

Zimbabwe

#VoiceandChoice

@Work in a rural community



Murehwa, Zimbabwe 28 January: "I am free." This is how Varaidzo Chitima sums up what has changed in her life since moving to Murehwa Rural District Council, a "dura" (Shona for "granary") or hub for the Centres of Excellence (COE) for Gender in Local Government in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland East Province.

Immaculate in an African print dress, Chitima recounts to a team of Gender Links (GL) country managers on a study visit from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) a life punctuated by the horrors of, incest, verbal and physical abuse. Yet hers is a story of reclaiming agency; of hope and renewal through a programme rooted in systemic, holistic change to bring #VoiceandChoice to women in rural areas.

A victim of teenage pregnancy, she moved from her home area of Murehwa in the North

East of Zimbabwe, 86 km from Harare, to her husband's home in the Manicaland province where she had three children. In 2009 when she travelled to a funeral, she came back to the devastating news that her husband had been sexually abusing her older daughter. She decided to report the case to the police. They took no action but this led to her husband physically abusing her and ostracising her. Later her brother-in-law started abusing the same daughter, who fell pregnant and gave birth to a child later adopted by Social Welfare and put in a children's home.

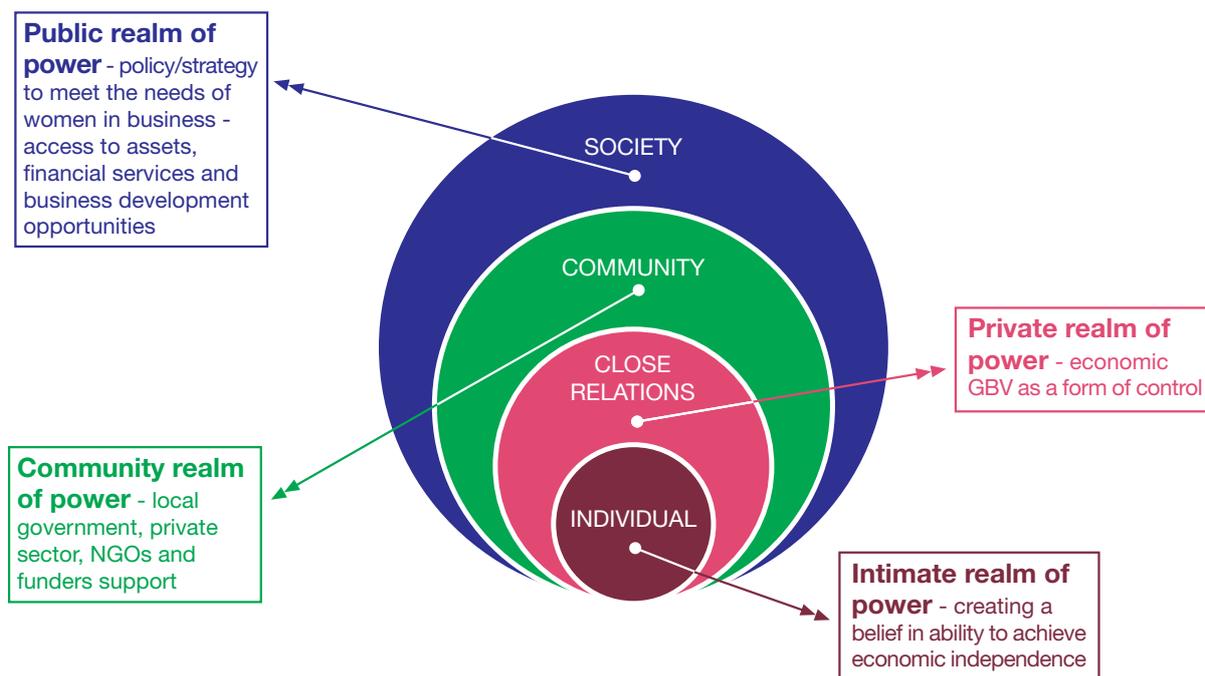
Chitima moved back to Murehwa, her home, with her three children a few years ago. She made sure that her abused daughter got counselling and completed her "O" level high school. Chitima enrolled in the Sunrise Campaign, a unique programme that provides entrepreneurship training to survivors

of gender violence through a combination of business and life skills.

Chitima used her travel money as capital to start a fish business. "I have gained confidence and my business is growing," she told the study visit team. "I have applied for market space from the council. I can now use a computer and I have my own E Mail address. I now also have a bank account. I use my cellphone for business transactions. I have gained confidence and my business is growing. From a nobody who was always abused, I am now an emerging entrepreneur!"

GL's Theory of change for economic justice and ending GBV

Murehwa is an example of work by GL with 450 local authorities in ten SADC countries¹ to bring about systemic change to the lives of women through gender responsive local governance. The COE programme includes local action to end gender violence as well as promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).



GL's Theory of Change (ToC) recognises that reinforced in formal and informal ways, gender inequality begins in the home; is perpetuated by the family; schools; work place; community, custom, culture, religion and tradition as well as structures within society more broadly - the media, new media, popular culture, advertising, laws, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and others. While society generally identifies other forms of inequality, gender inequality is so normalised that it often goes unnoticed, including by women who have been socialised to accept their inferior status. Gender inequality follows the life cycle of most women from cradle to grave. Despite changes in laws and Constitutions, many women remain

minors all their lives - under their fathers, husbands, even sons, and as widows subject to male relatives.

GL's ToC posits that while individual, family, community and societal factors often become a vicious negative cycle that militates against change each one of these layers can be reversed into a virtuous positive cycle that results in change. At the policy level, GL led the campaign by Southern African Women's Rights Organisations (the "Alliance") for a SADC Protocol on Gender and Development adopted in 2008 and updated in 2016 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This unique instrument brings together

¹ Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

African and global commitments to gender equality in one legally binding sub-regional Protocol that GL has cascaded to the local level through local action plans. The Centres of Excellence (COEs) cover 40% of the population in the ten countries in which the programme operates. Following official endorsement of the programme by the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, the COEs now cover all 92 councils in Zimbabwe. Through the COEs, GL is able to reach community, household and individual levels to change gender power relations.

The Centres of Excellence (COE) model

The COE model involves a ten stage process including political buy-in; conducting a situational analysis; capacity building linked to the development of an action plan; development of flagship programmes and campaigns; monitoring and evaluation and sharing of good practices at annual SADC Protocol@Work summits. Each year, councils conduct a self-assessment using the Gender and Local Government Score Card. This is verified by independent assessors during the summits. Councils are issued colour coded certificates

depending on their score (from blue, to green, to bronze, to silver, to gold, to platinum) during a public ceremony at the summit as an incentive to keep improving their performance on gender mainstreaming.

Zimbabwe is piloting a second phase to the COE programme - the *Dura/Isiphala* (granary in Shona and isiNdebele) or “hub and spoke” model. This involves one urban and one rural council in each of the ten provinces taking on mentorship of surrounding councils. The hubs convene quarterly meetings to review gender action plans; arrange study visits and peer reviews ahead of summits; and promote youth and citizen engagement.

Murehwa Rural District Council joined The Centres of Excellence (COE) programme in 2014 with a score of 40%. The council conducted a study visit to neighbouring Zvimba Rural District Council, one of the best performing councils in the COE programme. Six years later, Murehwa's Gender and Local Government score stands at 87%. Adorning the Council Chamber are a variety of awards that Murehwa has won during SADC Protocol@ Work summits. From that time the programme “has brought positive change to the operations of council” says Winnet Tambara the Gender Focal Person. She summarises these changes as follows:

Before COE	After COE
Council Policies were not Gender sensitive	Gender sensitive policies in place
There was no Gender Policy in place	Gender Policy in place
There was no Gender Management structures	Establishment of gender management structures
No Gender specific programmes	Gender specific budgeting (Most resourceful council award 2018 summit)
No sex disaggregation of data - poor decision making	Sex disaggregated data for decision making
Council Chair and vice were both males	Council chair now male, Vice Chair is female
Engagement meetings were only done once during budget consultations and were done at Traditional Ward level.	Citizen engagement meetings now done at Ward level (all 30 wards) and a platform to meet special groups was created
Did not take seriously the issue of SDGs and SADC protocol targets	Planning, policies and resolutions must address the SDGs and the post 2015 SADC protocol on Gender and development

Source: Murehwa RDC.

Gender aware leadership

At the heart of these changes is leadership from the front. In addition to a vibrant gender focal person, the Council has two gender champions.



Resta Dzviyangoma is the first woman Vice Chair of the Council; a vocal proponent of the COE model and of the Fifty/Fifty campaign. Overall, Zimbabwe only has 14%

women in local government. In Murehwa, 4 out of 30 (13%) of the councillors are women. But Dzviyangoma presents herself as a shining example of what investment in woman leadership can do. She recalls how shy she was when she came into politics; how she has since participated in COE training; stood against male councillors and won in her constituency based on merit and a record of delivery. She has competed in leadership categories in summits and spoken at international gatherings in at least ten countries as a result of the COE programme.

Dzviyangoma is the Vice Chairperson of the Women in Local Government Forum (WiLGF) national executive committee that is taking up a campaign for a constitutional amendment to ensure that the 2013 Zimbabwe Constitution includes women in local government under the hashtag #letsgo5050localgovt. "We cannot make a difference unless we are at the seat of power," says Dzviyangoma. "I have seen the difference that it makes in Murehwa. Now we must campaign for women in local government to be in decision-making across the whole nation." She is also a mentor to participants in the Sunrise Campaign.



The other gender champion is Murehwa Chief Executive Officer (CEO), **Alois Gurajena**. He told GL Country Managers that "Gender Links has not only brought positive changes

at policy level but it has also brought positive changes to me as an individual. I am not ashamed to call myself a driver of change because the programme has made me one.

My attitude towards gender issues has greatly changed and I now listen carefully to issues raised by women and grant them the opportunity to lead. I learnt that women are key in development and they must be accorded the opportunity to lead in governance issues. I also learnt that men's involvement is key in women empowerment projects. The changes that took place in my life impacted positively on the way our institution operates."

He noted that council has participated in various GL initiatives like the Sunrise Campaign, "which has transformed the lives of gender-based violence survivors and has produced emerging entrepreneurs. We are also a participant in the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights programme and have adopted a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights action plan together with the junior council."

Embracing the #Voice andChoice Campaign



The Sunrise Campaign is a prime example of the #VoiceandChoice campaign. A unique partnership between GL, COE hubs and survivors of GBV, the programme arises from research showing that the majority of survivors of GBV remain in abusive relationships because they lack economic choices. In the first phase, GL ran the programme directly. Now, GL provides training materials, monitoring and

evaluation tools and training for Gender Focal Persons in councils. The councils provide venues, trainers, access to local finance, joint ventures, advice on council procurement, mentorship, markets and support.

In Murehwa, building on to the entrepreneurship programme that was initiated by Gender Links, the gender committee has commissioned various empowerment projects and programmes. Notably council has a revolving

fund for women. This fund is intended to empower women with entrepreneurial skills. Through this fund the local authority has assisted 11 women's groups. In addition the council has set-up ward based gender committees so as to gather and discuss gender issues at ward level in all 30 wards in the council. These are incorporated into the gender committee. The gender committee has a budget for most activities including the entrepreneurship programme.

Table Two: Key results of the Sunrise Campaign in Zimbabwe

Indicator	Overall (150 women)	Murehwa RDC (15 women)
Started the business because of the project	52%	65%
Average monthly income before the project (currency)	\$178	\$159
Average monthly income after the project (currency)	\$385	\$326
Increase or decrease in average monthly income	116%	105%
Gender Progress Score of participants at start	55%	53%
Gender Progress Score of participants after	60%	61%
Increase or decrease in Gender Progress Score	5%	8%
Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) at baseline	45%	40%
GEI at endline	65%	63%
Increase or decrease in GEI	20%	23%

Source: GL Monitoring and Evaluation.

Thirty women in Murehwa (150 in the whole country), including Chitima, participated in the second phase of the Sunrise Campaign. Table two summarises key outcomes. In Murehwa, average monthly income rose by 105% from \$159 to \$326 per month, compared to 116% in the programme overall. In Murehwa, the Gender Progress Score, measuring gender attitudes, rose by 8%, compared to 5% overall. The Gender Empowerment Index (GEI), a composite indicator measuring increase in income, agency and entrepreneurial flair and decrease in the experience of GBV. In the Murehwa this rose by 23%, compared to 20% in the programme overall.

Like the other ten hubs that are piloting running the Sunrise Campaign, Murehwa has broadened its women's rights programming to include the #VoiceandChoice campaign more

broadly. Led by the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance, this campaign includes menstrual health; maternal health; Comprehensive Sexual Health; teenage pregnancy; Early Child Marriage; GBV; HIV and AIDS; and Sexual Diversity. In addition to GBV, Murehwa is focusing on two components: menstrual health and Early Child Marriages. As a result of the COE programme, the council has set up a parallel junior council.

The junior councillors shadow the council and offer policy advice from a youth perspective. Junior councillors have started a campaign for free pads in schools. They have conducted a rapid assessment of Adolescent SRHR services from a youth perspective that will be shared with the council. They are also spearheading the campaign for ending Child Marriages. During the study visit, the junior councillors

performed a play featuring a mother forcing her child into an early marriage for economic reasons. A male junior councillor pleads with the mother to allow her daughter to finish school. He wins her over through arguments and persuasion that her daughter can be a far greater asset, and live a more fulfilled life with an education. The council has now enlisted the support of Chief Mangwende, the local chief, to lead the campaign against child marriages.

Partnerships for progress

As part of the COE programme, Murehwa RDC also provided free land to the Rozaria Memorial Trust that empowers the girl child through various programmes and leading advocacy around ending child marriages. Rozario Trust honours the late mother of Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, a globally renowned Zimbabwean gender activist and African Union (AU) Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriages. The Trust in deep rural Murehwa includes a place of safety, a “*nhanga*” or hut for young women to seek peer advice, a computer and general training centre.

Lessons learned

Key lessons learned from the study visit include:

- **Political will and commitment:** Despite the many political challenges and change of personnel in Zimbabwe, the COE programme has progressed for over a decade to become the “programme of choice” for gender mainstreaming. Political support from the parent ministry has been a key success factor. Individual “Drivers of Change” have sustained the momentum on the ground.
- **Local ownership:** The “hub and spoke” model is a key sustainability strategy that is bearing fruit. Its emphasis on peer learning and sharing (each one teach one, each one reach one) is teaching GL to learn to let go; trust partners; pass on ownership and manage from behind.
- **Smart partnerships:** The case study demonstrates the power of smart partnerships

between GL and local authorities; between local authorities themselves, as well as other CBOs such as the Rozario Trust.

- **Value for money:** GL's role is now catalytic: ideas; standard setting and quality assurance with the bulk of costs shouldered by the council and its neighbours. The Sunrise Campaign is an example of multiplier effects, with modest investments in human capital resulting in significant increases in income. Some results, e.g. reduction in GBV, are difficult to quantify in numbers, but are key success factors.
- **Holistic approaches:** This programme is an integrated approach to women's rights. #Voiceandchoice on the ground ranges from women's political participation to bodily integrity, freedom from GBV to economic inclusion.
- **Involving youth:** Involving youth in a structured way, through the junior councils, brings their voice into local governance especially on SRHR. This is also a promising model for training young women leaders.
- **Systemic change:** The programme moves from palliative solutions such as places of safety to systemic change, such as financial independence, providing women the means with which to exercise #Voiceandchoice.
- **Changing lives:** As demonstrated in Chitima's testimonial, the programme is delivering real change in the lives of women. Chitima moved back to her home area, Murehwa to find the freedom that she had been denied most of her adult life. There can be no greater affirmation of the COE hub and spoke programme that it is here she has finally found that freedom.

