



**Lasting change
through volunteering**



Understanding the drivers of Social Exclusion and Gender in Zimbabwe

Name:

ACTIVE – Active Citizenship Through Inclusive Volunteering and Empowerment

Location:

Zimbabwe Manicaland Province

Donor :

UKAID

Dates:

2022-2025

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) puts people at the centre of its poverty eradication and development approach, believing that people are the best agents of change. This is underpinned by our People First strategy and framework that sets out how we will fight marginalisation and poverty. VSO views social inclusion and gender equality as a human rights issue and both a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people-centred development. VSO Zimbabwe has been programming in the livelihoods thematic area mainly focusing on Agroecology. Currently, VSO is implementing the Active Citizenship Through Inclusive Volunteering and Empowerment (ACTIVE) programme, funded by UKAID. ACTIVE seeks to enable the most marginalized people and civil society to lead their own development by exercising the power of collective voice, claiming their rights to better services, and holding people in power and service providers to account. Vulnerable and marginalized local people are supported with the skills to volunteer, taking ownership

and action on issues important to them. This support will include local, national, and international volunteers who are embedded in communities and institutions (state and non-state).

SEGA Evaluation

An evaluation of social inclusion and gender was conducted to generate a picture of social exclusion and gender gaps in Zimbabwe so as to inform programme designs and delivery mechanisms, using a qualitative approach, and primary data analysis. The aims were:

- Understand social exclusion and gender gaps to inform programme priorities.
- Understand underlying causes, systems and drivers of social exclusion and gender inequalities in Zimbabwe.
- Identify characteristics of socially excluded groups, extent of exclusion, and experiences.
- Document lived realities in health provision and livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

A total of 160 respondents were interviewed households participated in the SEGA research. 81 of the interviewed respondents were female, and a total of 79 interviewed respondents were males.

Key findings:

The key findings are grouped according to themes of Knowledge about Social Exclusion/Inclusion and Gender, Causes of Social Exclusion, Groups that are excluded, Power analysis (Decision-making) and Gender based violence and exclusion. The focus

group discussions and key informant interviews pointed that, social exclusion of some primary actors is adversely contributing to gender-based violence. Women and girls, children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities all experience a range of complex, structural and institutional challenges and face multiple exclusions.

- 69% of respondents had some knowledge and awareness about social exclusion and gender inequality.
- Psychological abuse which can be linked to both physical and sexual abuse is least understood by community members as a form of GBV. The research highlighted that, some members of the community resolve to beating and insulting as part of their conflict resolution mechanisms.
- A high gender-based violence prevalence reported in the interviewed districts can be attributed to limited knowledge among households.
- Multiple barriers that prevent different groups of people from accessing rights, services and opportunities in communities, as institutional barriers, socio-cultural barriers and educational barriers.
 - Institutional: policies, procedures, or situations can systematically disadvantage certain groups are rife within their communities particularly for people with disabilities (PWDs). Their access to basic services such as health care services are hindered by the lack of inclusive measures. Lack of implementation of policies and adherence to laws, insufficient resources and capacity result in exclusion of other vulnerable groups.
 - Socio-cultural: negative norms, harmful practices, attitudes and beliefs dominating cultural and religious values lead to exclusion of single mothers, ingrained gender norms means women have to seek permission to attend activities, or cannot due to childcare needs.
 - Educational: lack of education is a major barrier which leads to exclusion, and is prevalent in these communities. Some do not participate due to fear of discrimination based on their education.
- Excluded groups: High exclusion - People with disabilities, the elderly, Sex Workers, Widows, female-head of households, LGBTQ+. Moderate exclusion: People Living with HIV, inmates/ ex-inmates, young mothers and youth

Recommendations:

- **Engage parents and community leaders** in a dialogue to transform harmful cultural practices that perpetuate

child marriage of adolescent girls that violates girl's right to safe SRHR, health and well-being.

- **Include marginalised groups** from the planning stages in projects that aim to improve their lives, as people with lived experience of social exclusion and gender inequality are in the best position to understand their own needs and identify ways to realise their rights.
- **Partner with government institutions and other NGOs** to challenge discriminatory attitudes that exclude marginalized groups from employment, community development, and financial opportunities.
- **Engagement of youths in development issues** that occurs in their communities to ensure sustainability.
- **Mainstream the Washington Group of Questions** for improved identification and in monitoring and evaluation to gather information on disabilities in a consistent and comprehensive way.
- **Scale up awareness on inclusion and GBV** within communities and strengthen partner capacity on Social Inclusion and Gender.

Conclusion

In addition to systemic challenges that enhances social exclusion, gender roles and social issues are also involved. For instance, political affiliation, and level of education can be deduced as core determinants of exclusion in Zimbabwean communities. There is evidence from the study that village head/community leaders are the most group involved in making decisions in communities. Councilors are reported to be the main group of individuals making decisions at local government level. They are more prominent because most decision that affect the communities involve party politics. The distribution of agricultural inputs to community farmers, for example have been marred by party politics that identifies the beneficiaries along party lines. Elderly men and women, PWDs and sex workers are being left out in development. The prison community is also not spared from exclusion, as inmates/ ex inmates are also said to be excluded in community activities. The focus group discussions and key informants pointed that, social exclusion of some primary actors is adversely contributing to gender-based violence. One can conclude that, poverty is an overarching challenge that compounds the social exclusion and injustices felt by marginalized groups. Similarly, to lack of participation and voice, poverty appears as both an underlying mechanism - and an effect of social exclusion.