with a distinctive mandate: to open Parliament to the public eye, to strengthen the conditions for informed participation, and to advance inclusive representation and institutional accountability.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 gave that mandate its deepest anchoring. Article 118 requires Parliament to conduct its business openly. Article 119 guarantees every person the right to petition. Articles 27, 38, 81 and 100 commit the Republic to equality of political participation and to representation that includes women, young people, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities. These are not aspirations Mzalendo supports from the sidelines; they are obligations we exist to help fulfil, through independent monitoring, civic technology, and sustained engagement between citizens and their representatives.

Twenty years have taught us what works and what does not. They have taught us that access to information, though essential, is not the same as influence; that opportunities for participation, though many, do not by themselves deliver meaningful engagement; and that the credibility Mzalendo has earned with Parliament, civil society, media and citizens, is our most important institutional asset and the one we must guard most jealously. The review of our 2021–2025 strategic period was candid about the distance between the work we do and the outcomes we can demonstrate. This plan is, in large part, our response to that candour.

The Strategic Plan 2026–2030 is organized around three pillars; promoting and monitoring legislative openness; promoting inclusive Parliaments and political processes; and promoting civic engagement, scrutiny and accountability of Parliament. Together they express a deliberate shift in emphasis: from asking how many Kenyans can see what Parliament does, to asking how what citizens see and say shapes what Parliament does and how anyone would know. The plan's commitments on accessibility, legislative intelligence, information integrity, digital innovation, inclusion and follow-through are matched by equal commitments to the institutional foundations that make the work sustainable: governance, human capital, financial resilience, partnerships and learning.

We have also planned for a future we cannot fully predict. Drawing on our Strategic Foresight Framework 2026–2036, this plan has been stress-tested against four democratic futures for Kenya. The scenarios differ in many respects, but they agree on one thing: in every possible Kenya, the need for credible, independent information about what is done in the people's name will only grow. Our task is to remain worthy of that need - independent, rigorous, non-partisan and useful.

None of this work is ours alone. Mzalendo Trust stands within a wider ecosystem of parliamentary institutions, civil society, media, development partners and citizens whose commitment to democratic accountability sustains the whole. To our Board, whose stewardship has carried this process; to our staff, whose expertise and dedication are the Plan's true engine; to our partners, here and beyond, whose collaboration multiplies our reach; and to the citizens who use our platform, question their representatives and keep faith with the democratic promise — thank you. This plan belongs to all of you.

The task ahead is considerable, but so is the inheritance. Twenty years of watching Parliament have earned us something rare: the standing to ask more of it. In the next five years, we intend to use that standing well — so that Parliaments, both in Kenya and Africa are not only watched, but are more open, more inclusive and more accountable because they were.

Caroline Gaita
Executive Director, Mzalendo Trust
Nairobi, November 2026

Executive Summary

For two decades, Mzalendo Trust has contributed to Kenya's democratic governance landscape through a fundamental conviction: democratic accountability requires credible information, meaningful citizen participation, and independent scrutiny of representative institutions. Founded in 2005 by Ory Okolloh and Conrad Akunga as a volunteer-driven parliamentary information initiative, Mzalendo has evolved into an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization (PMO) advancing legislative openness, inclusive political representation, civic engagement, and democratic accountability. The Strategic Plan 2026–2030 builds on this institutional legacy while establishing a sharper focus on strategic contribution, organizational effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Mzalendo's mandate is grounded in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, particularly its provisions on parliamentary openness, public participation, equality, political rights, and inclusive representation. As an independent accountability institution, Mzalendo's role remains distinct from Parliament's constitutional responsibilities. Through legislative monitoring, research, civic technology, evidence-based advocacy, and citizen engagement, it strengthens public understanding of parliamentary processes, supports informed participation, and enables independent scrutiny of elected representatives.

The review of the 2021–2025 strategic period revealed substantial institutional progress. Mzalendo consolidated its credibility as a source of parliamentary information and legislative intelligence, strengthened engagement on political inclusion, expanded civic participation opportunities, and deepened relationships across the democratic accountability ecosystem. However, the review also identified a critical gap between documented activities and outputs and the systematic demonstration of longer-term outcomes. This finding defines the central strategic imperative for 2026–2030: moving beyond the delivery of interventions toward demonstrating their contribution to informed public scrutiny, meaningful participation, inclusive representation, and democratic accountability. The Plan consequently prioritizes the quality, application, continuity, and measurable contribution of Mzalendo's work.

This direction responds to an increasingly complex operating environment characterized by changing political relationships, heightened public scrutiny of legislative decisions, evolving civic mobilization, persistent barriers to political inclusion, and growing expectations of institutional accountability. Technological transformation presents opportunities to strengthen legislative intelligence and civic engagement, while misinformation, digital exclusion, and cybersecurity threats introduce new vulnerabilities. Geopolitical uncertainty, shifting development financing priorities, and pressures on civic space further reinforce the need for institutional independence, adaptability, and financial resilience.



Developed through institutional review, stakeholder consultations, PESTEL and SWOT analyses, and strategic foresight, the Plan draws on Mzalendo's Strategic Foresight Framework 2026–2036. The framework explored four alternative democratic futures for Kenya: *Mambo ni Yale Yale* (Business as Usual), *Mambo ni Mwecheche* (Collapse), *Tumejipanga* (Restraint, Repair and Intentional Building), and *Form ni Mpya* (Total Disruption). These scenarios reinforced the importance of maintaining credible legislative intelligence, institutional independence, trusted relationships, and organizational resilience across changing democratic conditions.

Guided by its vision of open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments where informed and empowered citizens participate meaningfully in democratic governance, Mzalendo will pursue three interconnected strategic pillars:

PILLAR 1

Promoting and Monitoring Legislative Openness will strengthen the credibility, accessibility, and application of legislative intelligence through independent parliamentary monitoring, research, responsible digital innovation, and institutional collaboration. The priority is to deepen the quality and use of parliamentary evidence in informed public scrutiny while strengthening Mzalendo's capabilities and partnerships within the parliamentary monitoring ecosystem.

PILLAR 2

Promoting Inclusive Parliaments and Political Processes will advance meaningful political participation and representation, particularly among women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities. Through research, capacity strengthening, evidence-based advocacy, and institutional engagement, Mzalendo will address barriers to inclusion while strengthening the quality, continuity, and institutional relevance of participation.

PILLAR 3

Promoting Civic Engagement, Scrutiny and Accountability of Parliament will strengthen informed and sustained public engagement with parliamentary institutions. Through legislative intelligence, civic technology, accessible participation pathways, and collaborative accountability approaches, Mzalendo will support meaningful civic participation, systematic scrutiny of parliamentary decisions and commitments, and sustained institutional dialogue.

Together, the pillars connect credible parliamentary information, inclusive participation, and sustained public scrutiny as complementary dimensions of democratic accountability. Their delivery will be supported by six institutional and cross-cutting strategic enablers encompassing governance and independence; human capital and knowledge management; financial resilience and sustainability; strategic partnerships; digital infrastructure and information integrity; and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL). These capabilities will strengthen organizational effectiveness, safeguard nonpartisanship, and sustain Mzalendo's mandate beyond individual funding cycles.

Implementation will be guided by the Plan's Theory of Change, which connects institutional capabilities and strategic interventions to expected outcomes while distinguishing Mzalendo's direct responsibilities from broader democratic changes dependent on multiple actors. The Board of Trustees will provide strategic oversight, while management will coordinate delivery and institutional performance. A strengthened MERL framework will prioritize outcome measurement, organizational learning, and strategic adaptation, supported by regular performance review and risk management.

Mzalendo enters the 2026–2030 period with an established mandate, specialized expertise, and institutional credibility. The defining ambition of this Plan is not expansion for its own sake, but the translation of these strengths into deeper, more sustained, and demonstrable contributions to democratic accountability. By strengthening legislative intelligence, advancing political inclusion, supporting informed civic scrutiny, and investing in institutional resilience, Mzalendo seeks to contribute to more open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments in Kenya and Africa.

01

Background Information

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1 Mzalendo Trust: Our Story and Evolution

Mzalendo is a Kiswahili word meaning *patriot*. It reflects the conviction that patriotism extends beyond national identity to active citizenship, informed participation in public affairs, and the responsibility to hold elected representatives accountable. For Mzalendo Trust, this conviction is expressed through a commitment to promoting parliamentary openness, inclusive representation, meaningful public participation, and democratic accountability.

Founded in 2005 by Ory Okolloh and Conrad Akunga, Mzalendo Trust emerged in response to limited public access to reliable information about Parliament and elected representatives. What began as a volunteer-driven initiative to make parliamentary information accessible to citizens has evolved into an independent, non-partisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization (PMO), occupying a distinctive position within Kenya's democratic accountability landscape.

Over the past two decades, Mzalendo Trust's institutional evolution has reflected both the changing nature of Kenya's democracy and the growing recognition that democratic accountability requires more than periodic elections or the formal availability of information. Its work has progressively expanded from enabling citizens to understand parliamentary proceedings to strengthening the conditions for informed participation, independent scrutiny, inclusive representation, and institutional responsiveness.

The promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 marked an important turning point in this journey. By establishing stronger constitutional commitments to public participation, transparency, accountability, and inclusion, the Constitution provided a foundation for Mzalendo Trust's continued institutional development. The organization subsequently relaunched its parliamentary information platform in 2012 and formally registered as Mzalendo Trust in 2013, consolidating its identity and contribution to parliamentary accountability.

By 2025, Mzalendo Trust had completed twenty years of engagement in Kenya's democratic governance landscape. Its institutional journey demonstrates the enduring importance of independent parliamentary monitoring and the need for civic accountability institutions to remain responsive to changing political, social, and technological realities. This twenty-year milestone also reflects significant organizational growth, including the expansion of Mzalendo Trust's team, funding portfolio, breadth and scope of work, and partnerships and networks at national, regional, and global levels. Over this period, Mzalendo has strengthened its positioning within Kenya's democratic landscape and established itself as a recognized actor within the parliamentary monitoring community regionally and globally. Through robust collaboration and sustained institutional engagement, Mzalendo has also consolidated its reputation as a credible, independent source of parliamentary information.

As Mzalendo Trust enters its third decade, the central strategic question is no longer simply how to expand access to parliamentary information or opportunities for public engagement, but how these contribute to more meaningful participation, inclusive representation, institutional responsiveness, and accountability. This requires a deliberate shift toward demonstrating institutional contribution and outcomes, while maintaining the independence, credibility, and non-partisanship that underpin Mzalendo's mandate.

The Strategic Plan 2026–2030 builds on this institutional foundation, positioning Mzalendo to consolidate its experience, strengthen its institutional capabilities, and deepen its contribution to open, inclusive, and accountable parliamentary institutions in Kenya and shape the next five years of the institution.

1.1.2 Institutional and Constitutional Anchoring

Mzalendo Trust's institutional identity is rooted in the conviction that an open, representative, and accountable Parliament is fundamental to a functioning democracy. As an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization (PMO), Mzalendo Trust has, over the past two decades, worked to bridge the information and engagement gaps between citizens and their elected representatives. Its work is grounded in the understanding that meaningful democratic participation requires citizens to have access to credible parliamentary information, opportunities to engage in legislative processes, and the ability to independently scrutinize the performance of their representatives.

This commitment is anchored in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, which establishes the foundations for democratic governance, public participation, transparency, accountability, and inclusive representation. Article 1 affirms that sovereign power belongs to the people of Kenya, while Article 10 establishes national values and principles of governance, including democracy, participation of the people, good governance, integrity, transparency, and accountability. These principles reinforce Mzalendo Trust's founding belief that citizens have a continuing role in democratic governance beyond electoral cycles.

Parliament occupies a central position within this constitutional framework. Article 94 vests national legislative authority in Parliament, while Article 118 requires Parliament to conduct its business openly and facilitate public participation in its legislative and other business. Article 119 recognizes the right of every person to petition Parliament on matters within its authority, while Article 196 establishes comparable requirements for openness and public participation in county assemblies. These provisions provide an important constitutional foundation for Mzalendo's work in promoting legislative openness, making parliamentary information accessible, and supporting informed public engagement.

Equally central to Mzalendo Trust's institutional mandate is the recognition that Parliament should reflect the diversity of the people it represents. Articles 27, 38, 81, and 100 of the Constitution provide important foundations for equality, political rights, and inclusive representation, particularly for women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities. These constitutional commitments underpin Mzalendo Trust's work in promoting more inclusive political processes and strengthening opportunities for underrepresented groups to participate meaningfully in democratic governance.

While Mzalendo Trust's work is informed by these constitutional principles, its institutional role remains distinct from that of Parliament. Parliament holds the constitutional responsibilities for legislation, representation, and oversight. Mzalendo Trust contributes to democratic accountability through independent parliamentary monitoring, research and legislative analysis, public access to information, civic engagement, and constructive dialogue with parliamentary and other democratic institutions. Its contribution lies in strengthening the evidence, public awareness, and opportunities for participation that support greater transparency, representation, responsiveness, and accountability.

Over time, these commitments have shaped Mzalendo Trust's three interconnected areas of strategic engagement: promoting and monitoring legislative openness; promoting inclusive Parliaments and political processes; and promoting civic engagement, scrutiny, and accountability of Parliaments. Together, these areas reflect the evolution of Mzalendo Trust's work from improving access to parliamentary information toward a broader institutional contribution to democratic participation and accountability.

Mzalendo Trust's institutional positioning has also evolved beyond its founding role as a parliamentary information platform. Today, it operates within a wider democratic accountability ecosystem, engaging parliamentary institutions, citizens, civil society, political actors, media organizations, researchers, and other accountability institutions at national, regional, and global levels. Its experience, partnerships, and participation in parliamentary monitoring networks have strengthened its standing as an independent and credible actor in Kenya's democratic landscape and the wider parliamentary monitoring community.

As Mzalendo Trust enters its third decade, safeguarding its independence, nonpartisanship, institutional credibility, and public trust remains essential. The Strategic Plan 2026–2030 builds on this constitutional and institutional foundation, providing direction for Mzalendo Trust to deepen its contribution to parliamentary openness, inclusive political participation, and democratic accountability while strengthening its capacity to respond to emerging governance challenges and opportunities.

1.1.3 Twenty Years of Watching the Watchdog: Key Milestones, 2005–2025

Mzalendo Trust's twenty-year journey reflects the evolution of parliamentary accountability in Kenya and the organization's changing contribution to this landscape. From its origins as an initiative addressing gaps in parliamentary information, Mzalendo Trust has developed into an established institution contributing to legislative openness, inclusive representation, civic participation, and democratic accountability.

The milestones presented below illustrate significant moments in this institutional journey and demonstrate how Mzalendo Trust has adapted to changing constitutional, political, and technological circumstances while maintaining its core commitment to parliamentary openness and accountability.

Mzalendo Trust's 20 Year Journey

2005

The Beginning: Ory Okolloh and Conrad Akunga launch Mzalendo Trust as a website and blog to improve public access to information about Parliament and elected representatives.

2010

A New Constitutional Foundation: The Constitution of Kenya establishes stronger guarantees for public participation, openness, inclusion, and accountability, providing an important foundation for Mzalendo Trust's work.

2012

A New Parliamentary Information Platform: Mzalendo Trust relaunches as a comprehensive parliamentary information website, expanding public access to legislative information.

2013

Institutionalization and Independent Scrutiny: Mzalendo Trust is formally registered and releases its first parliamentary scorecard, strengthening its institutional identity and independent monitoring role.

2014

Recognizing Public-Interest Leadership: The annual People's Shujaaz Awards are introduced to recognize legislators championing public-interest issues.

2017

Opening Legislative Processes to Citizens: Mzalendo Trust launches Dokeza to facilitate public input into draft legislation and broaden opportunities for engagement in legislative processes.

2019

Strengthening Evidence on Political Inclusion: Mzalendo Trust publishes research on youth and women's participation in the 11th and 12th Parliaments. The organization also strengthens its research portfolio, expands its institutional and financial capacity, and broadens partnerships at national and regional levels.

2020

Broadening the Accountability Ecosystem: Mzalendo Trust expands engagement with political parties, parliamentary caucuses, youth- and women-led organizations and movements, and the media. It strengthens Dokeza and its leadership in regional parliamentary monitoring, open parliament initiatives, and Open Government Partnership processes, while navigating the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021

A Consolidated Strategic Direction: Mzalendo Trust begins implementing its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, structured around legislative openness, inclusive representation, and democratic accountability. It also deepens its work on political inclusion through capacity building for youth and women's movements and aspiring political leaders.

2022

Civic Technology and Electoral Accountability: Mzalendo Trust develops civic technology innovations, including KnowYourAspirant and Vote Compass, to support informed participation during the electoral cycle. It also assesses the institutional performance of the 12th Parliament, strengthening evidence-based scrutiny and electoral accountability.

2023

Tracking Political Commitments and Strengthening Parliamentary Engagement: Mzalendo Trust introduces the Promise Tracker to strengthen public scrutiny of commitments made by the governing administration. It also deepens institutional engagement with Parliament, contributing data, research, and expertise to induction processes involving the Senate and women and young Members of Parliament

2024

Increased citizen agency: Amid heightened public interest in legislative decisions and their implications for everyday life, Mzalendo Trust reinforces its position as a credible, independent source of parliamentary information. Through analysis of the Finance Bill, parliamentary voting information, and public-facing coverage, the organization supports informed civic scrutiny and engagement.

2025

Twenty Years of Parliamentary Accountability: Mzalendo Trust marks two decades of parliamentary monitoring, civic technology, public participation, research, advocacy, and civil society collaboration. By this milestone, it has established itself as a reputable PMO, a trusted information resource, a convening partner, and a leader within parliamentary monitoring networks, reaching diverse audiences through multiple platforms.

Across these milestones, three broad phases of institutional evolution can be identified.

The first phase, from 2005 to 2012, centered on expanding public access to parliamentary information and establishing the foundations for independent legislative scrutiny. This period reflected the recognition that access to credible information is essential for informed citizenship and democratic accountability.

The second phase, from 2013 to 2020, involved the consolidation of Mzalendo's institutional identity and the broadening of its contribution to parliamentary openness, political inclusion, and public participation. During this period, Mzalendo increasingly positioned itself as an independent accountability actor connecting citizens, parliamentary institutions, and the wider civic ecosystem.

The third phase, from 2021 to 2025, reflected a growing emphasis on the relationship between parliamentary openness, inclusive political participation, citizen voice, and institutional accountability. Mzalendo's experience during this period highlighted the importance of moving beyond access and engagement as ends in themselves toward understanding their contribution to meaningful participation, responsiveness, and accountability.

Taken together, these phases demonstrate both institutional continuity and adaptation. They also reveal an important strategic lesson: while access to information, opportunities for participation, and independent monitoring are essential foundations of democratic accountability, their broader significance depends on the extent to which they contribute to informed public scrutiny, inclusive representation, and institutional responsiveness.

As Mzalendo enters the 2026–2030 strategic period, its priority is to consolidate the institutional gains of the past two decades while strengthening the effectiveness, sustainability, and reach of its contribution. This requires a greater emphasis on strategic outcomes, institutional capabilities, collaboration, and the ability to respond to emerging political, democratic and technological realities.

The next phase of Mzalendo's development will therefore be defined not simply by the expansion of its interventions, but by the depth, relevance, and sustainability of its contribution to parliamentary openness, meaningful citizen participation, and democratic accountability.



1.2 Methodology

The development of Mzalendo Trust's Strategic Plan 2026–2030 was guided by a participatory, evidence-based, and foresight-informed approach. The process sought to assess the organization's institutional progress, draw lessons from the previous strategic period, and identify the strategic priorities and capabilities required to strengthen its contribution to parliamentary openness, inclusive representation, and democratic accountability.

The planning process also drew on Mzalendo Trust's Strategic Foresight Framework 2026–2036, which explored alternative futures for Kenya's democratic governance. This provided a longer-term perspective for considering the organization's strategic direction, institutional sustainability, and capacity to respond to emerging risks and opportunities.

Three complementary approaches informed the development of the Plan.

1

Document Review and Institutional Reflection

- A review of institutional, strategic, and contextual documents was undertaken to assess Mzalendo Trust's progress and institutional development during the 2021–2025 strategic period. The review considered achievements, emerging outcomes, institutional strengths, performance gaps, and lessons relevant to the next phase of the organization's development.
- Key materials included the previous Strategic Plan, institutional assessments, implementation reports, and relevant literature on parliamentary governance and democratic accountability. Particular attention was given to understanding Mzalendo Trust's broader institutional contribution, the effectiveness of its strategic approaches, and opportunities for strengthening its relevance, sustainability, and impact.

2

Stakeholder Consultations and Key Informant Interviews

The planning process was informed by consultations with Mzalendo Trust's Board, management, staff, and external stakeholders within Kenya's parliamentary governance and civic accountability ecosystem.

- Internal consultations provided opportunities to reflect on institutional performance, strategic positioning, organizational capabilities, sustainability, and long-term aspirations. Engagements with the Board and management supported consideration of the organization's future direction and the institutional arrangements required to deliver its mandate.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with external stakeholders provided perspectives on Mzalendo Trust's contribution to parliamentary openness, inclusive representation, civic participation, and democratic accountability. These consultations also explored emerging governance challenges, changing relationships between citizens and representative institutions, and opportunities for strengthening Mzalendo Trust's strategic relevance.

Together, these engagements informed the identification of strategic priorities, institutional development needs, and areas requiring continuity or adaptation.

3

Strategic Foresight and Situational Analysis

- Strategic foresight provided a longer-term perspective for developing the Plan. Drawing on the Strategic Foresight Framework 2026–2036, the process considered how emerging political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal developments could shape Kenya's democratic governance and Mzalendo's operating environment.
- The foresight process explored four alternative democratic futures: *Mambo ni Yale Yale*, *Mambo ni Mwecheche*, *Tumejipanga*, and *Form ni Mpya*. These scenarios provided a basis for examining potential changes in parliamentary accountability, citizen participation, institutional relationships, and the conditions under which Mzalendo may be required to operate.
- The foresight findings were considered alongside the institutional review, stakeholder consultations, and situational analysis to identify strategic risks, opportunities, and capabilities required for the 2026–2030 period.

Collectively, these approaches provided the foundation for a five-year Strategic Plan that builds on Mzalendo's institutional mandate while emphasizing strategic outcomes, institutional sustainability, collaboration, and adaptability in a changing democratic environment.

02

Progress Review of the Previous Strategic Plan (2021–2025)

2.1 Achievements and Institutional Progress

The 2021–2025 strategic period marked an important phase in Mzalendo Trust's institutional development. Across its three strategic pillars, the organization consolidated its contribution to parliamentary openness, inclusive political representation, civic engagement, and democratic accountability. The review highlights four areas of institutional progress and the lessons they provide for the 2026–2030 strategic period.

2.1.1 Strengthening Parliamentary Openness and Independent Scrutiny

Mzalendo Trust consolidated its position as an independent source of parliamentary information and analysis, strengthening public access to legislative proceedings, parliamentary decisions, and information on elected representatives. Its monitoring and analytical work supported citizens, civil society organizations, researchers, and the media to follow legislative developments and undertake informed public scrutiny.

Beyond information provision, Mzalendo Trust strengthened independent scrutiny of parliamentary processes and political commitments. This reinforced its distinctive contribution as a nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization capable of generating credible legislative intelligence and making parliamentary processes more accessible and understandable.

The period demonstrated the value of Mzalendo Trust's specialized expertise and credibility while highlighting the need to understand more systematically how parliamentary evidence is used to support public accountability.

2.1.2 Advancing Inclusive Representation and Political Participation

Mzalendo Trust contributed to strengthening opportunities for women, young people, persons with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups to engage with political actors and representative institutions. Through research, institutional relationships, and civic engagement, the organization supported dialogue on political inclusion, leadership, representation, and barriers to equitable participation. Under the previous strategic plan, Mzalendo Trust also strengthened the capacity of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to engage in political processes, with the aim of enhancing their political representation. Research and data generated by Mzalendo Trust, alongside evidence produced by its partners, contributed to strengthening the case for more inclusive political representation and participation.

Its research and engagement helped sustain attention to persistent constitutional and institutional challenges, including women's political representation and the implementation of the two-thirds gender principle. These efforts strengthened the evidence and relationships supporting more inclusive political participation.

The experience also demonstrated that expanding participation opportunities does not necessarily translate into meaningful representation. Sustained engagement and institutional responsiveness remain important considerations for the next strategic period.

2.1.3 Deepening Civic Engagement and Democratic Accountability

During the strategic period, Mzalendo Trust strengthened opportunities for informed civic engagement and collective scrutiny of parliamentary processes. By connecting citizens, civil society organizations, and parliamentary institutions, it supported public participation, collaborative accountability efforts, and engagement around legislative and public-interest concerns.

Mzalendo Trust also developed and deployed civic technology tools to strengthen civic awareness and facilitate engagement with legislative processes and formal public participation opportunities. These tools complemented its parliamentary monitoring and information-sharing work by creating additional channels through which citizens could access information and engage with parliamentary affairs.

Its contribution extended to strengthening relationships among civic actors and connecting citizen perspectives with parliamentary information and formal participation processes. These approaches reinforced the importance of linking civic engagement with credible evidence, independent scrutiny, and institutional dialogue.

However, available documentation did not consistently demonstrate how these engagements contributed to subsequent parliamentary responses or institutional decisions. This highlighted the importance of assessing the quality, continuity, and outcomes of civic participation alongside its reach.

2.1.4 Consolidating Institutional Credibility, Partnerships, and Organizational Capabilities

Mzalendo Trust strengthened its institutional position through sustained relationships with parliamentary institutions, civil society organizations, political actors, media, development partners, and regional accountability networks. These relationships supported collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the application of its parliamentary monitoring expertise across the wider democratic accountability ecosystem.

The organization also consolidated capabilities in parliamentary monitoring, research, civic technology, and public communication. Its accumulated institutional knowledge and experience across political and parliamentary cycles remained important assets for independent scrutiny and strategic continuity.

These achievements reinforced Mzalendo Trust's institutional credibility while highlighting the need for stronger organizational systems, financial resilience, knowledge management, and sustainable partnerships to support long-term effectiveness.

2.1.5 Overall Assessment of Institutional Progress

The 2021–2025 strategic period strengthened Mzalendo Trust's position as an independent Parliamentary Monitoring Organization and consolidated its contribution across legislative openness, political inclusion, civic engagement, and institutional collaboration. Its experience demonstrated the value of credible parliamentary evidence, trusted relationships, and specialized expertise in supporting informed public participation and democratic scrutiny.

At the same time, the review identified a gap between documented activities and outputs and the evidence available to demonstrate longer-term outcomes. The central lesson for 2026–2030 is therefore to build on established institutional strengths while strengthening the application of legislative intelligence, the quality and continuity of participation, institutional learning, and the assessment of Mzalendo Trust's contribution to parliamentary accountability.



2.2 Missed Opportunities and Strategic Lessons (2021–2025)

The review identified areas where Mzalendo Trust could further consolidate its achievements and strengthen its institutional contribution. These represent strategic opportunities for the 2026–2030 period rather than shortcomings that can be addressed by Mzalendo Trust alone.

2.2.1 Connecting Legislative Openness, Participation, and Accountability

While Mzalendo Trust strengthened access to parliamentary information and opportunities for public engagement, the relationship between these contributions and sustained accountability outcomes was not consistently demonstrated.

Greater attention is required to understanding how parliamentary evidence is applied, how civic submissions are followed up, and how engagement contributes to informed scrutiny and institutional dialogue. This also includes strengthening the quality and continuity of participation among historically underrepresented groups.

2.2.2 Deepening Institutional Reach and Civic Connections

Mzalendo Trust's established relationships provided a strong foundation for engagement within the parliamentary accountability ecosystem. However, opportunities remained to strengthen connections between national parliamentary processes, locally grounded civic actors, and emerging forms of citizen participation.

Changing patterns of digital mobilization and decentralized civic organizing underscore the importance of maintaining relationships with diverse constituencies while preserving Mzalendo Trust's specialized parliamentary monitoring mandate.

2.2.3 Strengthening Institutional Capabilities and Sustainability

The previous strategic period highlighted opportunities to make greater use of Mzalendo Trust's accumulated institutional knowledge, research expertise, and civic technology capabilities. This includes strengthening information accessibility, knowledge management, technological adaptability, and the responsible use of digital systems.

Financial resilience, diversified resource mobilization, organizational capacity, and the continuity of strategic partnerships also emerged as important considerations for sustaining Mzalendo's independence and core functions beyond individual funding cycles.

2.2.4 Strengthening Outcome Measurement and Institutional Learning

Available institutional reporting placed greater emphasis on activities and immediate outputs than on longer-term outcomes and strategic contribution. This limited the ability to demonstrate how Mzalendo Trust's work collectively supported meaningful participation, informed scrutiny, and institutional accountability.

Strengthening outcome-oriented Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) will therefore be essential to generating credible evidence of results, supporting institutional learning, and informing strategic adaptation.

Collectively, these lessons reinforce the need for Mzalendo Trust to consolidate its established mandate while strengthening institutional effectiveness, sustainability, and the demonstrable contribution of its work. They provide a foundation for the strategic choices presented in the subsequent sections of this Plan.

03

Situational Analysis and Strategic Context

3.1 Kenya's Democratic Governance and Parliamentary Accountability Context

Kenya's democratic governance landscape continues to evolve amid changing political dynamics, growing citizen expectations, technological transformation, and increasing demands for transparency and accountability. While the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 established a strong foundation for representative democracy, public participation, political inclusion, and institutional accountability, gaps between constitutional commitments and institutional practice continue to shape public trust in democratic institutions.

Parliament remains central to Kenya's democratic governance architecture through its legislative, representative, and oversight responsibilities. However, questions surrounding institutional independence, executive–legislative relations, political accountability, and the responsiveness of parliamentary processes continue to underscore the importance of independent scrutiny. Across electoral cycles, changing political alignments and institutional priorities create both opportunities and challenges for strengthening parliamentary openness and accountability.

The relationship between citizens and representative institutions is also undergoing significant transformation. Growing public scrutiny of legislative decisions, taxation, public expenditure, and political representation reflects increasing expectations of transparency and institutional responsiveness. At the same time, emerging forms of civic mobilization, particularly among younger generations, are reshaping how citizens access information, organize, and engage with democratic institutions. These developments highlight the growing importance of credible legislative intelligence, accessible parliamentary information, and sustained institutional dialogue.

Despite constitutional guarantees, meaningful public participation and inclusive political representation remain uneven. Structural barriers continue to constrain the participation of women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities, while institutional mechanisms for demonstrating how public contributions are considered remain inconsistent. These gaps reinforce the importance of strengthening the relationship between citizen engagement, parliamentary responsiveness, and public accountability.

Technological transformation presents additional opportunities and risks. Digital innovation, open data, and emerging analytical capabilities offer new possibilities for generating, interpreting, and communicating legislative intelligence. However, misinformation, disinformation, digital exclusion, cybersecurity threats, and concerns about information integrity may undermine public trust and informed participation. In this environment, the credibility, accessibility, and responsible use of parliamentary information are increasingly important institutional assets.

The wider operating environment is also characterized by economic pressures, changing development financing priorities, concerns about civic freedoms, and growing uncertainty across political and institutional systems. These dynamics create additional demands on independent accountability organizations to demonstrate relevance, maintain institutional independence, strengthen organizational resilience, and secure sustainable financing beyond short-term project cycles and evolving geopolitical dynamics.

For Mzalendo Trust, these developments create a strategic environment in which demand for credible parliamentary information and independent scrutiny is increasing, even as political uncertainty, unequal participation, and institutional constraints complicate democratic accountability. Mzalendo Trust's distinctive contribution lies in generating accessible legislative intelligence, connecting evidence with civic engagement, and sustaining independent scrutiny across changing political conditions.

The 2026–2030 Strategic Plan must therefore balance continuity in Mzalendo Trust's parliamentary monitoring mandate with responsiveness to emerging civic practices, technological developments, and institutional risks. The PESTEL analysis examines the external conditions shaping these choices.



3.2 PESTEL Analysis of Mzalendo Trust's Operating Environment

Mzalendo Trust operates within a dynamic political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal environment that shapes parliamentary accountability, democratic participation, and institutional sustainability.

The PESTEL analysis draws on the institutional review, stakeholder consultations, and strategic foresight process. It highlights the external developments most relevant to Mzalendo's mandate and their implications for its strategic positioning during the 2026–2030 period.

DIMENSION	KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND DYNAMICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR MZALENDO TRUST
POLITICAL	Global democratic and geopolitical shifts: Changing global political alignments, democratic backsliding, pressures on civic space, and evolving international approaches to democracy and governance are reshaping the environment in which accountability organizations operate.	Requires Mzalendo to remain attentive to international democratic governance trends, strengthen engagement with regional and global parliamentary monitoring networks, and safeguard its institutional independence and credibility.
	Parliamentary independence and accountability: Executive–legislative relations, political-party interests, and changing institutional priorities continue to shape parliamentary oversight and responsiveness.	Reinforces the importance of independent legislative intelligence, credible parliamentary monitoring, and sustained institutional dialogue while safeguarding nonpartisanship and public trust.
	Political transitions and civic space: Electoral cycles, changing political alliances, public expectations, and pressures on civic freedoms create uncertainty for democratic institutions and accountability actors.	Heightens the importance of institutional agility, trusted relationships, and organizational resilience across changing political environments.
ECONOMIC	Fiscal pressures and economic accountability: Public debt, taxation, expenditure priorities, and economic inequality continue to shape public expectations of parliamentary scrutiny and responsible governance.	Increases the relevance of accessible legislative intelligence and independent scrutiny of parliamentary decisions concerning public resources.
	Changing development financing: Shifting donor priorities, geopolitical uncertainty, funding constraints, and increasing competition for development resources are reshaping the financing environment for civic and democratic governance organizations.	Underscores the importance of long-term institutional financing, diversified resource mobilization, sustainable partnerships, and financial resilience.
SOCIAL	Changing civic participation and public trust: Youth-led mobilization, decentralized civic networks, and changing citizen expectations are transforming engagement with political institutions.	Creates opportunities for trusted legislative intelligence, constructive institutional dialogue, and stronger connections with emerging civic actors.
	Inclusion and representation: Persistent barriers affecting women, young people, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities continue to constrain equitable political representation and participation.	Reinforces the relevance of inclusive parliamentary processes and evidence-based scrutiny of representation and institutional responsiveness.

DIMENSION	KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND DYNAMICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR MZALENDO TRUST
TECHNOLOGICAL	Digital transformation and artificial intelligence: Open data, automation, and emerging analytical technologies are transforming how legislative information is generated, analyzed, and accessed.	Presents opportunities to strengthen legislative intelligence, institutional knowledge management, thought leadership, and the accessibility of parliamentary information.
TECHNOLOGICAL	Information integrity and digital exclusion: Misinformation, disinformation, cybersecurity risks, surveillance concerns, and unequal digital access affect public confidence and participation.	Heightens the importance of credible information, responsible technology use, digital resilience, and accessible communication across different constituencies.
ENVIRONMENTAL	Climate change and resource governance: Environmental pressures, climate financing, and resource allocation are becoming increasingly significant areas of public policy and legislative oversight.	Reinforces the relevance of independent scrutiny of parliamentary decisions and accountability concerning environmental governance and public resources, where these intersect with Mzalendo's mandate.
ENVIRONMENTAL	Environmental and external shocks: Climate emergencies and other disruptions can place additional pressure on public institutions, budgets, and governance systems.	Highlights the importance of institutional resilience and agility in sustaining independent parliamentary monitoring under changing conditions.
LEGAL	Constitutional guarantees and implementation gaps: Constitutional provisions on public participation, access to information, equality, representation, and accountability remain central to democratic governance, although implementation is uneven.	Provides a strong constitutional foundation for Mzalendo's mandate and reinforces the relevance of legislative intelligence and independent scrutiny of institutional compliance.
LEGAL	Evolving legal and regulatory environment: Judicial decisions, legislative reforms, and regulatory changes affecting civic freedoms, digital rights, information access, and public institutions continue to shape accountability processes.	Requires continued legal and institutional awareness to safeguard organizational independence, credibility, and effective engagement with parliamentary processes.

Overall Assessment



The PESTEL analysis identifies three interconnected pressures shaping Mzalendo's operating environment: increasing public demand for parliamentary accountability amid political and institutional uncertainty; changing forms of civic participation and information access; and growing demands on organizational resilience arising from technological risks and financing constraints. These pressures create opportunities to deepen the relevance of independent legislative intelligence while requiring Mzalendo to safeguard its credibility, accessibility, and institutional continuity.

Strategically, the findings point to the importance of maintaining independent parliamentary scrutiny, strengthening connections with emerging civic actors, applying digital capabilities responsibly, and building the institutional resilience necessary to sustain Mzalendo's mandate. While PESTEL describes the current environment, the foresight analysis considers how these dynamics could interact under different future conditions.

3.3 Strategic Foresight: Exploring Kenya's Democratic Futures

Recognizing that Kenya's democratic trajectory will be shaped by developments extending beyond individual electoral cycles, Mzalendo Trust undertook a strategic foresight process to explore alternative futures for Kenya toward 2036. The process examined how political, economic, social, technological, and institutional dynamics could interact to shape democratic governance, parliamentary accountability, and citizen participation.

Drawing on literature review, stakeholder consultations, horizon scanning, systems analysis, and participatory scenario development, the exercise identified interconnected drivers of change and developed four plausible futures. These scenarios are neither predictions nor preferred outcomes. Rather, they provide a framework for examining uncertainty, challenging prevailing assumptions, and considering the conditions under which democratic institutions and accountability actors may operate.

Four Plausible Futures for Kenya in 2036

SCENARIO	FUTURE SNAPSHOT	IMPLICATIONS FOR MZALENDO TRUST
1. Mambo ni Yale Yale — Business as Usual	Kenya's democratic institutions remain operational, but longstanding challenges relating to political accountability, institutional responsiveness, public trust, and meaningful participation persist. Elections and formal democratic processes continue without substantial transformation in the relationship between citizens and political institutions.	Reinforces the relevance of independent parliamentary monitoring, credible legislative intelligence, and sustained public scrutiny in an environment where formal transparency may not consistently translate into accountability.
2. Mambo ni Mwecheche — Collapse	Compounding political, economic, and societal pressures weaken democratic institutions, undermine public trust, and constrain civic freedoms. Parliamentary oversight and institutional accountability deteriorate, while access to reliable information and opportunities for meaningful participation become increasingly restricted.	Highlights the importance of institutional resilience, independence, trusted information systems, and organizational continuity under conditions of heightened uncertainty and democratic fragility.
3. Tumejipanga — Restraint, Repair and Intentional Building	Sustained institutional reforms, constructive civic engagement, and more accountable political leadership contribute to gradual democratic renewal. Parliamentary oversight becomes more credible, public participation is more meaningful, and representative institutions demonstrate greater responsiveness to citizens.	Presents opportunities for Mzalendo to consolidate its thought leadership, legislative intelligence, and institutional dialogue, contributing evidence and expertise to more open, inclusive, and accountable parliamentary processes.
4. Form ni Mpya — Total Disruption	Fundamental changes in political organization and ideologies, citizen expectations, and institutional arrangements transform established structures of power and representation. New political actors, technologies, and models of democratic participation emerge, creating possibilities for renewal alongside uncertainties about legitimacy, inclusion, and accountability.	Underscores the importance of institutional agility, adaptive capabilities, and continued relevance as parliamentary and democratic accountability arrangements evolve.



Reading Across the Four Futures

The four scenarios reveal different trajectories for Kenya's democratic governance, ranging from institutional continuity and democratic deterioration to gradual renewal and fundamental disruption. Across these futures, the effectiveness of parliamentary accountability depends not only on formal democratic institutions but also on the availability of credible information, opportunities for meaningful participation, institutional responsiveness, and the ability of accountability actors to operate independently.

For Mzalendo Trust, the scenarios highlight the need for a mandate that remains consistent even as institutional approaches adapt. Under conditions of continuity or democratic deterioration, independent monitoring, trusted information, and sustained public scrutiny become particularly important. Under conditions of renewal, Mzalendo Trust can deepen evidence-based engagement and constructive institutional dialogue. In a more disruptive future, the organization may need to adapt how it monitors representation, connects with citizens, and interprets emerging democratic arrangements.

The strategic implication is that Mzalendo Trust must strengthen capabilities that remain valuable across different futures: credible legislative intelligence, institutional independence, adaptable civic engagement, trusted partnerships, and organizational continuity. These considerations inform the assessment of institutional strengths and vulnerabilities in the SWOT analysis and the strategic priorities for 2026–2030.

3.4 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis consolidates findings from the previous strategic period, stakeholder consultations, institutional experience, and the external operating environment. It examines the capabilities Mzalendo Trust can build upon, the institutional gaps requiring attention, and the opportunities and threats that will shape its strategic choices during 2026–2030.

Consolidated SWOT Matrix

STRENGTHS

- Distinctive institutional mandate and credibility: Established specialization in independent parliamentary monitoring, legislative openness, and democratic accountability, supported by a recognized nonpartisan identity.
- Legislative intelligence and institutional expertise: Accumulated parliamentary knowledge, research capabilities, monitoring experience, and established information products provide a strong foundation for credible legislative analysis.
- Institutional relationships and convening capacity: Established relationships with parliamentary institutions, civil society, research organizations, media, and development partners provide a foundation for constructive institutional dialogue and collaboration.
- Civic technology and public communication: Experience in developing digital platforms and translating complex parliamentary processes into accessible information for public understanding, scrutiny and engagement with political processes.
- Experience in inclusive civic engagement: Established expertise in supporting political inclusion, citizen participation, and engagement with legislative institutions.
- Established institutional experience: Accumulated organizational learning, parliamentary monitoring experience, and a track record of engagement provide a foundation for strengthening thought leadership.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Growing demand for legislative intelligence and accountability: Increasing public scrutiny of parliamentary decisions, public expenditure, taxation, and political representation creates demand for credible, accessible, and independent legislative analysis.
- Changing forms of civic participation: Youth-led mobilization, decentralized networks, and emerging civic actors create opportunities for broader engagement and constructive institutional dialogue.
- Technological innovation: Advances in artificial intelligence, open data, and digital analytical capabilities offer opportunities to strengthen legislative intelligence, research efficiency, information accessibility, and knowledge dissemination, also cognizant of Kenya's median age which is approximately 20 years.
- Strategic partnerships and institutional collaboration: Opportunities exist to deepen long-term relationships with parliamentary institutions, civic actors, academia, media, and development partners around shared accountability objectives.
- Growing attention to democratic governance and inclusion: Continued demand for representative institutions, meaningful public participation, and accountable governance creates opportunities for evidence-based thought leadership.
- Devolution and locally grounded accountability: County assemblies and community-based civic networks provide opportunities to strengthen connections between parliamentary accountability and citizens' experiences of governance.

WEAKNESSES

- Gaps in outcome measuring and reporting: Institutional reporting has been stronger in documenting activities and outputs than in systematically demonstrating longer-term outcomes and organizational contribution.
- Knowledge management and information utilization: Opportunities remain to strengthen the integration, accessibility, continuity, and systematic use of institutional knowledge, research, and digital information products.
- Geographic reach and engagement continuity: Institutional engagement remains more established nationally, with opportunities to strengthen sustained connections with county-level and community-based accountability actors.
- Human capital and institutional systems: Reliance on specialized expertise and key personnel creates potential vulnerabilities in institutional continuity, succession planning, and organizational capacity.
- Institutional sustainability and financing: Dependence on external project funding, alongside the need for more predictable and diversified long-term financing, presents challenges for institutional continuity and strategic flexibility.
- Partnership and institutional continuity: Some collaborative relationships and initiatives remain dependent on specific projects, funding arrangements, or individual institutional champions.

THREATS

- Political interference and institutional constraints: Political interests, executive–legislative tensions, and uneven institutional responsiveness may constrain independent parliamentary scrutiny and accountability.
- Restrictions on civic space and political polarization: Constraints on civic freedoms, heightened political competition, and reputational risks may affect institutional access, public engagement, and organizational independence.
- Information integrity and cybersecurity risks: Disinformation, digital surveillance, data protection concerns, and cybersecurity threats may undermine public trust and the credibility of parliamentary information.
- Funding uncertainty and changing donor priorities: Shifting development financing priorities, short-term funding cycles, and increasing competition for resources may constrain institutional sustainability and strategic continuity.
- Uneven institutional capacity and access to information: Limitations in parliamentary information systems, institutional transparency, and public responsiveness may affect the availability and quality of evidence required for independent monitoring.
- Political and institutional uncertainty: Changing political alignments, electoral cycles, and wider socioeconomic disruptions may affect institutional relationships, operational stability, and public trust.

Strategic Interpretation of the SWOT

Mzalendo Trust's principal strategic advantage lies in its independent parliamentary monitoring mandate, specialized legislative intelligence capabilities, institutional credibility, and established relationships across the accountability ecosystem. These strengths position the organization to respond to growing demand for credible parliamentary evidence, meaningful political inclusion, and informed civic scrutiny. However, gaps in outcome measurement, knowledge management, organizational capacity, engagement continuity, and financial sustainability could constrain the depth and continuity of its contribution.

The resulting strategic direction is one of consolidation and selective strengthening rather than institutional expansion for its own sake. Mzalendo Trust will build on its established parliamentary monitoring expertise through three interconnected pillars addressing legislative openness, inclusive political processes, and civic accountability. These will be supported by institutional enablers that strengthen governance, human capital, financing, partnerships, digital systems, and organizational learning.

04

Strategic Direction and Institutional Positioning

Mzalendo Trust's strategic direction for 2026–2030 builds on two decades of independent parliamentary monitoring, civic engagement, and democratic accountability work. It reflects a commitment to consolidating the organization's distinctive institutional mandate while strengthening its relevance, credibility, resilience, and long-term sustainability within a changing democratic governance environment.

The Strategic Plan prioritizes institutional continuity alongside purposeful adaptation. It positions Mzalendo Trust to deepen its legislative intelligence capabilities, strengthen constructive institutional dialogue, advance inclusive parliamentary processes, and consolidate its role as a trusted source of independent evidence and thought leadership on parliamentary accountability.

Institutional Identity

Mzalendo Trust is an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization committed to promoting open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments in Kenya and Africa. Through independent legislative monitoring, research, civic technology, advocacy, and citizen engagement, Mzalendo generates credible legislative intelligence, strengthens public understanding of parliamentary processes, and supports informed participation and sustained democratic scrutiny.

1

VISION

Open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments where informed and empowered citizens participate meaningfully in democratic governance.

2

MISSION

To advance open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments through independent monitoring, legislative intelligence, research, civic technology, and citizen engagement that empower citizens to participate meaningfully and hold their representatives accountable.

3

PURPOSE

To strengthen democratic accountability through credible legislative intelligence, informed citizen participation, and sustained responsive and answerable Parliament.

CORE VALUES

Nonpartisanship: We uphold political independence, objectivity, and fairness in our decisions, research, and institutional engagements. Our work is guided by credible evidence, professional judgment, and the public interest, free from partisan allegiance or undue political pressure.

Transparency: We uphold openness and accountability in our governance, decision-making, communication, and resource management. We communicate clearly, act responsibly, and remain answerable for our institutional commitments and actions.

Inclusion: We foster an organizational culture that values diversity, equity, respect, and meaningful participation. We create an environment where different perspectives are welcomed, contributions are valued, and everyone has an opportunity to participate and thrive.

Innovation: We cultivate creativity, curiosity, continuous learning, and adaptability in how we work. We embrace responsible technology, new ideas, and improved practices to strengthen organizational effectiveness and remain responsive to change.

Collaboration: We foster a culture of teamwork, mutual respect, trust, and shared responsibility while cultivating purposeful partnerships grounded in shared values and mutual learning. We value collective expertise, open communication, and constructive relationships that strengthen our institutional effectiveness while safeguarding our independence.

Sustainability: We practice responsible stewardship of our people, knowledge, relationships, and financial resources. We invest in institutional resilience, human capital, and long-term organizational continuity to sustain our independence and effectiveness.

Approaches

Mzalendo Trust advances its mandate through complementary approaches that connect parliamentary information, citizen participation and institutional accountability.

1. **Evidence-Based Research:** Mzalendo Trust undertakes independent parliamentary monitoring, research, and analysis to generate credible legislative intelligence that informs public understanding, civic engagement, policy dialogue, and democratic accountability. The organization prioritizes accuracy, objectivity, and accessible communication of evidence to strengthen its credibility as a trusted source of parliamentary information and analysis.

2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Mzalendo facilitates constructive and sustained engagement with citizens, parliamentary actors, civil society, media, and other relevant stakeholders to encourage dialogue, mutual understanding, and informed participation in parliamentary processes. These engagements are grounded in respect, inclusivity, and the preservation of Mzalendo's institutional independence.

3. **Partnerships:** Mzalendo Trust cultivates purposeful and strategic partnerships with organizations and institutions that share its commitment to democratic accountability. Through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and complementary expertise, these partnerships strengthen institutional reach, collective learning, resource mobilization, and the sustainability of its work, while safeguarding its nonpartisan identity.

4. **Civic Technology:** Mzalendo leverages accessible, innovative, and responsible digital technologies to monitor parliamentary processes, organize and communicate legislative intelligence, and facilitate informed civic engagement. Its civic technology approaches prioritize accessibility, usability, data integrity, and adaptability to changing technological and civic environments.

5. **Advocacy:** Mzalendo undertakes independent, evidence-based advocacy to advance parliamentary openness, inclusive political processes, and democratic accountability. Drawing on legislative intelligence, research, and citizen perspectives, the organization promotes public dialogue, raises awareness of accountability gaps, and encourages relevant institutions to consider reforms within their respective mandates.

05

Strategic Pillars and Programmatic Direction (2026–2030)

Mzalendo Trust's strategic priorities for 2026–2030 are organized around three interconnected pillars that reflect its established mandate as an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization. Together, these pillars provide a framework for strengthening legislative openness, advancing inclusive parliamentary and political processes, and enabling informed civic engagement and sustained public scrutiny.

The pillars recognize the complementary relationship between credible legislative intelligence, meaningful public participation, and democratic accountability. They also distinguish Mzalendo Trust's direct institutional responsibilities from the broader changes it seeks to advance through independent monitoring, research, civic technology, strategic partnerships, and evidence-based advocacy.

The three strategic pillars are:

1. Promoting and Monitoring Legislative Openness
2. Promoting Inclusive Parliaments and Political Processes
3. Promoting Civic Engagement, Scrutiny and Accountability of Parliament



Implementation of these pillars will be supported by cross-cutting institutional capabilities, including governance, human capital, knowledge management, responsible technology, strategic partnerships, financial sustainability, and monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL).

5.1 Strategic Pillar 1: Promoting and Monitoring Legislative Openness

Legislative openness remains central to Mzalendo Trust's mandate as an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization. It encompasses public access to parliamentary information, transparency in legislative processes, and the ability of citizens and other accountability actors to examine the work, decisions, and performance of elected representatives.

During the 2026–2030 strategic period, Mzalendo Trust will build on its established parliamentary monitoring capabilities while strengthening the accessibility, quality, interpretation, use, and continuity of legislative information. Particular emphasis will be placed on consolidating legislative intelligence as a distinctive institutional capability that connects credible parliamentary evidence with informed public scrutiny and democratic accountability.

5.1.1 Existing Foundation: What Mzalendo Trust Is Already Doing

Mzalendo Trust has developed a substantial body of work focused on monitoring parliamentary institutions, generating legislative intelligence, and making parliamentary information available and understandable to the public. Its interventions have contributed to greater visibility of parliamentary proceedings, legislative developments, representative performance, and opportunities for informed public scrutiny.

Key areas of established work include:

- **Parliamentary monitoring and legislative tracking.** Mzalendo Trust monitors parliamentary proceedings, legislative developments, and the performance of elected representatives. Its parliamentary information platforms and tracking tools provide citizens, researchers, journalists, and civil society actors with resources for understanding legislative processes, examining parliamentary activity and a repository of Parliamentary information that is instrumental in studying patterns in Kenya's democratic history.
- **Research, analysis, and parliamentary performance assessment.** Through parliamentary scorecards, research products, and evidence-based analysis, Mzalendo Trust contributes to public understanding of legislative performance, representation, and accountability. Its accumulated parliamentary data and institutional knowledge provide an important foundation for credible legislative intelligence and sustained independent scrutiny.
- **Civic technology and public access to information.** Mzalendo Trust has developed and utilized digital platforms to make parliamentary information more accessible and understandable. These initiatives strengthen the connection between complex legislative processes and citizens seeking to understand parliamentary decisions and the conduct of their representatives.
- **Engagement with parliamentary institutions and accountability actors.** Mzalendo Trust maintains constructive relationships with parliamentary stakeholders, civil society organizations, researchers, media actors, and other partners to advance legislative openness, information sharing, and the use of parliamentary evidence. Its engagement in Open Government Partnership processes provides an additional platform for promoting openness, transparency, and public accountability through institutional dialogue and collaborative commitments.
- **Capacity building and regional parliamentary monitoring collaboration.** Mzalendo has contributed to strengthening the capabilities of civic actors and parliamentary monitoring practitioners through training, capacity development, and knowledge exchange. Its engagement with the regional Parliamentary Monitoring Organization movement provides a foundation for peer learning, shared practices, and stronger collaboration among independent parliamentary monitoring organizations.

Together, these interventions position Mzalendo as a credible source of legislative intelligence and an established contributor to the wider parliamentary openness ecosystem. The strategic priority is to consolidate these strengths while responding to changing expectations regarding the timeliness, reliability, accessibility, and usefulness of parliamentary information.

5.1.2 Emerging Issues and Future Considerations

The strategic foresight process identified several developments likely to shape the future of legislative openness and independent parliamentary scrutiny.

- **Changing relationships between institutions, power, and accountability.** The continued existence of parliamentary institutions does not necessarily guarantee effective oversight, transparency, or responsiveness. Executive–legislative relations, institutional independence, and political incentives will continue to shape the availability of parliamentary information and opportunities for meaningful public scrutiny.
- **Growing public demand for credible legislative intelligence.** Public interest in legislative decisions, public expenditure, political commitments, and representative performance reinforces the need for accessible, independent, and credible parliamentary analysis. Citizens increasingly require information that explains not only parliamentary proceedings but also the decisions taken, the conduct of representatives, and their implications for democratic accountability.
- **Technological change and information integrity.** Advances in artificial intelligence, data analysis, and digital communication create opportunities to improve parliamentary monitoring, research, and information dissemination. However, misinformation, manipulated content, cybersecurity risks, and unequal digital access present challenges to public trust. Maintaining credible legislative intelligence will require transparent methodologies, reliable sources, human verification, and responsible technological practices.
- **Devolution and uneven legislative openness.** County assemblies remain important institutions of representation, lawmaking, and oversight. Differences in information systems, record availability, institutional capacity, and opportunities for public scrutiny create challenges and potential opportunities for the selective application of Mzalendo's parliamentary monitoring expertise beyond national institutions.
- **Regional collaboration and the evolving parliamentary monitoring ecosystem.** Changing democratic conditions across the region reinforce the importance of knowledge exchange, capacity strengthening, and collaboration among independent Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations. Mzalendo's established regional leadership and engagement provides opportunities to contribute to shared professional practice, institutional resilience, and the wider advancement of legislative openness.
- **Uncertainty surrounding institutional access and democratic stability.** The alternative democratic futures explored through the foresight process illustrate how parliamentary openness could evolve under conditions of continuity, democratic repair, disruption, or institutional deterioration. These uncertainties underscore the importance of organizational agility, diversified monitoring approaches, institutional memory, and the capacity to sustain credible analysis under changing political conditions.

Taken together, these developments suggest that the future value of legislative openness will depend not only on the availability of parliamentary information but also on its credibility, accessibility, interpretation, preservation, and practical use.

5.1.3 Strategic Priorities for 2026–2030

Building on its existing work and the emerging issues identified through the foresight process, Mzalendo will focus on the following areas of strategic enhancement.

1 Deepen the quality and scope of independent parliamentary monitoring and legislative intelligence.

Mzalendo Trust will strengthen its capacity to monitor and interpret parliamentary proceedings, legislative decisions, representative performance, and oversight processes. This will include refining established monitoring approaches to capture meaningful dimensions of parliamentary performance, including committee work, legislative contributions, oversight responsibilities, post-legislative scrutiny and institutional follow-through where credible information is available.

The emphasis will be on strengthening the depth, consistency, analytical value, and continuity of legislative intelligence while preserving Mzalendo's independence and credibility.

2 Improve the accessibility, usability, and application of parliamentary information.

Mzalendo Trust will enhance how parliamentary information is organized, interpreted, and communicated to diverse audiences. Greater attention will be given to translating complex legislative information into clear, timely, and accessible formats that strengthen public understanding and informed scrutiny.

This will involve consolidating existing information platforms, strengthening audience-responsive communication, and improving the connection between parliamentary evidence, public concerns, and accountability discussions.

3 Strengthen responsible digital innovation and information integrity.

Mzalendo will deepen the responsible application of emerging technologies and data-analysis capabilities to strengthen parliamentary research, legislative tracking, information retrieval, and public communication.

Technological advancement will be guided by accuracy, human verification, transparency, accessibility, data protection, and institutional ownership of critical information resources. This will strengthen organizational agility while ensuring that innovation complements rather than substitutes for independent analysis.

4 Strengthen monitoring of legislative transparency and institutional follow-through.

Beyond documenting parliamentary activities, Mzalendo will strengthen systematic monitoring of legislative processes, decisions, and publicly documented institutional responses.

This will support sustained scrutiny of parliamentary developments over time and strengthen the availability of credible evidence for citizens, civil society, media, and other accountability actors. Mzalendo's responsibility will remain the independent documentation, analysis, and communication of parliamentary developments rather than the implementation of parliamentary decisions. Also deploying foresight tools through simulators to aid with anticipated effects and projections of legislation and other civic tech tools such as sentiment analysis to gain insights from the public on effective of legislation (comprehensive post-legislative scrutiny).

5 Consolidate strategic partnerships and engagement in legislative openness processes.

Mzalendo will deepen purposeful engagement with parliamentary institutions, media organisations, researchers, civil society, and regional and global communities of practice on open parliaments, political financing and political systems, and civic technology. These collaborations, including through Open Government Partnership processes, will strengthen legislative openness, promote the use of parliamentary evidence and advance the development and adoption of civic technology tools.

The organization will also assess opportunities to extend its monitoring expertise to county-level institutions based on demonstrated need, institutional capacity, strategic partnerships, and potential added value.

These engagements will prioritize constructive institutional dialogue, shared learning, and evidence-based advocacy while preserving Mzalendo's nonpartisan identity.

6 Strengthen capacity development and regional parliamentary monitoring collaboration.

Mzalendo will build on its established training and capacity-building experience to strengthen the capabilities of civic actors and independent parliamentary monitoring practitioners.

Through its engagement with the regional PMO movement, Mzalendo will support knowledge exchange, peer learning, shared methodologies, and collaborative approaches that contribute to stronger parliamentary monitoring practice and institutional resilience across the region.

5.1.4 Strategic Objective and Expected Outcomes

Strategic Objective

To strengthen legislative openness and independent parliamentary scrutiny by enhancing the availability, credibility, accessibility, and use of legislative intelligence, while advancing institutional dialogue, capacity development, and collaboration within the parliamentary monitoring ecosystem.

Expected Outcomes by 2030

OUTCOME 1: **Strengthened quality and accessibility of legislative intelligence.**

Citizens and accountability actors have improved access to credible, timely, understandable, and analytically robust parliamentary information that supports informed public scrutiny.

OUTCOME 2: **Greater application of parliamentary evidence in democratic accountability.**

Legislative intelligence is more consistently used by citizens, civil society, researchers, media, and other political and accountability actors to examine parliamentary processes, decisions, and representative performance.

OUTCOME 3: **Strengthened legislative openness, dialogue and collaboration.**

Mzalendo's sustained engagement with parliamentary stakeholders, Open Government Partnership processes, and other accountability actors contributes to more informed institutional dialogue and collaborative efforts to advance legislative transparency.

OUTCOME 4: **Strengthened capacity and collaboration within the parliamentary monitoring ecosystem.**

Civic actors and parliamentary monitoring practitioners demonstrate enhanced capabilities, knowledge sharing, and regional collaboration in independent legislative monitoring.

OUTCOME 5: **Greater institutional agility and resilience in legislative monitoring.**

Mzalendo demonstrates stronger capacity to adapt its monitoring methodologies, technological capabilities, and knowledge systems to changing democratic and technological conditions while maintaining independence, credibility, and continuity.

5.2 Strategic Pillar 2: Promoting Inclusive Political Representation and Processes

Inclusive political representation and meaningful participation are fundamental to the legitimacy, credibility, and effectiveness of democratic institutions. Kenya's constitutional commitments to equality, political rights, and representation establish an important foundation for the participation of women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities. However, formal opportunities for participation do not necessarily translate into equitable representation, meaningful engagement, or consideration of diverse perspectives in political and legislative decision-making.

For Mzalendo Trust, this pillar focuses on strengthening the evidence, capabilities, relationships, and opportunities that enable historically underrepresented groups to engage meaningfully with parliamentary and political processes. As an independent Parliamentary Monitoring Organization, Mzalendo Trust contributes to political inclusion through research, capacity strengthening, institutional dialogue, partnerships, and evidence-based advocacy rather than exercising the responsibilities of political parties or representative institutions.

During 2026–2030, Mzalendo Trust will consolidate its established interventions while strengthening their continuity, institutional relevance, and contribution to more inclusive representation and meaningful political participation.

5.2.1 Existing Foundation: What Mzalendo Is Already Doing

Mzalendo Trust has developed institutional experience in advancing the participation and representation of historically underrepresented groups in parliamentary and political processes. Its work combines research, advocacy, capacity strengthening, institutional engagement, and strategic partnerships.

Key areas of established work include:

- **Research and evidence on political inclusion.** Mzalendo Trust undertakes research and analysis examining political representation, participation, and the experiences of women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities. This evidence strengthens public understanding of inclusion barriers and supports informed dialogue and advocacy concerning political and legislative processes.
- **Engagement with parliamentary caucuses and political actors.** Mzalendo Trust has established relationships with parliamentary caucuses, political parties, and other institutional stakeholders to strengthen dialogue on representation, inclusion, and participation. These engagements provide opportunities to communicate evidence, highlight barriers, and advance consideration of underrepresented perspectives within relevant institutional processes.
- **Capacity strengthening, mentorship, and peer learning.** The organization has supported initiatives that strengthen the knowledge, skills, networks, and confidence of women, young people, and other underrepresented actors. Through mentorship, dialogue, and engagement with political institutions, these interventions have contributed to greater awareness of participation opportunities and stronger capabilities for civic and political engagement.
- **Partnerships and collaborative advocacy.** Mzalendo Trust has worked with civil society organizations, parliamentary caucuses, and other partners to advance inclusive political processes. Initiatives such as inter-generational, grassroots and county dialogues have created spaces for engagement among political actors, civic organizations, women, and young people, strengthening dialogue across institutional and community perspectives.
- **Public dialogue and visibility of underrepresented voices.** Through public engagement initiatives and platforms such as the National Youth Bunge, Mzalendo Trust has contributed to bringing underrepresented perspectives into public and parliamentary discussions. Mzalendo has also amplified the special interest groups represented in Parliament through collaborative legislative scrutiny on private member bills sponsored by SIGs, our Parliamentary coverage and legislative analysis of private member Bills and recognised outstanding MPs championing public-interest matters. These efforts have supported greater visibility of citizen priorities and opportunities for engagement between emerging civic actors and representative institutions.

Together, these interventions provide an established foundation for advancing political inclusion. The strategic opportunity for 2026–2030 is to strengthen their continuity, deepen institutional relationships, and demonstrate more clearly how participation contributes to sustained engagement and consideration of underrepresented perspectives.

STRATEGIC PILLARS AND PROGRAMMATIC DIRECTION (2026–2030)

5.2.2 Emerging Issues and Future Considerations

The strategic foresight process identified several developments likely to shape the future of inclusive political representation and participation.

- **Changing patterns of political representation and legitimacy.** Electoral participation remains an important mechanism of democratic representation, but it does not necessarily guarantee that citizens feel represented or that their concerns receive adequate consideration. Political party structures, campaign financing, patronage networks, and unequal access to political opportunities continue to shape pathways into representative institutions.
- **Growing youth agency and changing expectations of participation.** Emerging forms of youth-led engagement demonstrate that political participation increasingly extends beyond established political parties and conventional institutional channels. Digital organizing, issue-based mobilization, and citizen-led movements create new opportunities for political expression while also presenting challenges for constructive engagement with formal representative institutions.
- **Persistent structural barriers to inclusion.** Women, persons with disabilities, young people, and historically marginalized communities continue to encounter economic, social, political, and institutional barriers. Discriminatory practices, inaccessible participation mechanisms, unequal access to information, and limited opportunities for sustained engagement can constrain meaningful participation even where formal inclusion mechanisms exist.
- **Technology, digital exclusion, and political discourse.** Digital technologies create opportunities for broader participation, networking, and public engagement. However, online harassment, misinformation, surveillance risks, accessibility challenges, and unequal digital access may reinforce existing patterns of exclusion. Inclusive political engagement will therefore require approaches that combine digital innovation with accessible offline participation.
- **Institutional responsiveness and the quality of participation.** The foresight scenarios illustrate how opportunities for participation may expand, contract, or change under different democratic conditions. Greater participation does not automatically result in meaningful consideration of citizens' perspectives. The quality of engagement, continuity of dialogue, and documented institutional responses will therefore become increasingly important measures of progress.

These developments reinforce the need for institutional agility, sustained partnerships, and approaches that assess the quality and continuity of participation rather than relying primarily on the number of people reached.



Building on its existing work, Mzalendo Trust will pursue five areas of strategic enhancement.

1. **Strengthen evidence-based monitoring and advocacy on political inclusion.**

   Mzalendo Trust will deepen its research and analysis of representation, participation, and inclusion within parliamentary and political processes, with particular attention to women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities.

   The organization will strengthen evidence on structural barriers, emerging participation patterns, and institutional practices affecting political inclusion. This evidence will support informed public dialogue, institutional engagement, and advocacy while strengthening understanding of the quality and continuity of participation.

2. **Deepen engagement with parliamentary caucuses, political actors, and inclusion-focused institutions.**

   Mzalendo Trust will consolidate its established relationships with parliamentary caucuses, political parties, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders working to advance political inclusion.

   The emphasis will be on sustained institutional dialogue, evidence sharing, capacity strengthening, and purposeful partnerships that extend beyond individual events or projects. These engagements will connect inclusion-focused advocacy with relevant parliamentary and political processes while maintaining Mzalendo Trust's independence and nonpartisan identity.

3. **Strengthen pathways from participation to meaningful representation and engagement.**

   Mzalendo Trust will strengthen the connection between participation opportunities and sustained engagement with representative institutions, particularly for historically underrepresented groups.

   This will include supporting informed engagement before and after relevant institutional consultations, strengthening the documentation and communication of participant priorities, and tracking publicly identifiable institutional responses where appropriate.

   The focus will be on strengthening the quality, continuity, and relevance of participation while recognizing that decisions concerning representation and institutional reform remain within the mandates of the relevant authorities.

4. **Adapt inclusion approaches to emerging forms of civic and political participation.**

   Mzalendo Trust will strengthen its agility in responding to changing patterns of political engagement, particularly among young people and emerging civic actors.

   This will involve reviewing the accessibility and relevance of existing engagement approaches, integrating appropriate digital and offline methods, and strengthening partnerships with locally rooted organizations.

   Particular attention will be given to approaches that reduce participation barriers and connect diverse citizen perspectives with relevant institutional processes.

5. **Strengthen evidence, learning, and accountability for inclusion outcomes.**

   Mzalendo Trust will strengthen its capacity to assess the contribution of its inclusion initiatives to participants' knowledge, capabilities, networks, sustained engagement, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

   Through its organization-wide MERL framework, the organization will distinguish between participation in activities, continued engagement, and documented changes in the consideration of underrepresented perspectives.

These insights will inform institutional learning, adaptive programming, and the refinement of inclusion approaches over the strategic period.

5.2.3 Strategic Objective and Expected Outcomes

Strategic Objective:

To advance inclusive political representation and processes through credible evidence, sustained institutional engagement, capacity strengthening, and meaningful participation opportunities for historically underrepresented groups.

Expected Outcomes by 2030

OUTCOME 1: **Stronger evidence and institutional engagement on political inclusion.**

Parliamentary and civic actors have improved access to credible evidence on representation, participation barriers, and inclusion practices, supporting more informed institutional dialogue and advocacy.

OUTCOME 2: **Improved opportunities and capabilities for meaningful participation.**

Women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities supported through Mzalendo's interventions demonstrate strengthened knowledge, engagement capabilities, networks, and opportunities to participate in parliamentary and political processes.

OUTCOME 3: **Stronger connections between inclusive participation and institutional processes.**

The perspectives and contributions of underrepresented groups are more systematically documented, communicated, and followed up through relevant parliamentary and political engagement processes, with greater visibility of institutional acknowledgment and responses.

These outcomes recognize that political inclusion depends on broader institutional, economic, social, and political conditions. Mzalendo Trust's contribution lies in strengthening evidence, participation capabilities, institutional dialogue, partnerships, and independent scrutiny of inclusion practices, rather than directly determining political representation or institutional decisions.

5.3 Strategic Pillar 3: Promoting Civic Engagement, Scrutiny and Accountability of Parliaments

Meaningful civic engagement and sustained public scrutiny are essential to democratic accountability and the relationship between citizens and representative institutions. Kenya's constitutional framework provides opportunities for citizens to participate in legislative processes, petition Parliament, engage elected representatives, and demand accountability for public decisions. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on citizens' access to credible information, their capacity to engage meaningfully, and opportunities to follow up on parliamentary decisions and commitments.

For Mzalendo Trust, this pillar connects legislative intelligence with informed citizen action and sustained public scrutiny. Building on its established civic engagement platforms, civil society networks, research, and accountability initiatives, Mzalendo Trust will strengthen the continuity, accessibility, and effectiveness of civic participation and independent parliamentary scrutiny.

During 2026–2030, the strategic emphasis will be on deepening the connection between informed participation, collective civic action, institutional dialogue, and documented parliamentary responses. As an independent Parliamentary Monitoring Organization, Mzalendo Trust's role is to inform, facilitate, coordinate, monitor, and advocate, while safeguarding its nonpartisan identity and recognizing the constitutional responsibilities of Parliament.

5.3.1 Existing Foundation: What Mzalendo Is Already Doing

Mzalendo Trust has developed an established body of work that connects citizens and civil society actors with parliamentary processes, strengthens public understanding of legislative developments, and supports independent scrutiny of elected representatives.

Key areas of established work include:

- **Digital platforms for legislative participation and citizen engagement.** Through civic technology initiatives such as Dokeza and Bonga na Mzalendo, the organization has previously created channels for citizens to access legislative information, express their perspectives, and engage with parliamentary processes. These platforms have strengthened opportunities for informed participation and provided a foundation for more accessible citizen–Parliament engagement.
- **Civil society coordination and legislative advocacy.** Through the Civil Society Parliamentary Engagement Network (CSPEN), Mzalendo Trust has supported collaboration among civil society organizations engaging parliamentary institutions. This has strengthened opportunities for coordinated legislative submissions, evidence sharing, collective analysis, and sustained advocacy on matters of public interest.
- **Public dialogue and citizen–representative engagement.** Mzalendo Trust has convened and supported dialogue involving citizens, elected representatives, political actors, and civic organizations. These engagements provide spaces for communicating public concerns, discussing legislative priorities, strengthening mutual understanding and co-creating legislative interventions, and encouraging constructive engagement between citizens and their representatives.
- **Parliamentary scrutiny and political accountability initiatives.** Through parliamentary performance assessments, scorecards, research, and monitoring of publicly stated commitments, Mzalendo Trust has strengthened the availability of evidence for examining representative performance and political accountability. Initiatives such as the Promise Tracker have contributed to greater public visibility of commitments and opportunities for sustained follow-up.
- **Research, advocacy, and public communication.** Mzalendo Trust translates parliamentary evidence into accessible information and analysis that supports informed civic engagement. Through public communication, research, and strategic partnerships, the organization contributes to broader understanding of parliamentary decisions, legislative developments, and accountability concerns.

Together, these interventions demonstrate Mzalendo Trust's established contribution to connecting citizens and civic actors with parliamentary processes. They also provide a foundation for addressing a recurring institutional challenge: ensuring that participation and scrutiny extend beyond individual engagements to support sustained public accountability.

STRATEGIC PILLARS AND PROGRAMMATIC DIRECTION (2026–2030)

5.3.2 Emerging Issues and Future Considerations

The strategic foresight process identified several developments likely to reshape the relationship between citizens, parliamentary institutions, and democratic accountability.

- **Growing citizen agency and uncertain institutional responsiveness.** Changing patterns of civic participation, including youth-led mobilization, issue-based organizing, and digitally enabled scrutiny, demonstrate increasing public expectations of accountability. However, greater citizen engagement does not necessarily result in institutional action. The gap between public demands and documented parliamentary responses may become increasingly important to democratic legitimacy and public trust.
- **Economic governance and public accountability.** Public concerns surrounding fiscal governance, public expenditure, inequality, and service delivery continue to reinforce the importance of parliamentary oversight and scrutiny. Citizens increasingly seek credible information on how elected representatives exercise their legislative, budgetary, and oversight responsibilities and how parliamentary decisions relate to public priorities.
- **Changing relationships between citizens and political institutions.** Declining public trust, political polarization, and dissatisfaction with established participation mechanisms may weaken engagement with formal representative institutions. At the same time, emerging civic networks and community-based initiatives offer opportunities to strengthen collective action, public dialogue, and sustained accountability efforts.
- **Technology, information integrity, and civic participation.** Digital technologies are reshaping how citizens access parliamentary information, organize, and engage with public institutions. While these developments create opportunities for wider participation, misinformation, online harassment, surveillance risks, and unequal digital access may undermine public trust and expose civic actors to additional risks. Credible information, accessibility, security, and responsible innovation will therefore remain essential.
- **Civic space and the resilience of accountability networks.** Restrictions on civic freedoms, political intimidation, and uncertainty in civil society financing may constrain independent public scrutiny. Sustaining credible partnerships, institutional relationships, and adaptable engagement mechanisms will be important for maintaining civic accountability across changing political conditions.
- **Devolution and locally rooted accountability.** County assemblies provide additional opportunities for legislative participation and scrutiny. However, variations in institutional openness, civic capacity, and access to information require approaches that respond to local conditions and build on partnerships with organizations possessing sustained community relationships.

Across the alternative democratic futures considered through the foresight process, a central concern remains whether citizen agency can be sustained and connected to meaningful institutional accountability. This reinforces the importance of organizational agility, trusted civic networks, and mechanisms that support continuity of scrutiny and the documentation of institutional responses.

5.3.3 Strategic Priorities for 2026–2030

Building on its established initiatives and the emerging issues identified through the foresight process, Mzalendo Trust will pursue five areas of strategic enhancement.

1. **Strengthen meaningful and sustained citizen engagement with parliamentary processes.**

   Mzalendo Trust will consolidate its existing participation platforms and engagement approaches while improving their accessibility, continuity, and relevance to citizens' needs.

   Greater emphasis will be placed on supporting informed engagement throughout relevant legislative processes rather than concentrating participation around isolated consultations or events. This includes strengthening access to credible information before participation, supporting meaningful contributions, and communicating subsequent parliamentary developments.

   Digital participation mechanisms will be complemented, where appropriate, by accessible offline approaches and partnerships that reach citizens facing geographic, technological, linguistic, or other barriers.

2. **Deepen civic scrutiny and follow-through on parliamentary decisions and commitments.**

   Mzalendo Trust will strengthen the application of legislative intelligence and parliamentary monitoring evidence to support sustained scrutiny of legislative decisions, oversight processes, representative performance, and publicly stated political commitments.

   Building on existing accountability initiatives, the organization will deepen approaches for documenting parliamentary developments, tracking commitments within its mandate, and communicating progress, gaps, and publicly identifiable institutional responses.

   The emphasis will be on continuity and follow-through, enabling citizens and accountability actors to examine parliamentary performance over time rather than relying solely on isolated events or information releases.

3. **Strengthen civil society coordination and collective parliamentary engagement.**

   Mzalendo Trust will consolidate its role in facilitating coordinated, evidence-based engagement between civil society organizations and parliamentary institutions.

   Through CSPEN and other established partnerships, the organization will strengthen knowledge exchange, collective legislative analysis, coordination of submissions, and follow-up on matters raised with Parliament.

   Particular emphasis will be placed on purposeful partnerships, sustained collaboration beyond individual advocacy initiatives, and stronger connections between national organizations and locally rooted civic actors.

4. **Deepen citizen–representative dialogue and institutional feedback.**

   Mzalendo Trust will strengthen its established role in convening constructive dialogue and facilitating engagement between citizens, elected representatives, and parliamentary actors.

   The strategic emphasis will be on improving the quality, accessibility, and continuity of these interactions while strengthening mechanisms for documenting concerns raised, institutional responses communicated, and subsequent developments.

   This approach will support informed institutional dialogue and public scrutiny while recognizing that parliamentary institutions and elected representatives retain responsibility for responding to public concerns and exercising their constitutional mandates.

5. **Strengthen agility and innovation in civic accountability approaches.**

   Mzalendo Trust will enhance its capacity to respond to changing forms of civic mobilization, evolving public expectations, and emerging political and technological risks.

   This will include strengthening the accessibility and effectiveness of existing civic technology platforms, adopting responsible innovations in public communication and engagement, and reinforcing information verification, data protection, and participant safety.

   Across electoral cycles and changing democratic conditions, Mzalendo Trust will maintain its nonpartisan role by supporting credible parliamentary evidence, informed civic participation, and independent scrutiny of documented parliamentary performance and commitments.

Through its cross-cutting MERL and knowledge management systems, the organization will also strengthen its ability to assess the quality, continuity, and outcomes of civic engagement and apply institutional learning to future interventions.

5.3.4 Strategic Objective and Expected Outcomes

Strategic Objective

To strengthen meaningful civic engagement and sustained public scrutiny of Parliament through credible legislative intelligence, accessible participation pathways, collective accountability mechanisms, and systematic follow-up on parliamentary decisions and commitments.

Expected Outcomes by 2030

OUTCOME 1: **Increased meaningful and sustained civic engagement with parliamentary processes.**

Citizens and civic actors have more accessible, inclusive, and effective opportunities to participate in legislative processes and engage elected representatives, supported by credible information and sustained engagement mechanisms.

OUTCOME 2: **Strengthened public scrutiny of parliamentary decisions, performance, and commitments.**

Citizens, civil society, media, and other accountability actors demonstrate greater use of parliamentary evidence to examine legislative decisions, assess representative performance, and follow up on publicly stated commitments.

OUTCOME 3: **Improved coordination and continuity of civic engagement with Parliament.**

Civil society organizations and citizens engage parliamentary institutions more systematically, with stronger coordination of submissions, sustained institutional dialogue, and improved documentation of parliamentary acknowledgments, responses, and subsequent developments.

These outcomes reflect Mzalendo Trust's contribution to strengthening the conditions for democratic accountability. The organization can generate evidence, facilitate informed participation, coordinate civic scrutiny, and document institutional responses. Responsibility for parliamentary decisions, legislative oversight, and institutional accountability remains with Parliament and other relevant public authorities.

06

Strategic Implementation and Performance Framework (2026–2030)

The implementation of Mzalendo Trust's Strategic Plan 2026–2030 will be guided by an integrated, results-oriented, and adaptive approach. The framework establishes how the organization will translate its strategic priorities into institutional results, maintain accountability for performance, and respond to changes in its operating environment.

Implementation will build on Mzalendo Trust's established mandate as an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization, with emphasis on consolidating its strengths in legislative intelligence, inclusive political participation, and civic accountability. The three strategic pillars will provide the programmatic direction, while the institutional enablers outlined in Section 5.4 will support their effective and sustainable delivery.

This framework provides strategic guidance rather than a detailed operational plan. Annual workplans, budgets, and supporting institutional frameworks will define specific activities, resource requirements, responsibilities, milestones, and performance targets.

6.1 Strategic Implementation Approach

Mzalendo Trust will adopt a coordinated approach to implementing its three strategic pillars, recognizing their complementary contributions to parliamentary openness, inclusive political representation, and democratic accountability.

Implementation will be guided by four principles:

- **Strategic focus and coherence.** Institutional priorities and resource commitments will remain aligned with Mzalendo Trust's mandate, comparative advantage, and intended strategic outcomes. The three pillars will be advanced as complementary areas of contribution rather than isolated programs.
- **Results and accountability.** Institutional performance will be assessed not only through the delivery of activities and outputs but also through the application of legislative intelligence, the quality of civic participation, and evidence of sustained public scrutiny and institutional engagement.
- **Institutional independence and sustainability.** Implementation decisions will safeguard Mzalendo Trust's nonpartisan identity, credibility, and continuity of core parliamentary monitoring functions. Resource allocation will reflect institutional capacity, financial sustainability, and strategic relevance.
- **Agility and learning.** Research, strategic foresight, stakeholder feedback, and performance evidence will inform institutional decisions, enabling Mzalendo Trust to respond to emerging opportunities and risks without departing from its strategic direction.

The Strategic Plan will provide the overarching reference for institutional decision-making throughout 2026–2030. Its priorities will be translated into annual workplans and budgets, allowing for flexibility in implementation while maintaining accountability for the agreed strategic outcomes.

6.2 Strategic Results and Theory of Change

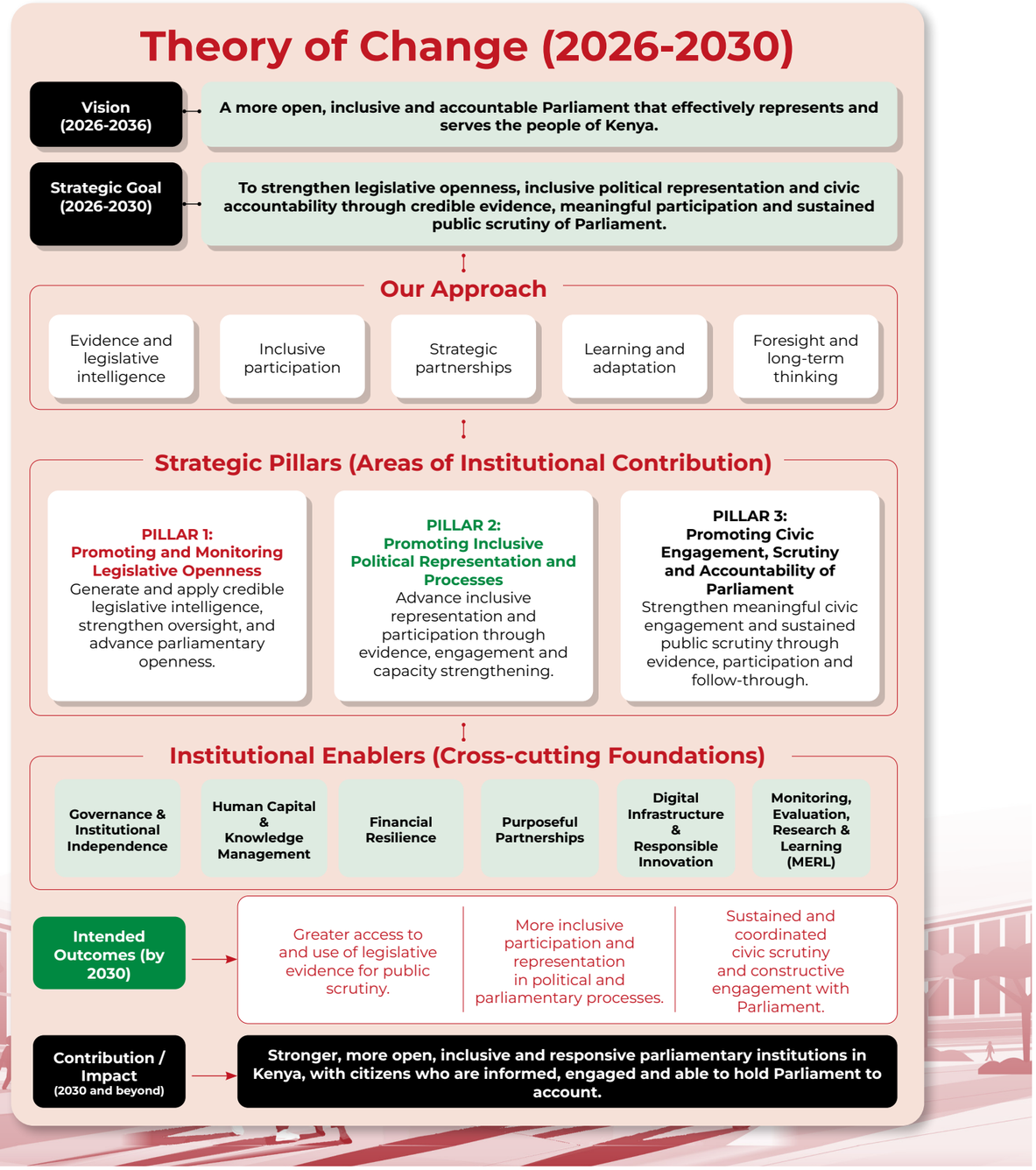
Mzalendo Trust's strategic results framework connects its three programmatic pillars to their intended outcomes and longer-term contribution to democratic accountability.

The framework recognizes that legislative openness, inclusive political representation, and civic engagement are mutually reinforcing. Credible parliamentary evidence strengthens informed participation and scrutiny; inclusive engagement expands opportunities for diverse perspectives to be represented; and sustained civic accountability mechanisms support public dialogue and institutional follow-through.

6.2.1 Translating Strategic Outcomes into Performance Measurement.

The strategic objectives and expected outcomes presented under each of the three pillars in Section 5 provide the foundation for assessing Mzalendo Trust's performance during 2026–2030. These outcomes will be translated into measurable indicators, baselines, targets, and means of verification through the supporting Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) framework. Performance assessment will distinguish between results directly attributable to Mzalendo Trust's interventions and broader institutional or democratic changes to which its work contributes.

6.2.2 Theory of Change



The Theory of Change illustrates how Mzalendo Trust's institutional capabilities and strategic interventions are expected to contribute to the intended outcomes across the three pillars and, ultimately, to more open, inclusive, and accountable parliamentary institutions.

The framework distinguishes between outputs directly generated by Mzalendo Trust, intermediate outcomes involving citizens and other stakeholders, and wider democratic changes that depend on multiple institutions and contextual factors. This distinction will guide realistic performance expectations and credible reporting of Mzalendo Trust's contribution.

6.3 Governance and Strategic Accountability

Implementation of the Strategic Plan will be anchored in Mzalendo Trust's established governance and management arrangements, with clear accountability for institutional direction, performance, and resource stewardship.

The **Board of Trustees** will provide strategic oversight, ensuring that organizational priorities, major resource commitments, and institutional decisions remain consistent with Mzalendo's mandate, values, and long-term sustainability. Its oversight will include institutional performance, governance effectiveness, strategic risk, and the safeguarding of organizational independence.

Executive leadership and management will be responsible for coordinating strategic delivery, aligning institutional capabilities and resources, and ensuring coherence across the three programmatic pillars. Management will provide the Board with evidence-based assessments of strategic progress, emerging challenges, and matters requiring institutional decisions.

Institutional accountability will be supported by transparent decision-making, credible evidence, responsible financial stewardship, and appropriate safeguards for nonpartisanship and research independence.

Mzalendo Trust will also maintain accountability to its stakeholders through communication of strategic achievements, institutional performance, challenges, and lessons learned.

The specific responsibilities of organizational functions and personnel will be established through approved management structures and operational instruments.

6.4 Performance, Risk, and Strategic Adaptation

Mzalendo Trust will integrate Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL), strategic risk management, and foresight-informed adaptation to strengthen institutional performance throughout the implementation period.

6.4.1 Strategic Performance and Learning

MERL will provide the evidence required to assess progress toward strategic outcomes, strengthen accountability, and inform institutional decisions.

Performance assessment will consider three levels of results:

- **Direct results:** Legislative intelligence, research, engagement mechanisms, institutional capabilities, and other outputs generated through Mzalendo Trust's work.
- **Intermediate outcomes:** The application of parliamentary evidence, strengthened participation capabilities, sustained civic engagement, and documented institutional dialogue and follow-up.
- **Longer-term contribution:** Changes in the conditions supporting parliamentary openness, inclusion, and accountability to which Mzalendo Trust contributes alongside other actors.

Both quantitative and qualitative evidence will be used to understand the relevance, effectiveness, and contribution of Mzalendo Trust's interventions.

Research and institutional learning will support reflection on emerging governance developments, the effectiveness of strategic approaches, and the assumptions underpinning the Plan.

A **midterm strategic review** will assess progress, institutional capabilities, and the continued relevance of strategic priorities. An **end-of-period evaluation** will examine overall achievements, institutional performance, and lessons for the subsequent strategic planning cycle.

6.4.2 Strategic Risk and Institutional Resilience

Mzalendo Trust will maintain awareness of strategic risks that could affect its mandate, institutional credibility, and ability to sustain results.

STRATEGIC RISK	STRATEGIC RESPONSE
Political interference and threats to institutional independence	• Safeguard nonpartisanship, transparent methodologies, and governance oversight.
Restrictions on civic space and political instability	• Maintain context-sensitive engagement and adaptable participation approaches.
Financial uncertainty and resource dependence	• Strengthen financing diversification, resource prioritization, and institutional resilience.
Digital security and information integrity threats	• Strengthen responsible technology governance, information protection, and verification.
Limited institutional responsiveness	• Sustain evidence-based engagement, public scrutiny, and documentation of institutional responses.
Organizational capacity and continuity constraints	• Strengthen human capital, institutional knowledge, and continuity of core functions.

These risks will be considered through established governance and management arrangements, with detailed mitigation measures maintained through supporting institutional risk management processes.

6.4.3 Foresight-Informed Strategic Adaptation

The strategic foresight process underpinning this Plan highlighted the possibility of different democratic futures shaped by political, institutional, social, and technological developments.

Mzalendo Trust will apply foresight insights alongside research, stakeholder engagement, and MERL findings to assess emerging changes and determine whether adjustments to strategic approaches are necessary.

Strategic adaptation will focus on maintaining institutional relevance and effectiveness while safeguarding the organization's mandate, independence, and long-term direction.

Significant adjustments will be considered through established governance arrangements, ensuring that responsiveness to changing circumstances remains consistent with the agreed strategic objectives.

Through this integrated approach, Mzalendo Trust will maintain a clear strategic direction while strengthening accountability, organizational resilience, and the capacity to navigate uncertainty throughout the 2026–2030 period.

Strategic Outlook

Mzalendo Trust's Strategic Plan 2026–2030 sets out a focused and forward-looking direction for strengthening legislative openness, inclusive political representation, civic engagement, and democratic accountability in Kenya. Building on two decades of institutional experience, the Plan reaffirms Mzalendo Trust's position as an independent, nonpartisan Parliamentary Monitoring Organization committed to advancing open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments.

The strategic planning process has reinforced the continued relevance of Mzalendo Trust's mandate within an increasingly complex democratic environment. Changing patterns of political participation, evolving relationships between citizens and representative institutions, technological developments, and pressures on civic space underscore the need for institutional agility and sustained public accountability.

Mzalendo Trust's strategic direction therefore emphasizes consolidating its established strengths in independent parliamentary monitoring, credible legislative intelligence, research, civic technology, and citizen engagement. A defining ambition for the 2026–2030 period is to move beyond expanding access to information and participation opportunities toward strengthening how parliamentary evidence is applied, how diverse perspectives are represented, and how public concerns are documented and followed through within institutional processes.

Achieving these ambitions will require Mzalendo Trust to safeguard its independence and credibility while strengthening institutional capabilities, financial sustainability, and purposeful partnerships. The strategic foresight process further underscores the importance of anticipating change, navigating uncertainty, and adapting institutional approaches without compromising the organization's mandate and values.

This five-year Plan provides a strategic pathway toward the longer-term aspirations articulated in Mzalendo Trust's Strategic Framework 2026–2036. Its success will be reflected not only in the quality of legislative intelligence produced or the reach of civic engagement initiatives, but also in the sustained application of evidence, strengthened civic accountability capabilities, and meaningful institutional dialogue.

As Mzalendo Trust advances into its next chapter, its commitment remains clear: to strengthen citizens' ability to understand, engage with, scrutinize, and hold Parliament accountable, while contributing to a stronger and more connected parliamentary monitoring movement across Africa. Through this Strategic Plan, Mzalendo Trust reaffirms its commitment to informed civic participation, independent parliamentary scrutiny, and the advancement of open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments that serve the people of Kenya.

Acknowledgments

Mzalendo Trust extends its sincere appreciation to the individuals, institutions, and partners whose insights, expertise, and commitment supported the development of the Strategic Plan 2026–2030. The Plan reflects a collective process of institutional reflection, stakeholder consultation, and strategic foresight, enriched by diverse perspectives on parliamentary openness, inclusive political processes, civic engagement, and democratic accountability in Kenya.

Special appreciation goes to the **Board of Trustees** for its strategic guidance, stewardship, and continued commitment to the institutional mandate of Mzalendo Trust. We extend particular gratitude to **Caroline Gaita, Executive Director**, for her leadership, dedication, and steadfast support throughout the strategic planning process. We also recognize the founders of Mzalendo Trust, **Ory Okolloh and Conrad Akunga**, whose pioneering vision and commitment to parliamentary transparency laid the foundation for the organization's continued contribution to democratic governance.

We sincerely appreciate the staff of Mzalendo Trust for their institutional knowledge, reflections, and active engagement throughout the process: Gitungo Wamere, Jefferson Gathumbi, Loise Mwakamba, Edward Kakumu, Grace Naiserian, Viola Adisa, Vallary Mitchelle, Fredrick Ajok, Loiser Osoro, Sally Owino, and Gregory Githinji. Their contributions helped ground the Plan in institutional experience and shape a shared direction for the next five years.

We are equally grateful to the external stakeholders who contributed to, or were identified for engagement through, the key informant interviews (KIIs), stakeholder consultations, and strategic foresight & scenario-building process. Their diverse perspectives provided valuable insights into the opportunities, challenges, and alternative futures shaping parliamentary accountability and democratic participation.

Mzalendo Trust extends special appreciation to **LongView Consult, particularly Dr. Katindi Sivi and Gorety Okoth**, for accompanying the organization throughout this journey. Their technical guidance, research, facilitation of stakeholder consultations and strategic foresight exercises, and support in synthesizing diverse perspectives into a coherent strategic direction were instrumental in developing this Plan.

To everyone who shared their time, knowledge, experience, and perspectives, Mzalendo Trust extends its sincere gratitude. This Strategic Plan reflects the value of collective reflection, institutional commitment, and purposeful collaboration in advancing more open, inclusive, and accountable Parliaments.





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