



Annual Report



2025-2026

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FOREWORD



Josephine Ncube, Gender Links Zimbabwe Board Chairperson signing the MOU with Emily Brown, Gender Links Chair.

Gender Links was founded 25 years ago on a bold vision to advance gender equality and social justice across Southern Africa. As we celebrate this milestone, Gender Links Zimbabwe proudly reflects on its contribution to this legacy and its own journey as an independent, locally registered Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO), committed to advancing gender-responsive governance and inclusive development in Zimbabwe.

The period 2024-2026 has been a defining chapter for Gender Links Zimbabwe. It marks the successful culmination of two flagship programmes, the Diakonia-supported Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Programme and the Embassy of Sweden-supported Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development (LED) Programme. Their achievements demonstrate the power of strategic partnerships, community ownership and

locally driven solutions in creating lasting change.

Over the past year, Gender Links Zimbabwe has delivered significant results that will continue to shape local governance and economic development. Gender Responsive Budgeting has been institutionalised across all 92 local authorities, with every local authority submitting Gender Responsive Budgeting Statements as part of their annual budgets and increasing citizen participation in budget consultations. Through sustained advocacy and technical support, local budgets are increasingly responding to the needs of women, youth and marginalised communities.

The Local Economic Development (LED) programme has delivered transformative results at scale. A landmark Ministerial Directive now requires all local authorities to allocate at least 10% of their budgets towards Local Economic Development initiatives from 2026. LED allocations have increased from USD 3 million in 2022 to USD 33 million in 2025, unlocking significant investment in inclusive economic growth. Thousands of livelihoods have been strengthened, women's access to procurement opportunities has expanded, and local authorities are increasingly driving sustainable and inclusive development.

The impact of our work extends far beyond direct programme beneficiaries. During

this reporting period, Gender Links Zimbabwe convened 57 programme events, directly reached 5,639 women and men, and positively impacted an estimated 612,000 households, approximately 2.2 million people across Zimbabwe. Through strategic media partnerships, more than 40 stories have been published across national, provincial and online media platforms, amplifying community voices and strengthening our position as a leading advocate for gender-responsive governance and women's economic justice. Institutionally, 2025 has been a landmark year.

Our registration as a Private Voluntary Organisation and the acquisition of a permanent home through the Gender Links Future Fund represent important investments in our sustainability, governance and long-term growth.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, Board members, development partners, government counterparts, local authorities and the communities we serve. Together, we have demonstrated that meaningful and sustainable change is possible when institutions are strengthened, and communities are empowered. As we celebrate Gender Links at 25, we do so with optimism and confidence in the future. Gender Links Zimbabwe remains committed to advancing gender equality, strengthening local governance and transforming lives across Zimbabwe.



Josephine Ncube
Board Chairperson
Gender Links Zimbabwe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025-2026 reporting period was a defining chapter for Gender Links Zimbabwe (GLZ). As the organisation celebrated 25 years of Gender Links' regional legacy, GLZ consolidated its identity as a locally registered Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO). This milestone year was marked by the successful culmination of flagship programmes, strengthened institutional foundations, and measurable impact across governance, economic empowerment, and social justice.

Two flagship initiatives anchored GLZ's work, the Diakonia-supported Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Programme and the Embassy of Sweden-supported Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development (LED) Programme. Together, these programmes demonstrated the power of strategic partnerships, community ownership, and locally driven solutions in advancing gender equality. GRB was institutionalised across all 92 local authorities, with each submitting GRB statements as part of their annual budgets. Citizen participation in budget consultations rose from 84,785 in 2024 to 219,000 in 2026, with notable increases among women and youth.



Zimbabwe LED launch.

Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

A landmark Ministerial Directive now requires all local authorities to allocate 10% of their budgets to LED from 2026, with quotas for women, youth, and vulnerable groups. LED allocations grew from USD 3 million in 2022 to USD 33 million in 2025. The programme facilitated 1,094 sustainable livelihoods, created 1,254 new jobs (66% held by women), and raised average monthly incomes by 87% (USD 152 to USD 284). Women-owned enterprises secured 163 tenders worth USD 7.4 million, while savings and lending group membership expanded from 35% to 82%, enabling 645 entrepreneurs to access USD 81,931 in affordable credit.

GLZ's progress was anchored in multi-sector partnerships across government, local authorities, the private sector, and financial institutions. The Ministry of Local Government and Public Works institutionalised GRB and LED. Local authorities operationalized the hub and spoke programme. The private sector linked participants to markets and finance.

GLZ implemented a sustained communications strategy anchored on digital platforms and media partnerships. Over 40 stories were published by 14 journalists across 12 media platforms, profiling gender best practices and amplifying community voices. Facebook engagement grew to 1,256 followers, with page visits increasing by 45.4% (2,840 to 4,129), underscoring digital platforms as key channels for visibility and stakeholder engagement. The 2025 Zimbabwe SADC Protocol@Work Summit convened 204 participants (67% women) from 61 local authorities, showcasing 189 case studies and awarding 41 recognitions across different thematic categories. These efforts positioned GLZ as a leading voice on gender-responsive governance and women's economic justice.

2025 was a landmark year institutionally. GLZ achieved registration as a Private Voluntary Organisation, securing legal recognition. The organisation acquired a permanent home through the Gender Links Future Fund, symbolising sustainability and long-term growth. The Finance team delivered unqualified audits, ensured compliance with donor agreements, and strengthened financial management.

GLZ convened 57 programme events, directly reached 5,639 individuals (56% women), and positively impacted an estimated 612,000 households (2.2 million people). These interventions improved service delivery, expanded economic opportunities, and strengthened accountability mechanisms within local authorities.

The 2025-2026 year demonstrated GLZ's ability to translate policy into practice, strengthen institutions, and empower communities. Through flagship programmes, strategic partnerships, and robust governance, GLZ has

institutionalised gender-responsive budgeting and inclusive local economic development across Zimbabwe's 92 local authorities. These achievements underscore resilience, innovation, and sustainability. As Gender Links celebrates 25 years, GLZ stands as a credible and influential actor advancing gender equality, inclusive governance, and women's economic justice, with optimism and confidence.



Local Economic Development in action, Kadoma.

From Horticulture to Inclusive Growth: Umguza Rural District Council's Path to Gender-Responsive Local Economic Development

Umguza Rural District Council (RDC) is demonstrating how gender-responsive local governance can unlock inclusive economic growth. Through the Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development in Zimbabwe programme, implemented by Gender Links Zimbabwe with support from the Embassy of Sweden, the council has transformed the Thuthukani Luthi B Cooperative from a community horticulture project into a model for sustainable Local Economic Development (LED).

Rather than treating horticulture as a stand-alone livelihood activity, Umguza RDC has embedded it within its Local Economic Development strategy by aligning its Gender Policy with LED priorities, strengthening procurement opportunities for women-owned enterprises, allocating resources for enterprise development, and recruiting a full-time agronomist to provide technical support. These reforms have strengthened institutional ownership and positioned the council to sustain the initiative beyond external funding.



Thuthukani Luthi B cooperative members with their produce
Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

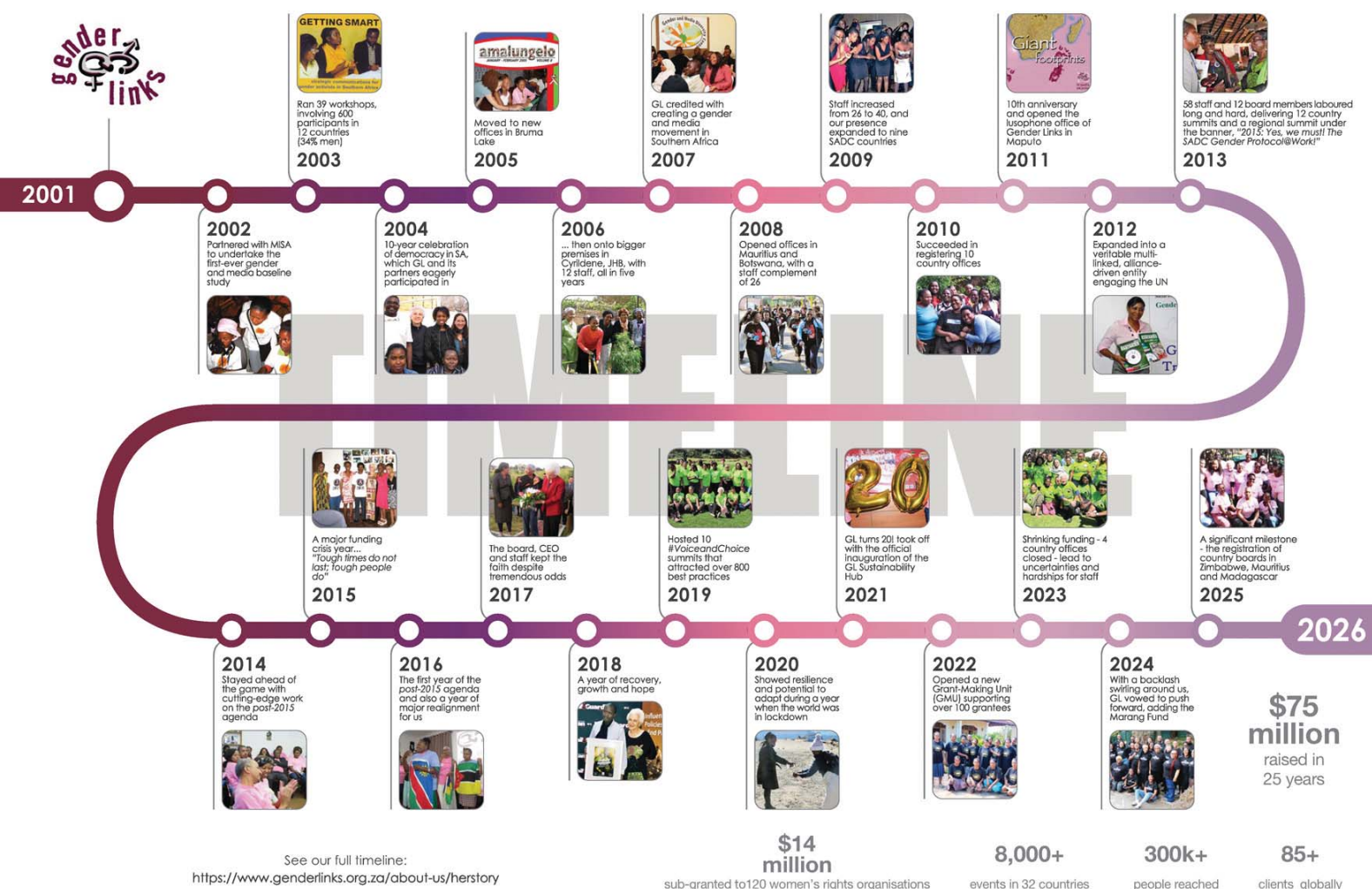
The cooperative has become more than a production site-it is now a learning hub where women gain technical skills, confidence and leadership while improving household incomes. "Our reach in the community is increasing, making the enterprise a learning hub. Our communities are resilient and determined to succeed. For many women, the horticulture enterprise has created a safe space they describe as therapeutic," said Lynder Maphosa, Umguza RDC Gender Focal Person.

GL@25

Gender Links Zimbabwe (GLZ) joined the rest of Gender Links (Head Office and Country Offices) and partners as Gender Links commemorated 25 years of resilience, growth, and lasting impact. GLZ brought together board members, staff and friends of Gender Links to commemorate this milestone achievement. Other partners included local authorities, funding partners and private sector organisations.

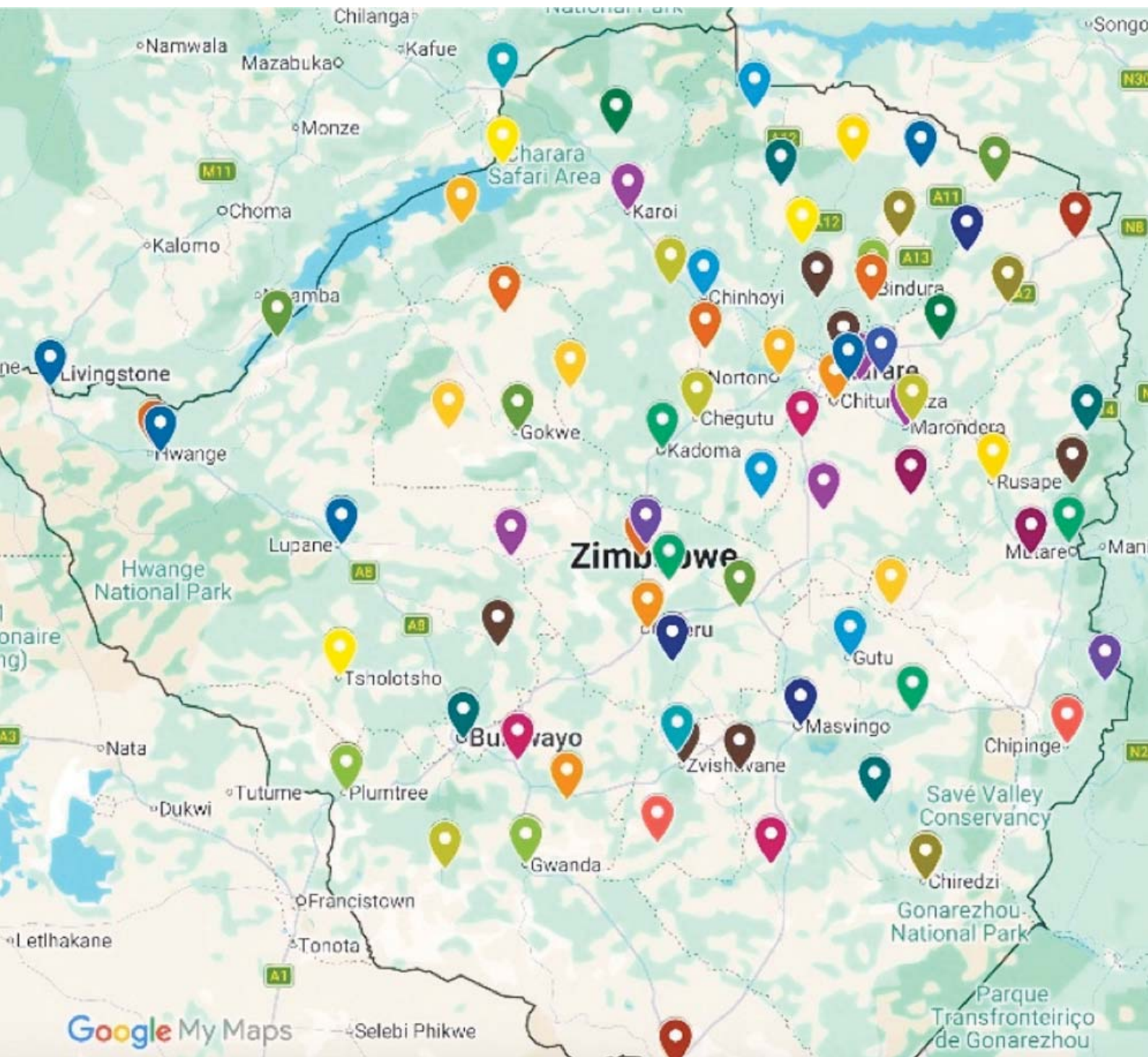


GLZ Director and Board Chairperson celebrating GL@25
Photo: Loverage Nhamoyebonde



Without our funders and partners, we would not be who we are or where we are today ~ Thank you, merci, obrigada, siyabonga, mazvita, realeboga!

WHERE WE WORK



HOW WE WORK

The Zimbabwean Context

Gender Equality and Policy Frameworks:

Zimbabwe has demonstrated commitment to gender equality through the development of national strategies, action plans, and the implementation of Gender and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) programmes. The country is party to key international instruments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Regionally, Zimbabwe has ratified the Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2063, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

Domestically, the 2013 Constitution enshrines progressive provisions including equality and non-discrimination (Section 56), gender balance (Section 17), equal representation in politics (Section 124), reproductive health rights (Section 76), property and inheritance rights (Section 80), protection from GBV (Sections 25 & 52), and affirmative action (Sections 56 & 17). These frameworks provide a robust legal foundation for advancing gender parity in governance, economic participation, and social justice.

Gendered Service Delivery: Despite these commitments, service delivery remains uneven. Rural women and youth face significant barriers to healthcare, safe water, and economic services. Gender-responsive budgeting at local authority level is still evolving, underscoring the importance of Gender Links Zimbabwe's interventions and advocacy for inclusive service provision.

Political Environment: The Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Bill reshaped civic space by requiring registration and compliance provisions on Non-Governmental Organisations

(NGOs). Gender Links Zimbabwe successfully registered as a PVO in November 2025, securing legal recognition.

Economic Environment: Zimbabwe's economy remained fragile, marked by inflationary pressures, currency instability, and high unemployment. Poverty levels were high, with 43.1% of the population living in extreme poverty, disproportionately affecting rural communities (55.5%). Women bore the brunt of poverty, with 51.9% of extremely poor individuals being female. Local economic development initiatives, including entrepreneurship and livelihoods support, became critical for resilience.

Social Environment: Zimbabwe's population of 15 million is 52% female and 48% male. Despite this demographic balance, women's representation in decision-making remains low. In the 2023 elections, women held 30% of National Assembly seats (85/280) and 45% of Senate seats (36/80), both declines from previous terms. At the local government level, representation rose to 33% due to the Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 2 Act of 2021, which reserved 30% of seats for women.

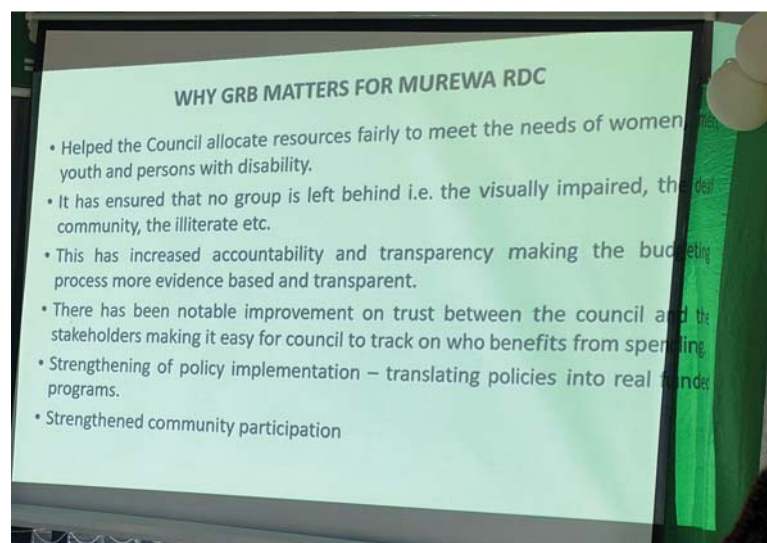
Persistent patriarchal traditions, harmful cultural practices, and high levels of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) continue to undermine women's voice, choice, and agency. Survivors of GBV often face stigma, economic dependence on abusers, and limited access to essential services, perpetuating cycles of abuse. The emergence of drug and substance abuse and mental health issues cannot be ignored, as it has harmed the social fabric of the nation.

Donor Landscape: The donor environment remained constrained. The abrupt pull-out of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) put pressure on already

constrained resources. Another major blow was the announcement by the Government of Sweden of the closure of the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, with whom Gender Links has a longstanding relationship. This will surely put further strain on NGO activity and support, but also underscores the need for more innovative ways of funding beyond traditional donor support.

Zimbabwe's 2025 context reflects progressive policy frameworks and constitutional commitments, but persistent gender disparities, economic fragility, and tightening civic space continue to challenge women's empowerment. Gender Links Zimbabwe's focus on gender-responsive budgeting, local economic development, and digital advocacy positions the organization to respond

effectively to these challenges while advancing inclusive governance and locally owned impact.



Murewa Rural District Council: A Beacon of Excellence in Gender Mainstreaming

Murewa Rural District Council Excellence (COE), demonstrating how gender-responsive governance can transform local service delivery. As the Hub Council for Mashonaland East Province, Murewa RDC has championed peer learning through the Hub and Spoke model, supporting neighbouring councils to strengthen gender mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

A defining achievement during the year was the integration of GRB into the council's Enterprise Resource Management (ERM) system. The upgraded system automatically generates gender budgeting reports, making it easier to track gender-related expenditure and strengthen accountability. *"The council budget Enterprise Resource Management system was upgraded to produce auto-generated gender reports that feed directly into our Gender Responsive Budgeting reports. This has strengthened evidence-based planning and the resourcing of our Gender Action Plan,"* said Winnet Tambara, Murewa RDC Gender Focal Person.

The reforms have translated into tangible results. The council increased funding for gender-specific programmes from 2% (USD293,000) in 2024 to 4% (USD677,000) in 2025, financing gender capacity-building, Junior Council initiatives and the commemoration of key international gender advocacy days. Inclusive budget consultations also resulted in greater participation by persons with disabilities, prompting the council to exempt rental payments for people with disabilities. *"When communities participate meaningfully in budgeting, they help shape decisions that respond to their realities. We have seen more people with disabilities engaging in consultations, and their voices have influenced council policy,"* Tambara noted.

By embedding gender into planning, budgeting and policy implementation, Murewa RDC has institutionalised gender equality as a governance principle rather than a stand-alone project. Its sustained political commitment, innovative systems and willingness to share good practices continue to position the council as a model for other local authorities. *"Gender responsiveness is no longer an add-on; it is now part of how we plan, budget and deliver services,"* Tambara concluded.



Murewa RDC SDGs awareness campaigns.

Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

Partnerships

KEY FACTS

- The Ministry of Local Government & Public Works institutionalised GRB and LED, directing all 92 local authorities to submit GRB statements and allocate 10% of annual budgets to LED.
- Partnerships with agro-business, waste management, clean energy actors, and the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank enabled financial inclusion, and women and youth empowerment.

Gender Links Zimbabwe's progress on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Local Economic Development (LED) has been anchored in strategic partnerships across government, local authorities, the private sector and financial institutions. The Ministry of Local Government and Public Works has been pivotal, issuing directives that institutionalised GRB and LED and requiring all 92 local authorities to submit GRB statements and allocate 10% of annual budgets towards LED initiatives, which created the policy environment for scale. The Office of the President and Cabinet and the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small, Medium and Enterprise Development have provided high level policy alignment and advocacy channels that amplify GRB and LED priorities nationally. Local authorities themselves, especially hub councils such as Mutare City Council, Bulawayo City Council, Umguza Rural District Council, Murewa Rural District Council and Zibagwe Rural District Council have operationalised GRB through budget allocations, junior council support and peer learning, demonstrating local ownership.

Partnerships with the private sector (notably agro business, waste management and clean energy actors) and the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank have linked GRB to local economic development, procurement opportunities and financial inclusion for women and youth, creating pathways for sustainable economic empowerment.

These partnerships have delivered three critical benefits: policy leverage, resource mobilisation and sustainability. Government directives created the enabling environment; local authorities' financial commitments signalled ownership and ensured continuity; and private sector linkages opened market and value chain opportunities for women and youth. The Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank and private sector actors have been especially important in translating budget commitments into tangible economic opportunities for women led enterprises. The lesson is clear: partnerships multiply impact. They convert policy into practice, strengthen local ownership, and anchor programmes in institutional systems that outlast project cycles.

Key lessons & reflections

- Value of partnerships: Multi sector partnerships (government, local authorities, CSOs, media, private sector, finance) are essential to scale programmes from policy to practice.
- Local ownership enhances sustainability: When local authorities allocate budgets and staff time to gendered programming, the programmes persist beyond donor cycles.
- Media and documentation matter: Trained journalists and documented case studies amplify accountability and replication.

Local Action for Gender Justice



Zimbabwe implemented the Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development (LED) and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) programmes. The impact of these two flag-

ship programmes is far-reaching. Key to these interventions was their strengthening of ownership and sustainability as well as showing the strength and value of partnerships.

Driver of Change



Gender Responsive Budgeting

KEY FACTS

- All 92 local authorities submitted Gender Responsive Budgeting statements for the 2026 annual budgets.
- Budget consultations: rose from 84,785 (2024) to 219,000 (2026), with strong participation from women and youth.
- Over 1,000 officials and stakeholders reached cumulatively; 277 councillors and officials (217 female) engaged in 15 GRB hub meetings in 2025.

This past year Gender Links Zimbabwe (GLZ) consolidated gender responsive public finance and procurement across Zimbabwe's local authorities, moving Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) from policy into practice while catalysing measurable gains in citizen engagement, and institutional capacity.

Between 2024 and 2026, GLZ scaled national impact. The GRB Toolkit and hub-and-spoke capacity building reached **all 92 local authorities**. Citizen budget consultations rose from 84,785 in 2024 to 219,000 in 2026, with notable increases among female adults and youth. Local authority revenues grew from **USD 1,3 million to USD 1,4 million**, driven by internal revenue.

"The council budget enterprise resource management system software was upgraded to produce auto-generated gender reports that feed into the council's gender-responsive budgeting report. The council has also gone on to review critical policies, including the resourcing of gender action plans."

Winnet Tambara

Budget composition shifted toward service delivery: mainstream programmes increased from 59% to 61%, while gender specific programming fluctuated between 4 and 6%, and Gender Management System (GMS) allocations rose from 1% to 3% in 2025. GLZ



Murewa GFP explaining the council budgeting initiatives. Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

strengthened capacity at multiple levels: over 1,000 local authority officials and stakeholders reached cumulatively; 277 councillors and officials (217 female) participated in 15 hub and spoke GRB meetings in 2025. The GRB programme also brought with it procurement training to facilitate access to procurement for marginalized groups, including women, youth and people with disabilities.

The success of these programmes is attributed for by the partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, who have guided the policy with enabling directives and the local authorities as co-implementers. This has engrained sustainability and ownership which will transcend beyond any donor support.

Economic Agency and Climate Change

KEY FACTS

- Ministerial Directive mandated all 92 local authorities to allocate 10% of budgets to LED from 2026.
- Average monthly incomes for entrepreneurs increased by 87% (USD 152 to USD 284).
- 645 entrepreneurs accessed USD 81,931 in affordable credit.
- Women-owned enterprises secured 163 tenders worth USD 7.4 million (633% increase from baseline).

Local Economic Development

The Promoting Gender-Inclusive Local Economic Development Programme delivered transformative results across Zimbabwe's local authorities, embedding gender equality into local governance and livelihoods. By the end of 2025, twelve Centres of Excellence had developed and costed gender-responsive LED action plans, catalysing a landmark Ministerial Directive mandating all 92 local authorities to allocate at least 10% of their budgets to LED from 2026, with quotas for women, youth, and vulnerable groups. This systemic shift unlocked USD 33 million in annual public investment, up from just USD 3 million at baseline, demonstrating a sevenfold increase in resources dedicated to inclusive growth.

The programme directly facilitated 1,094 sustainable livelihoods, while average monthly incomes for entrepreneurs rose by 87% (USD 152 to USD 284), and the proportion of those earning below USD 50 dropped from 31% to 9%. A total of 1,254 new jobs were created, with women holding 66% of these positions, underscoring the programme's success in breaking gender barriers in employment. Access to finance was expanded through strengthened internal savings and lending groups, with membership rising from 35% to 82% and 645 entrepreneurs accessing USD

81,931 in affordable credit. Procurement systems were reshaped, with women-owned enterprises securing 163 tenders worth USD 7.4 million, a 633% increase from baseline.

Twelve local authority-anchored flagship enterprises were established, supported by USD 2.6 million in co-investment, while 56 savings groups and nine multi-stakeholder policy platforms ensured sustainability. Beyond economic gains, the programme enhanced women's confidence, agency, and decision-making power, contributing to reductions in gender-based violence and fostering climate-resilient livelihoods in sectors such as clean energy, horticulture, and waste management. The legacy of this programme is a permanent institutional framework for inclusive LED, proving that when local authorities are mandated, capacitated, and held accountable, they become powerful engines for poverty reduction, gender equality, and sustainable local development.

"For me, it's not just about the numbers. It's about the impact we're having on our community. We're creating jobs, generating income, and providing fresh produce to our people. That's what gets me out of bed every morning."

Khayelihle Moyo, Umguza RDC

Voice, Presence and Power



KEY FACTS

- Over 40 stories published by 14 journalists across 12 national, provincial, and online platforms.
- Journalists reached marginalized communities and documented gender best practices.
- Stories carried by Zimbabwe's most influential media houses, significantly expanding GLZ's visibility.

Over the years, Zimbabwe has worked with a dedicated team of journalists to profile the impact of GLZ's work in Zimbabwe through its media Centres of Excellence programme, which has built journalists' capacity for gender-sensitive media reporting. They have been critical in reaching the most marginalized communities and documenting gender best practices. As of 2025, over 40 stories have been published by 14 journalists across 12 national, provincial and online media platforms.

The media outputs generated under the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Local Economic Development (LED) initiatives demonstrate a strong communications and advocacy impact for Gender Links Zimbabwe (GLZ). The breadth of coverage highlights GLZ's success in translating programme interventions into compelling public narratives that elevate gender-responsive governance and women's economic empowerment within national discourse. The stories were carried by some of Zimbabwe's most influential media houses, significantly expanding the visibility of GLZ's work.

The media coverage has provided GLZ with substantial communication value by positioning the organisation as a leading voice on Gender Responsive Budgeting, inclusive local governance and Local Economic Development. Rather than simply reporting

programme activities, the stories demonstrate how gender-responsive approaches have contributed to improved service delivery, increased women's participation in decision-making, strengthened disability inclusion and enhanced economic opportunities at the local level. This has strengthened GLZ's credibility among policymakers, development partners, local authorities and communities, while reinforcing its role as a technical resource on gender-responsive governance. The consistent framing of gender equality as a governance and development issue has also enhanced GLZ's policy influence and advocacy reach. The extensive media engagement has enhanced GLZ's institutional profile, expanded its advocacy reach and positioned the organisation as a credible and influential actor advancing gender-responsive local governance and women's economic justice in Zimbabwe.



Priscilla Maposa at the Beitbridge Village Level Workshop in Zimbabwe, May 2019.
Photo: Patricia-Mahachi

WHO WE REACHED



Results

KEY FACTS

- 57 events convened.
- 5,639 people reached directly (3141 women; 2498 men).
- 612,000 households impacted, covering a population of 2.2 million.

Gender Links Zimbabwe continues to drive inclusive and transformative change across communities through its work in gender-responsive governance, women's economic empowerment and local development.

Through strategic partnerships and community-centred programming, the organisation has reached thousands of individuals directly while creating ripple effects that extend to hundreds of thousands of households across Zimbabwe.

Our Reach in Numbers

57 Events Convened: Gender Links Zimbabwe successfully convened 57 programme events, including hub and spoke meetings, capacity-building workshops, training sessions, awareness-raising activities, knowledge and sharing platforms. These platforms strengthened citizen participation, promoted gender-responsive and local economic governance, facilitated engagement between communities and decision-makers and increased GLZ's visibility.

5,639 people reached directly: A total of 5,639 individuals participated directly in programme activities and interventions, comprising 3,141 women (56%) and 2,498 men (44%). The strong participation of women reflects Gender Links Zimbabwe's commitment to advancing women's leadership and economic empowerment, while the inclusion of men demonstrates the organisation's gender-transformative approach that recognises the importance of engaging all members of society in achieving gender equality.

612,000 households impacted: Programme interventions have generated significant multiplier effects, reaching an estimated 612,000 households (about 2.2 million people) across Zimbabwe. These impacts include improved service delivery, increased community participation in local governance processes, enhanced economic opportunities for women and marginalised groups, and strengthened accountability mechanisms within local authorities.

Our reach demonstrates that our interventions extend well beyond direct beneficiaries. By influencing policies, strengthening institutions and building community capacities, the organisation creates sustainable and far-reaching impacts that improve the lives of women, youth, men and families across the country. Every event, training and dialogue contributes to building more inclusive communities, promoting equitable development, creating new partnerships and advancing gender equality at the local and national levels.



Communications for Social Change

KEY FACTS

- GLZ updated its component of the Gender Links website.
- 187 new followers in 2025/26. Total 1,256 followers.
- 4,129 (avg. 11.31/day) a 45.4% increase in visits from 2024/25.

2025 saw the migration of Gender Links to a new website. Zimbabwe participated in this exciting project by updating its Centres of Excellence web pages as well as integrating new pages on Gender Responsive Budgeting and Local Economic Development. In 2025, Gender Links Zimbabwe implemented a sustained communications and visibility strategy to amplify project results, influence public discourse on gender responsive local economic development, and ensure consistent donor and partner recognition. Communications efforts were anchored on GLZ's digital platforms, Facebook, supported by X, and the Gender Links website, complemented by targeted media engagement and on-site visibility.

The communications strategy prioritised results-based storytelling, linking programme activities to measurable outcomes in gender responsive budgeting, gender responsive local economic development and learning and sharing.

An analysis of the Facebook page revealed that the page recorded 187 new followers during the 2024/25 reporting period compared to 171 new followers in 2025/26, representing a decline of approximately 8.6%. Although follower growth slowed marginally in 2025/26, the page maintained relatively consistent audience acquisition throughout the year. The difference is not substantial and suggests that the page retained its ability to attract new followers despite fluctuations in content performance and engagement patterns. In total GLZ has 1256 Facebook followers.

Facebook Page Visits

Period	Total Visits	Daily Average
1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025	2,840	7.78
1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026	4,129	11.31

Facebook page visits increased substantially from 2,840 in 2024/25 to 4,129 in 2025/26. This represents an increase of approximately 45.4%, indicating that more users were actively visiting the page and seeking information during the second reporting period. The increase in visits despite slightly lower follower growth suggests that existing audiences were engaging more frequently with the page's content. It also indicates improved visibility and potentially more effective dissemination of programme-related information. The increase in page traffic demonstrates growing public interest in Gender Links Zimbabwe's activities and may

reflect stronger content promotion, increased media visibility and successful stakeholder engagement efforts during the 2025/26 period.



Audience Demographics

Gender and Age Profile

The page audience is predominantly composed of adults aged 25-44 years. Women aged 25-34 constitute the largest audience segment (18.5%), followed closely by women aged 35-44 (17.4%) and men aged 35-44 (16.9%). The page was particularly successful in reaching economically active adults who are likely to be involved in governance, entrepreneurship and community development initiatives.

Overall, the 2025/26 reporting period reflects positive growth in audience engagement and digital outreach performance. Although follower growth moderated slightly, the substantial increase in page visits indicates that Gender Links Zimbabwe's Facebook platform

is becoming an increasingly important channel for stakeholder communication, programme visibility and public engagement.



Zimbabwe Women's Indaba.

Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

Promoting Youth Participation in Governance Spaces

Mutare City Council is demonstrating that meaningful youth participation begins with institutional commitment. Recognising the growing challenges facing young people including unemployment, mental health concerns and drug and substance abuse the council has embedded youth participation within its governance systems by adopting a Council resolution that provides dedicated funding for the Junior Council. In 2025, the council allocated USD16,545 to support youth-led governance initiatives, ensuring that young people have a structured platform to influence local decision-making.

Through the Junior Council, young people are actively participating in budget consultations, advocacy campaigns and civic engagement processes. Youth-led visual arts campaigns, centred on *"The Mutare We Want,"* have encouraged dialogue on local development priorities, sexual and reproductive health, and youth inclusion in governance. The council has also supported disability awareness campaigns led by Junior Councillors, promoting inclusive participation and ensuring that the voices of young people with disabilities are represented.

"If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make the change," said Faith Gwizo, Junior Mayor of Mutare, reflecting the leadership and civic responsibility that the programme is nurturing among young people.



Youth campaign in Mutare City Council.
Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

The council's investment extends beyond financial support. By creating formal spaces for youth engagement, Mutare City Council is strengthening accountability between young citizens and local government while cultivating the next generation of civic leaders. The Junior Council has become an important platform for young people to articulate community priorities, influence policy discussions and contribute practical solutions to challenges affecting their communities. Mutare City Council's experience demonstrates that when youth participation is backed by policy, dedicated resources and sustained political commitment, young people become active partners in local governance rather than passive beneficiaries.

LINKING AND LEARNING

KEY FACTS

- 204 participants attending the summit (67% women; 33% men).
- 61 local authorities represented.
- 381 case studies submitted; 189 of whom were showcased in 11 thematic categories.
- 41 awards presented (16 winners; 25 runners up).

The 2025 Zimbabwe SADC Protocol@Work Summit and Awards served as a flagship event for assessing progress in gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and local economic development (LED) across Zimbabwe's 92 local authorities. Convened under the theme *"Taking stock of gender-responsive budgeting and local economic development initiatives in Zimbabwe,"* the summit provided a national platform for policy dialogue, peer learning, and evidence-sharing among 204 participants, 137 women (67%) and 67 men (33%) representing 61 local authorities, civil society, government, and private-sector actors.

Out of 381 entries submitted across 11 thematic categories, 189 case studies were shortlisted and presented, showcasing best practices in gender equality, climate justice, entrepreneurship, and inclusive governance.

The Gender Progress Score for local authorities stood at 65%, consistent with 2024, indicating sustained institutionalization of gender-responsive practices. Local authorities demonstrated measurable progress in integrating gender considerations into planning and budgeting. A total of 41 awards were presented (16 winners and 25 runners-up) across categories including Centres of Excellence, Gender Responsive Budgeting, Climate Justice, Local Economic Development (Flagship Enterprises and Entrepreneurship), Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Gender-Based Violence, Youth Leadership, Drivers of Change, and Media. Judges commended local authorities for improved presentation quality, stronger political commitment, and increased use of sex-disaggregated data. However, they noted

persistent gaps in tracking gender budget allocations, monitoring beneficiaries, and integrating gender codes into financial management systems.

High-level endorsements from the Deputy Minister of Local Government and Public Works, the Permanent Secretary for Presidential Affairs and Devolution, and the Ambassador of Sweden reinforced national and international alignment with Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sweden's development cooperation strategy (2022-2026) was highlighted as a key framework supporting gender equality, inclusive economic growth, and environmental sustainability. The 2025 summit demonstrated measurable progress in gender mainstreaming, institutional capacity building, and local economic empowerment, reaffirming Zimbabwe's commitment to equitable and sustainable development across all local authorities.



Summit winners showing off their accolades.

Photo: Timothy Manyange

SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

Gender Links Zimbabwe has embedded sustainability by combining **policy influence**, **local ownership**, and continuous **capacity building** to make gender responsive budgeting and inclusive governance routine practice. Through strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, local authorities, sector ministries, the Office of the President and Cabinet, the private sector and financial institutions, GLZ secured directives, resources and practical pathways for women's

economic participation. The hub and spoke model, junior councillor programmes and targeted training for councillors, officials and journalists have institutionalised skills and accountability mechanisms, while documentation, summits and M&E systems create learning loops for replication. By aligning policy, finance and community voice, GLZ has shifted GRB from project activity to sustained local practice that endures beyond funding cycles.

Gender Links Future Fund

2025 saw the office moving to a new permanent home, thanks to the support of the Gender Links Zimbabwe board who were influential in lobbying the Gender Links Future Fund to extend resources for the purchase of a house for the Zimbabwe Office. This truly marked a great and memorable achieve-

ment, creating opportunities for further growth, opportunities, and expansion all under one roof. The future is bright for the Zimbabwe office as we navigate the development sector with a new home, hope and positivity. We will strive to scale, deepen and accelerate our operational and programmatic vision.



Gender Links Zimbabwe House.

Photos: Tapiwa Zvaraya

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

KEY FACTS

- Gender Links Zimbabwe board fully registered. 7-member board (86% of whom are female and 14% male).
- Validated the GLZ Country Strategy (2026-2030).
- Successfully registered as a Private Voluntary Organization (PVO).
- Oversaw GLZ's first independent institutional audit.
- Established three committees: Audit & Risk; Organizational Development; and Programmes, Innovation & Fundraising.

Throughout the reporting period, the Gender Links Zimbabwe Board provided decisive governance, oversight and strategic guidance that strengthened the office's institutional effectiveness. The Board's role combined programme stewardship, compliance oversight, fiduciary scrutiny and strategic direction, which reinforced GLZ's ability to deliver and sustain its core interventions.

The Board actively reviewed and supported the office's programmes. The Board validated the GLZ Country Strategy (2026-2030), advised on programme handover and sustainability measures, strengthening programme continuity and local ownership. The Board played a central role in navigating statutory compliance and institutional registration. By November 2025, the office was successfully registered as a Private Voluntary Organization, a milestone the Board helped secure. The Board also oversaw the office's first independent institutional audit, reinforcing financial discipline and transparency. Members were also organized into committees, with 3 emerging committees formed i.e. Audit & Risk, Organizational Development and Programmes, Innovation and Fundraising.

Board members contributed expertise to regional board and committee meetings, ensuring Zimbabwe's lessons informed regional policy and practice. The Board's active engagement with regional governance (Memorandum of Agreement finalisation, and policy updates) strengthened alignment between country and regional priorities and amplified GLZ's influence across the organization.

The Zimbabwe Board's governance interventions strategic, financial, legal and programmatic were instrumental in consolidating GLZ's institutional foundations, improving compliance, and positioning the office for sustained, locally owned impact.



Gender Links Zimbabwe Board.

Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

Human Resources

The Zimbabwe Office was comprised of a vibrant team that blended strategic influencers, institutional memory, experience and new blood. At its peak, the office had 9 staff (5 permanent staff and 4 individuals on service level agreements). These 9 individuals made the office tick, capably led by the Director, resulting in the achievement of the results. The success of the office culminated in the recognition of staff at the Gender Links awards ceremony. Individual staff members were awarded for their

resilience, problem-solving, team-player approach, visibility, storytelling, ethics, and integrity. The Zimbabwe team is the true definition of “teamwork making the dream work”. All this work would not have been possible without the strategic guidance of the Zimbabwe Board, led by the Board Chairperson, Josephine Ncube. This period also saw the office being formally registered as a Private Voluntary Organization in accordance with Zimbabwean law. This team is the reason this office keeps soaring to greater heights.

Sound Financial Management

KEY FACTS

- Ensured full compliance with agreements from Diakonia and the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, enabling smooth resource flows and seamless transparency.
- Under the direction of the Country Director and Head Office, the Finance team successfully led Zimbabwe's first institutional audit, strengthening financial governance and credibility.
- Leveraged Online Evo and Sage Pastel systems to enhance financial planning, forecasting, and human resource planning. These tools enabled strategic, data-driven financial decision-making.

The Gender Links Zimbabwe Finance team played a pivotal role in advancing the organisation's strategic objectives through sound financial management, strong governance, and effective donor compliance. Their work reinforced accountability, compliance, safeguarded the organisation's reputation, and strengthened stakeholder confidence.

The finance team ensured compliance with the country's donors, including Diakonia and the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe. This

ensured a smooth flow of resources, allowing for seamless accountability and transparency.

Under the direction of the Country Director and Head Office, the Finance team successfully led donor and Zimbabwe's first institutional audit, reinforcing good financial governance. This success is complemented by the systems in place, including the Online Evo and Sage Pastel, which assisted in financial planning, forecasting and human resource planning. These made it possible for financial decisions to be made from a strategic position.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Directors' Responsibility and Approval of the Financial Statements

It is the Director's responsibility to ensure that the Financial Statements fairly presents the state of affairs of the organization. The external auditors are responsible for independently reviewing and reporting on the Financial Statements.

The Financial Statements set out in this report have been prepared by management in accordance with Gender Links Zimbabwe's entity specific standard. They are based on appropriate accounting policies which are supported by reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates.

The organization's internal controls and systems are designed to provide reasonable assurance as to the integrity and reliability of the financial statements and to adequately safeguard, verify and maintain accountability of its assets. Such controls are based on established written policies and procedures which are monitored through the organization and all employees are required to maintain the highest ethical standards in ensuring that the organization's business practices are conducted in a manner which in all reasonable circumstances is above reproach.

Issues that came to the attention of management have been addressed and the management is satisfied that the function of these controls, systems, procedures is satisfactory.

The organization's external auditors, Baker Tilly Chartered Accountants (Zimbabwe), have audited the Financial Statements and their reports appears on pages 4 to 6.

The organization's Financial Statements which are set out on pages 7 to 14 were, in accordance with its responsibilities, approved by the Board of Directors on 14-07-2026 and were signed on its behalf by:

.....
Josephine Ncube
Board Chairperson

.....
Priscilla Maposa
Director



Chartered Accountants
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Avondale
Harare
Zimbabwe
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Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Directors of Gender Links Zimbabwe

Opinion

We have audited the Financial Statements of Gender Links Zimbabwe, for the period ended 31 March 2026, as set out on pages 7 to 14 which comprises the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Income and Expenditure, Statement of Changes in Funds, Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the Financial Statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying Financial Statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of Gender Links Zimbabwe for period ended 31 March 2026.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (Parts A and B) (IESBA Code) and other independence requirements applicable to performing audits of Financial Statements in Zimbabwe. We have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the IESBA Code and in accordance with other ethical requirements applicable to performing audits in Zimbabwe. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter

a) Basis of Accounting and Restriction of Use

We draw attention to note 1 to the Financial Statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The Financial Statements are prepared in accordance with the organisation's own accounting policies to satisfy the financial information needs of the organisation's donor. As a result, the Financial Statements may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

b) Grants and Donations

In common with the audit of similar organizations, verification of all sums receivable is not possible in respect of donations and sponsorships. Our examination of income from these sources has been confined to testing recorded receipts.

Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Statements

The Directors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these Financial Statements in accordance with the organisation's basis of accounting and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the Financial Statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the Financial Statements, management is responsible for assessing the organisation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organisation or cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

The objectives of our audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Financial Statements are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's statements that include our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these Financial Statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the planning and performance of the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the Financial Statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of

- accounting estimates and related disclosures made by Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on Gender Links Zimbabwe, Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development in Zimbabwe Project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)'s ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the Financial Statements or, if such disclosure is inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report.
 - Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the Financial Statements, including the disclosures, and whether the Financial Statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicated with the Directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

..... Baker Tilly

Partner: Kudzai Chikwanda
PAAB Practising Number: 0656
Baker Tilly Chartered Accountants (Zimbabwe)
15 Connaught Road, Harare

Date 14/07/2026

GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2026

	Notes	2026 US\$	2025 US\$
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant, and equipment	2	384,616	-
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	213,709	931,055
Total assets		598,325	931,055
RESERVES AND LIABILITIES			
RESERVES			
Accumulated deficit	Page 9	(14 845)	(1 887)
LIABILITIES			
Long-term liabilities			
Intercompany Loan	5	382,375	-
Short-term liabilities			
Trade payables	6	17,242	12,828
Deferred income	7	213,553	920,115
Total Reserves and Liabilities		598,325	931,055



 Josephine Ncube
 Board Chairperson



 Priscilla Maposa
 Director

GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Statement of Income and Expenditure as at 31 March 2026

		2026	2025
		US\$	US\$
INCOME			
Grant income	8	1,888,520	1,156,692
Other operating gains	9	-	33,050
		1,888,520	1,189,742
EXPENDITURE			
Operating expenses	10	1,901,477	1,166,126
Total Expenditure		1,901,477	1,166,126
(Deficit)/surplus for the year		(12 957)	23 616

GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Statement of Changes in Reserves as at 31 March 2026

	Accumulated Fund
Balance at 01 April 2024	(25 503)
Deficit for the period	23 616
Balance at 01 April 2025	(1 887)
Surplus for the year	(12 957)
Balance at 31 March 2026	(14 844)

GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Statement of Cashflows as at 31 March 2026

		2026	2025
		US\$	US\$
Cashflows from operating activities	Note		
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(12,957)	23,616
Changes in working capital			
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		-	89,886
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables		4,414	(122,986)
Increase/(decrease) in deferred income		(706,562)	882,767
Net cash from operating activities		(715,105)	873,283
Cashflow from investing activities			
Acquisition of property, plant and equipment		(384,616)	-
Net cash flow from investing activities		(384,616)	-
Cashflow from financin activities activities			
Loan from Gender Links-HQ		382,375	-
Net cash flow from investing activities		382,375	-
Total cash movement for the year		(717,346)	873,283
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		931,055	57,772
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	3	213,709	931,055

GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Notes to the financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2026

2 Property, Plant and Equipment

	Land and Buildings	
	USD	USD
Cost/Valuation		
At 1 April 2025	-	-
Additions	384 616	384 616
At 31 March 2026	384 616	384 616
Accumulated Depreciation		
At 1 April 2024	-	-
Depreciation for the year	-	-
At 31 March 2025	-	-
At 1 April 2025	-	-
Depreciation for the year	-	-
At 31 March 2026	-	-
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2025	-	-
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2026	384 616	384 616

GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Notes to the financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2026

	2026 US\$	2025 US\$
3 Cash and cash equivalents		
Bank	213,709	931,055
Cash	-	-
	213,709	931,055
4 Trade and other receivables		
Other receivables	-	-
	-	-
5 Intercompany-long term loan		
	382,375	-
GLZ received an intercompany loan in 2025 from Gender Links-HQ towards the purchase of the Milton Park property. The loan is interest free and is payable in 10 years.		
6 Trade payables		
Trade payables - various	11,943	1,480
Other payables - Intercompany with Gender Links S.A	5,299	11,348
	17,242	12,828
7 Deferred income		
Diakonia	28,608	50,019
European Union - Hivos	-	32,262
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Zimbabwe	184,945	837,834
	213,553	920,115
8 Grant income		
Sida	1,685,429	981,619
Diakonia	152,845	119,696
EU HIVOS	50,246	55,377
	1,888,520	1,156,692
9 Other operating income/gains		
Consultancy revenue - AFWID	-	1,560
Foreign exchange gains	-	31,490
	-	33,050
10 Operating expenses		
HR costs	291,460	257,844
Administration and operating costs	133,943	76,890
Capital expenditure	-	1,348
Sida programme costs-Local Economic Development project	1,349,012	721,600
Diakonia programme costs-Promoting Gender – Responsive Budgeting In Zimbabwe – Enhancing Citizen Participation In Local Government In Zimbabwe	89,647	68,215
EU HIVOS programme costs-Women and Youth Leadership and Participator	37,415	40,229
	1,901,477	1,166,126

We are a Southern African non-governmental leading women's rights organisation, dedicated to advancing gender equality and justice.

Everything we do is committed to empowering women and girls, advocating for meaningful policy change in their favour, and challenging harmful gender norms throughout the region. Gender Links continues to break new ground in the fight for gender equality.





Through **GL Advisory Services**, GL partners with organisations to integrate gender equality into policies and programmes, which include:

- Gender analysis and research
- Policy and strategy development
- Gender mainstreaming and training
- Strategic communications and impact measurement.



The **Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance** is a regional “network of net-works” that championed the adoption of the SADC Protocol on Development in 2008.



The **Grants and Fellowship Unit** mobilises and manages donor funding that often bypasses grass-roots organisations and providing fellowships and internships to young women into spaces that they would not ordinarily have access to.



The **GL Academy** is a vibrant hub equipping activists, leaders, and partners across the Global South with **accredited, practice-driven courses** that strengthen leadership, advocacy, and sustainability skills, foster peer learning and cross-regional solidarity.

#PushForward4Equality