

# Empowering Women - Ending Violence in Zimbabwe



Monica Mhoshiwa,  
GBV Survivor, Gweru  
City Council.  
*Credit: Gender Links*

GL I now believe in myself and I am not scared to take risks. I now have a nose for opportunities surrounding

For 13 years **Monica Mhoshiwa** suffered abuse in her marriage but could not speak out about it until 2010. That did not solve her problem because her husband became more violent. She lost her job and went to the Musasa Project that offers counselling and shelter to survivors of gender violence for help. Musasa Project introduced Mhoshiwa to Gender Links (GL) for the entrepreneurship programme. "Because of

me. I was taught about Gender Based Violence (GBV) and entrepreneurship as a way of empowering me as a survivor of abuse. I am living testimony to the fact that the programme was very useful as it brought positive change in my life. Many aspects of my life changed for the better and I began to look at myself in a positive manner. The feeling of rejection disappeared and for the first time in my life I felt that I was good on my own. The lessons about setting up a business were an eye opener for me and everything made sense to me. I did not need a man to have the kind of life that I desire." Mhoshiwa has started and grown a business. She has since opened an informal trader account with a local bank. She now believes in herself and is not afraid to take risks.

## KEY FACTS

- 145 survivors of GBV in ten councils in Zimbabwe trained as entrepreneurs.
- 92% grew their businesses in some way; 86% added new products, 79% found new markets and 67% opened a bank account.
- 98% completed a business plan and 96% followed through on the plan.
- Average income per month among participants in Zimbabwe rose from US\$51 at the beginning of the project to US\$144. Overall income for year increased by \$254,510 as a result of the project.
- 91% of participants said they now experience less or much less GBV, whilst 3% still experienced the same

levels of GBV; 6% of the beneficiaries experienced more or much more GBV. Overall, the relationship control index that measures power within intimate relationships increased by two percentage points to 54%.

- Gender attitudes as measured by the Gender Progress Score (GPS) in the communities increased by three percentage points from 59% to 62%. At 70% the participants scored a GPS of eight percentage points higher than their communities.
- Councils provided US\$3430 in in-kind support to the project.
- Participants gave the councils an overall rating of 76%.

*Gender Links (GL) is a Southern African NGO committed to an inclusive, equal and just society in the public and private space in accordance with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development that is being updated in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, Beijing Plus Twenty and Africa Agenda 2063. GL coordinates the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance and works to achieve the 2030 targets of the Protocol in its core media, governance and justice programmes.*

## Why this project?

Since its founding in 2001 GL has worked with over 2000 women in documenting their experiences of Gender based Violence (GBV). GL Zimbabwe conducted a GBV prevalence surveys in all the 10 provinces of the country where it emerged that 69% of the women have experienced gender violence.

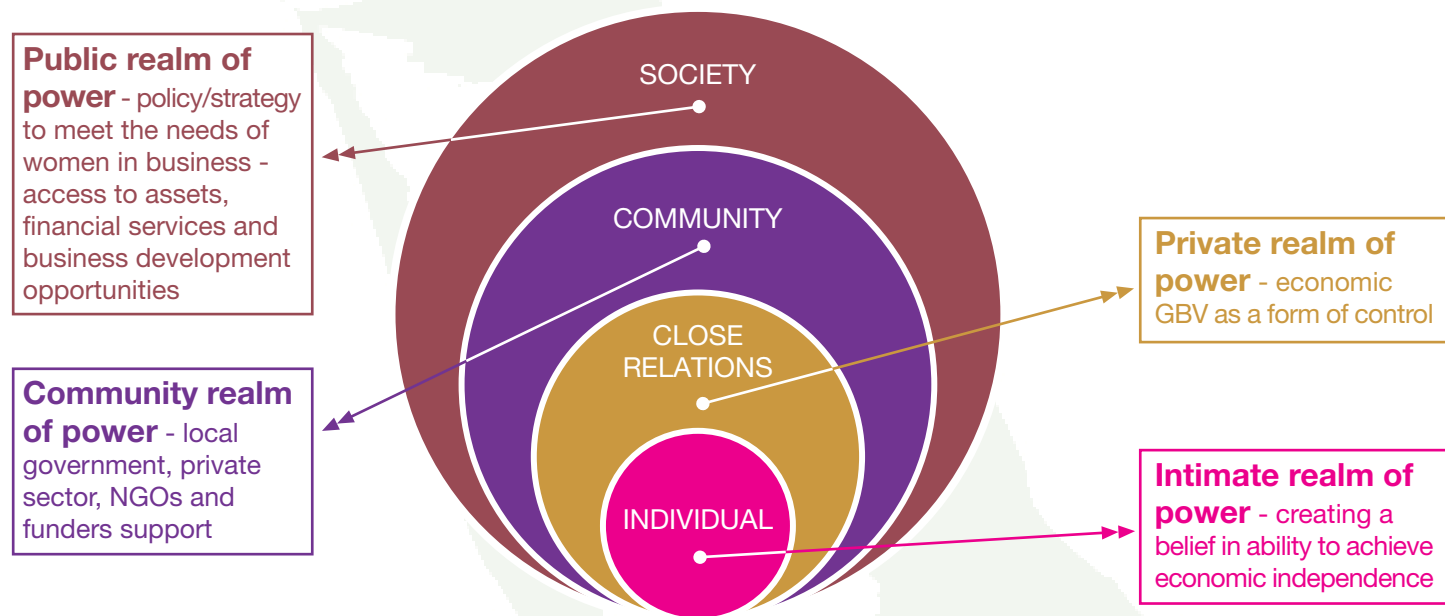
The most likely forms of violence are also those least likely to be reported to the police - economic, psychological and verbal abuse. Many women spoke about staying in or returning to abusive relationships because they lacked

"My business is prosperous and I am now able to provide for the family. I no longer rely on my husband because depending on him was the source of the abuse that I suffered in his hands. I spent most of the time doing my business and I am no longer able to dwell much on my husband's abusive behaviour. The fear that he instilled in me is no longer there and I am now an independent woman."  
Rejoice M, Gweru Zimbabwe

economic independence or experienced financial control as a form of abuse. GL set out to test the links between economic empowerment and ending GBV.

## What the project involved

The programme focusses on an integrated approach of life skills and entrepreneurship training including confidence building; decision making, business management, use of IT, networking and addressing the underlying structural inequalities between men and men. Informed by the ecological theory of change, the project aims at addressing power relations at an individual, personal relationship, community and societal levels.



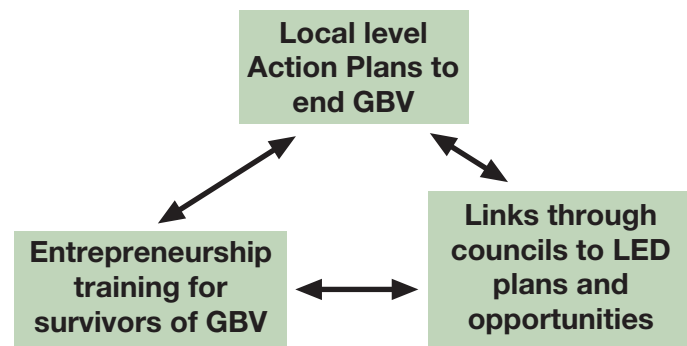
Key partners in the project included the Ministry of Local Government Public Works and National Housing (MLGPWNH); Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender & Community Development (MWAGCD) as well as Musasa Project. The main beneficiaries of the programme were identified from 10 of the 58 councils that form part of the Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government in Zimbabwe. These are; Bulawayo City Council, Chegutu Municipality, Chiredzi Town Council, Chitungwiza Municipality, Goromonzi RDC, Gweru City Council, Kadoma City Council, Manyame RDC, Victoria Falls Municipality and Zvimba RDC. The councils helped to identify participants,

improve access to markets, infrastructure, finance, mentorship and support. Altogether councils provided US\$3430 in support of the COE programme across the ten councils in cash and in kind.

## Key results

Some important outcomes are demonstrated in the personal accounts of participants through "I" stories and interviews:

One of the key aims was achieved increases in **income**: "The day I met GL in 2013 marked the genesis of a violence free life. They trained me to become a successful business woman and be able to compete in a world dominated by man. The skills I attained helped me to stop relying on my husband...GL trained me to be self-sufficient and I no longer beg anyone for money. I am now able to save and come up with a detailed budget so as to properly manage my income and expenditure. After GL helped me to come up with a business proposal I borrowed US \$100 from my children. I converted it into South African rand and I bought baby track suits at R60 (about \$5) each. To realise profit I sold them through barter trade. One track suit was



equivalent to 100 kilograms of maize grain with a market price of US \$15. I opened an Ecocash account to ensure that my money was safe and secure. I successfully did all this through the knowledge I obtained during GL's entrepreneurship programme. After working so hard I managed to save enough money and bought a brick-making machine. I leased out the machine and it is currently supplementing my income. I am working hard to acquire a commercial stand so that I will set up a brick moulding business."

Chipo Makoni from Chitungwiza Municipality

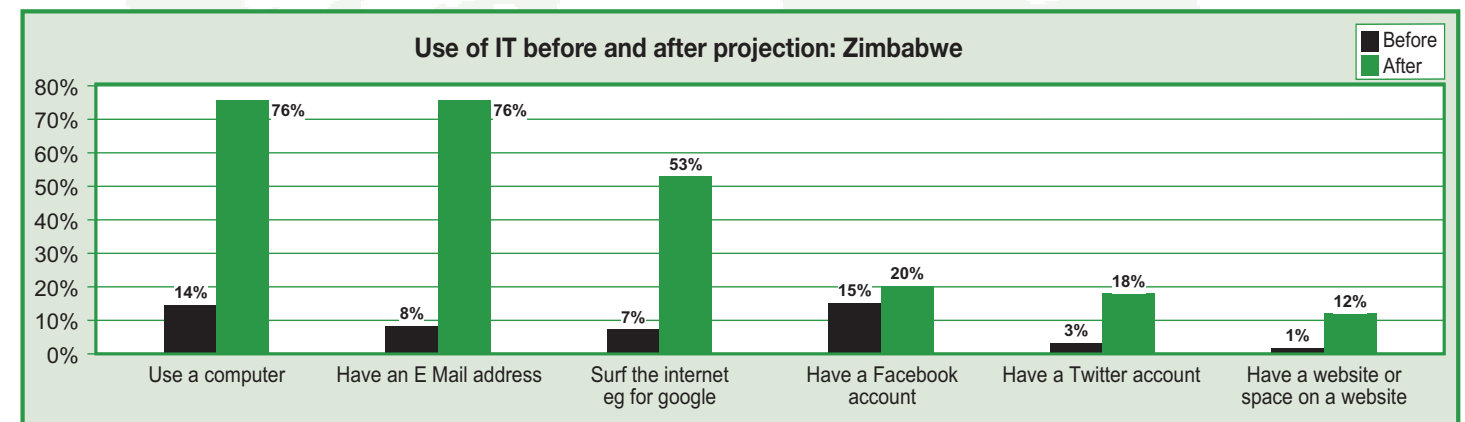
Prior to the project some of the women were already running small businesses and there has been testimony that they have **improved how they run their businesses**. Sithokozile Moyo improved the quality of her bakery business. "I met Sithokozile when she was selling bakery products on the streets," says Remegious Nkomazana director and owner of Bernard Bakery. "I discovered that she makes biscuits much better than me. I was doing biscuits before but they were of poor quality. When we got into an agreement, she started making biscuits for me. We are now confident of the quality." This shows that the project is also growing through networking and collaborations amongst participants and other stakeholders in their communities.

Some of the women have expressed that they now know the importance of **doing business legally**: "During the

training I was taught the importance of following the official channels when doing business. I did that to avoid losing stock through confiscation by the responsible authorities. Unfortunately at one time my stock was unlawfully confiscated and I reported the case to the police. I recovered my stock. I was able to fight because of the courage I gained during the entrepreneurship training."

Verina Muchegu from Chitungwiza Municipality

One of the main aims of the project was to **increase survivor's personal agency** and many have indicated positive changes in their relationships. Ellen Patana from Chegutu took advantage of the experience of working as a community worker to achieve her goals. She combined her work experience with the newly acquired entrepreneurial skills to form a community based organisation to fight GBV in the community. "The idea occurred to me after GL pointed me in the right direction. I tried to register the organisation as a trust but the social welfare department advised me to register it as a non-profit making organisation owned and controlled by a board of trustees. I got inspiration from the English idiom which says, 'experience is the best teacher' and I saw fit to educate other people on gender based violence through my organisation. This was after I realised that it was very important to impart the knowledge I gained from GL to other women."



Source: Gender Links.

The programme brought about a sea change in IT skills. As illustrated in the graph, 76% women now use a computer compared to 14% at the start of the project. 76% have access to E Mail (compared to 8% at the start). 53% surf the internet (compared to 7% at the start). 20% of the women stated that they have a Facebook account up from 15% when the project began. 18% of the women indicated that they now have a Twitter handle as opposed 3% at the inception of the project. Perhaps the most significant change is that 12% of women now have a website up from 1% at the beginning of the project.

The programme has helped Centres of Excellence for Gender in local government to put their gender action plans to work. Councils in Zimbabwe have implemented their action plans also incorporating entrepreneurship in some instances. Bulawayo City Council has a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) that builds the capacity of individuals through education and training in various technical skills that include

basket making among others. They mainly target young girls who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy by giving them a second chance.

As part of the entrepreneurship programme, GL also measures progress in gender attitudes in communities. Gender attitudes as measured by the Gender Progress Score (GPS) in the communities increased by three percentage points from 59% to 62%. At 70% the participants scored a GPS of eight percentage points higher than their communities. These positive trends show that if a programme like this is sustained, it can change both the way that participants view the world, as well as the way communities view them.

Chiredzi Town Council is an example of positive change in gender attitudes in the community. This change can be attributed to the door to door anti-GBV campaigns that the council embarked on prior to the project. Another



contributory factor is the ability of the council to engage with multiple partners like the Musasa Project and the Ministry of Women, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD) to help curb GBV in their community.



Door to door campaigns have helped to reduce gender violence in Chiredzi.  
Credit: Colleen Lowe Morna

This project has shown that there is a possibility of ending GBV through a combination of life skills and entrepreneurship development within a framework of community

and local participation to change lives and mainstream women. The project has also shown that using a multi-stakeholder approach is key to ending GBV at individual level, family and community levels.

## Lessons learned and how they will be applied

- Proper selection of the beneficiaries is critical.
- The project requires working with fewer councils, giving ample time to project beneficiaries as well as mentors to understand each other. This will enable smooth project implementation including monitoring and evaluation.
- There is need to link beneficiaries to proper funding for the sustenance of their projects and skills.
- Identifying potential sources of funding has been difficult and needs to be a focus issue with each new council and as a key issue in the Post-2015 agenda for the economic mainstreaming of women in SADC.
- There is need for male involvement in this programme so that they can support their counterparts.
- It is critical for the program to also capacitate the perpetrator on GBV issues as well as entrepreneurship.

### KEY INDICATORS

Indicator	Botswana	Lesotho	Madagascar	Mauritius	Mozambique	Namibia	South Africa	Swaziland	Zambia	Zimbabwe	Regional total or average
Survivor participation (in Phase 3)	109	130	154	105	220	128	81	140	133	150	1,350
Completed a business plan	100%	99%	96%	81%	80%	95%	79%	81%	98%	98%	91%
Followed a business plan	56%	92%	90%	64%	72%	89%	54%	72%	87%	96%	79%
Average monthly income before the project (USD)	8	20	41	6	1	9	-10	17	64	51	206
Average monthly income after the project (USD)	42	49	79	36	1	51	44	29	165	144	642
Increase in average monthly income after training (USD)	34	30	38	30	0	42	55	12	102	93	436
Overall increase in income over one year as a result of the project (USD)	39,640	44,451	133,084	31,234	2,533	81,220	45,241	27,330	239,887	254,510	899,130
Personal agency at the start	74%	72%	81%	83%	76%	69%	74%	71%	76%	77%	76%
Personal agency after the project	79%	76%	84%	83%	73%	73%	77%	74%	77%	80%	78%
Increase or decrease in personal agency	5%	4%	3%	0	-3%	4%	3%	3%	1%	3%	2%
Relationship control at the start	70%	49%	65%	65%	69%	65%	65%	63%	50%	52%	62%
Relationship control after the project	82%	60%	70%	68%	73%	64%	65%	68%	60%	54%	66%
Increase or decrease in relationship control	12%	11%	5%	3%	4%	-1%	0	5%	10%	2%	4%
GBV less or much less	96%	93%	94%	92%	66%	81%	74%	86%	97%	91%	85%
Gender Progress Scores in community (baseline in brackets)	62% (61%)	73% (66%)	65% (65%)	57% (56%)	67% (56%)	60% (59%)	62% (65%)	64% (57%)	59% (61%)	61% (59%)	63% (61%)
Gender Progress Score of participants	75%	66%	73%	82%	64%	65%	72%	70%	71%	70%	70%
Contribution in kind from councils (USD)	59,894	32,583	28,243	142,644	3	13,695	833	45,075	90,310	81,326	494,607
Rating of council support	44%	38%	70%	50%	70%	50%	38%	56%	52%	76%	54%
Overall rating of the project	92%	84%	87%	92%	95%	82%	84%	84%	89%	90%	89%

Source: Gender Links.

Zimbabwe has achieved a 3% rise in personal agency to 80% (2% higher than the region at 78%). Participants experiences of less or much less violence has scored 91% after the programme (6% higher than the regional average of 85%) with a marginal increase of 2% for relationship control (lower than the 4% increase regionally). Improvements in relationship control has been very strongly articulated in the qualitative research however.

### CONTACT

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