

ANNUAL 20 REPORT 25

GENDER EQUALITY | SOCIAL JUSTICE | POVERTY REDUCTION



CONTENTS

Message from the Board Chairperson.....	1
Message from the Country Director.....	2
Who We Are.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Strategic Overview.....	7
What We Achieved Together	7
Our Reach.....	8
Implimentation Foot Print.....	8
Key Impact Highlights.....	9
Impact By Priority Area	12
PRIORITY AREA ONE	
Environmental Sustainability and Climate Justice.....	13
Disaster Preparedness and Early Warning.....	13
Strengthened civil society coordination and policy engagement:.....	14
Agroecology Practices and Sustainable Agriculture.....	15
Improved Environmental Governance and Natural Resource Accountability.....	16
PRIORITY AREA TWO	
Civic Participation and State Accountability.....	18
Increased Citizen Engagement in Governance and Decision-Making.....	18
Policy advocacy and accountability at national and regional levels.....	18
Advancing Tax Justice to Protect and Expand Education Financing.....	19
Strengthening National and Global Advocacy on Financing for Development.....	20
Translating Advocacy into Policy and Community-Level Change.....	20
PRIORITY AREA THREE	
Youth-Led Engagements.....	22
Strengthened Youth Leadership and Agency.....	22
Youth Engagement in Advocacy and Civic Action.....	22
Youth Innovation, Feminist Solidarity and Community-Based Solutions.....	23
Building Youth Leadership, People Power, and Democratic Accountability.....	24
Strengthening Community Resilience and Humanitarian Preparedness.....	25
Partnerships, Collaborations and Stakeholder Engagement.....	26

CONTENTS

Implementation Partners.....	27
Finance and Administration.....	28
Conclusion.....	29
Cooperating Partners.....	29
Impact Stories.....	30
Key Publications	37

ACRONYM

AAG	ActionAid Global
AAI	ActionAid International
AAZ	ActionAid Zambia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CDC	Constituency Development Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Country Strategic Paper
FODEP	Foundation for Democratic Process
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
LRP	Local Rights Programmes
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDMA	Public Debt Management Act
PRRP	Participatory Reflection and Review Programme
PRS	Promoting Rights Schools
SAPP	Southern Africa Partnership Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIF	Strategic Implementation Framework
WDC	Ward Development Committee
ZAMSOF	Zambia Social Forum

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON

I am pleased to present the 2025 Annual Report of ActionAid Zambia (AAZ) on behalf of the Board of Directors. This report reflects a year of resilience, strategic focus, and unwavering commitment amid a rapidly evolving national and global landscape, a year defined by both significant challenges and meaningful progress in advancing social justice.

Amid these complexities, ActionAid Zambia remained steadfast in its mission to advance social justice and challenge the root causes of poverty and exclusion. Guided by our 2023–2028 Country Strategy, anchored in Feminist Principles and a Human Rights-Based Approach, AAZ continued to deepen its commitment to rights-holding communities, amplifying citizen voice, strengthening youth leadership and people power, and promoting equitable governance and climate justice.

In 2025, AAZ made notable progress in implementing strategic priorities that respond to Zambia’s evolving realities. Young people emerged as influential leaders and advocates within governance structures, driving civic engagement and accountability at the community and national levels. Through rights-centered advocacy, youth and women collectively shaped public discourse and advanced policy reforms that align with justice, inclusion, and democratic governance. Our work on economic justice and public finance accountability provided critical analysis and advocacy for transformative investments in social services and equitable economic systems.

The organisation’s climate justice and natural resource governance initiatives empowered communities, especially women and youth to demand transparency, environmental protection, and just transitions in the face of climate shocks and extractive industry pressures. Strengthening community resilience and humanitarian preparedness was a key achievement, with local structures applying skills in disaster

risk reduction, climate-resilient livelihoods, and early warning systems.

The Board exercised its oversight role with vigilance and commitment to accountability, strategic coherence, and organisational resilience. We prioritised risk management, learning, and good governance to support sustainable impact in an increasingly complex operating environment.

We recognise and commend the dedication of staff, partners, community leaders and grassroots movements whose collective efforts are reflected in this report. As we move forward within the 2023–2028 Country Strategy period, the Board remains confident in ActionAid Zambia’s ability to contribute meaningfully to transformative system change, rooted in gender justice, human rights, and people-powered action alongside the wider ActionAid Federation.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all stakeholders who continue to walk this path of justice and solidarity with us.

Pamela Sibanda
Chairperson, Board of Directors



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

In 2025, Zambia stood at a critical crossroads, navigating economic recovery, climate pressures, and significant governance reforms ahead of the 2026 general elections. Within this complex and evolving context, ActionAid Zambia remained steadfast in advancing climate justice, gender equality, youth leadership, and accountable governance, guided by our feminist principles and Human Rights-Based Approach.

This year's achievements affirm the strength and effectiveness of community-led action. Across the country, women smallholder farmers advanced agroecological practices to enhance food security and household resilience; communities intensified calls for transparency and accountability in natural resource governance; and young people actively shaped civic and policy dialogues. Rights holders did not remain passive beneficiaries; they emerged as drivers of transformative change.

Through sustained advocacy, we contributed to the protection of education financing, the advancement of tax justice reforms, and the defence of civic space, reinforcing the principle that public resources and democratic systems must serve the collective good rather than narrow interests.

These achievements are a testament to the strength, courage, and collective leadership of our partners, social movements, community structures, and allies who consistently challenge injustice and work to shift power to the people most affected by inequality. Their organising, advocacy, and grassroots mobilisation continue to expand democratic space, amplify marginalised voices, and hold duty bearers accountable at local, national, and global levels. It is through these strategic alliances and shared commitment to social justice that

meaningful and sustainable progress has been realised.

As we transition into 2026, we do so with renewed determination and clarity of purpose. We remain committed to deepening solidarity across movements, strengthening feminist leadership, defending and expanding human rights, and advancing policies and practices that promote equity and sustainability. Together, we will continue to drive transformative change toward a Zambia that is just, inclusive, climate-resilient, and responsive to the aspirations of its people.

Faides TembaTemba
Country Director



WHO WE ARE

ActionAid is a global justice federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication. With a presence in over 40 countries, ActionAid works in partnership with people living in poverty and exclusion, particularly women and young people, to challenge systems of oppression and build a world where everyone can live with dignity.

Rooted in feminist principles, human rights-based approaches, and people-powered activism, the ActionAid Federation operates through locally rooted national members. These members work in solidarity with communities to transform power relations, promote accountability, and drive sustainable and lasting change.

ActionAid Zambia (AAZ) is a member association of the ActionAid Federation, registered as a local organisation and governed by an independent Board of Directors. Since 2006, AAZ has worked to advance social justice and confront inequality in Zambia, with a strong focus on empowering women, youth, children, and marginalised communities.

Our work is guided by a human rights-based approach and a firm commitment to strengthening the leadership and agency of people living in poverty and exclusion. We challenge unjust social, economic, and political systems; promote feminist and economic alternatives; advance environmental and social justice; and advocate for transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance.

AAZ collaborates closely with community structures, civil society organisations, social movements, and government institutions to influence structural change at local, national, and global levels.



A just, equitable, and sustainable Zambia in which every person enjoys freedom from poverty and oppression for the enjoyment of their right to a life of dignity.



To promote Social Justice, Gender Equality & Poverty Eradication for the people living in Poverty, Exclusion and Marginalised in Society by working with the people living in poverty, their communities, organisations, Activists & Social Movements for a Just sustainable Zambia.



Mutual Respect



Equity and Justice



Integrity



Solidarity



Courage of Conviction



Independence



Humility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, ActionAid Zambia (AAZ) delivered an integrated program portfolio of cross-thematic projects aligned to its Strategic Plan and grounded in Feminist Principles and a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). Operating within a challenging environment characterised by prolonged drought, constrained civic space, political uncertainty, and shrinking development financing, AAZ remained steadfast in advancing its priority areas: climate justice, resilient livelihoods, accountable governance, economic justice, youth leadership, and women's rights.

AAZ prioritised women and young people as rights-holders and agents of change, strengthening community resilience while influencing structural policy reforms at the national level. Through community-led agroecology initiatives, particularly with women smallholder farmers, AAZ enhanced climate resilience, household food security, and sustainable livelihoods. These grassroots efforts were complemented by national advocacy that contributed to increased public financing for sustainable agriculture and stronger policy momentum around farmers' seed rights, reinforcing food sovereignty and environmental sustainability.

In the extractives and natural resource governance sector, communities were supported to demand transparency, accountability, and equitable benefit-sharing, particularly in artisanal and small-scale mining areas. Women emerged as leaders in advancing Gender-Responsive Public Services (GRPS), demonstrating AAZ's commitment to shifting power relations and embedding feminist leadership at the community level.

AAZ also strengthened democratic governance and economic justice by supporting citizen monitoring of public resource mobilisation and expenditure. Engagement with duty bearers contributed to tangible policy dialogue and action on progressive taxation and sustainable debt management, key pillars of equitable development and long-term economic resilience. Even within a constrained civic environment, the organisation expanded safe civic spaces and reinforced citizen agency.

Youth leadership remained central to AAZ's strategy. Youth-led advocacy successfully expanded access to youth-friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and institutionalised mechanisms for sustained youth participation in national civic processes. By amplifying young people's voices and supporting inter generational organising, AAZ advanced inclusive governance and social accountability.

Overall, the 2025 portfolio demonstrates the effectiveness of integrated, feminist, and rights-based programming in delivering immediate, community-level improvements while advancing long-term structural transformation. By combining local organising with national policy engagement, ActionAid Zambia strengthened the agency of women and youth, deepened accountability, and contributed to building a more just, resilient, and equitable Zambia.

ZAMBIAN CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Zambia's 2025 context was marked by economic strain occurring alongside macroeconomic stabilisation efforts, democratic reform unfolding amid pressures on civic space, and escalating climate and environmental risks. These intersecting challenges disproportionately impacted women, youth, and marginalised communities, reaffirming the continued relevance and urgency of ActionAid Zambia's Country Strategy.

Grounded in feminist principles and a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), ActionAid Zambia (AAZ) responded by amplifying citizen voice, promoting economic and climate justice, defending civic space, and advocating for structural reforms that address the root causes of poverty and inequality. The 2025 context, therefore, not only shaped implementation realities but also strengthened AAZ's resolve to advance transformative and sustainable change in Zambia.

Shrinking Civic Space and Democratic Governance

Ahead of the 2026 general elections, Zambia experienced heightened political activity, including mass voter registration and the publication of the electoral calendar. However, several legal and policy reforms including Constitutional Amendment Bill No.7 of 2025, the Cyber Crimes Act No.4 of 2025, the Cyber Security Act No.3 of 2025, and proposed Non-Governmental Organisation Bill No.6 of 2025, raised concerns among civil society due to limited consultation, reduced transparency, and perceived restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. Reports of rights violations, particularly targeting dissenting voices, underscored the fragility of civic space.

For ActionAid Zambia, this context reinforced the centrality of its governance, civic participation, and human rights priorities. Through a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), AAZ strengthened citizen agency, supported community monitoring of public resources, and defended civic space, particularly for women and young people whose voices are often marginalised.

Economic Pressures, Debt, and Inequality

Although inflation declined from 16.7 percent in January to 11.2 percent in December and the Kwacha appreciated due to rising copper prices, these gains did not translate into reduced poverty or improved living standards. Households, especially women-led and youth-led households, continued to struggle with high food prices, energy instability, and limited livelihood opportunities. Load-shedding further constrained small and medium enterprises, disproportionately affecting women and youth entrepreneurs.

Zambia's fiscal space remained heavily shaped by debt restructuring under the G20 Common Framework and the IMF Extended Credit Facility. While social sector spending floors were maintained, debt servicing costs significantly increased, limiting transformative investments in health, education, and social protection. Although social cash transfer coverage expanded to 1.5 million households in the 2026 Budget, an estimated 60 percent of vulnerable households, primarily women and child-headed households, remain unreachable.

These realities affirmed AAZ's campaign and advocacy priorities on economic justice, progressive taxation, sustainable debt management, and increased public investment in social services. Through feminist economic justice lens, AAZ continued to challenge structural inequalities that place disproportionate care and survival burdens on women, advocating for redistributive policies and accountable public finance management.

Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice

Zambia continued to face severe climate and environmental pressures in 2025. Prolonged drought and erratic rainfall reduced agricultural productivity and hydroelectric generation, while projections for the 2025/26 season warned of flood risks and waterborne diseases. Mining pollution, including toxic effluents into the Kafue River, posed serious threats to community health, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Legislative reforms in the mining sector, including the Geological and Minerals Development Act No.2 of 2025 and operationalisation of the Minerals Regulation Commission Act, signalled shifts in extractive governance, including the introduction of an Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) Fund to promote environmentally responsible practices. However, persistent pollution and weak enforcement mechanisms highlighted ongoing accountability gaps.

Within this context, AAZ advanced its climate justice and natural resource governance priorities, supporting communities, especially women, to demand transparency, environmental remediation, and equitable benefit-sharing. Zambia's updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and commitments under the Kampala and Addis Ababa Declarations, alongside outcomes from COP30 processes, created advocacy opportunities for a just transition framework grounded in community rights, labour protections, and grant-based climate finance. AAZ leveraged these processes to push for rights-based climate adaptation and mitigation policies that centre front line communities.

Global Funding Shifts and Civil Society Sustainability

The unprecedented reduction in Official Development Assistance (ODA) by major donor countries such as the United States Government significantly affected Zambia's civil society sector. Funding cuts led to organisational closures, job losses, and disruptions in essential services, including social protection, education, and health. This contraction occurred within an already shrinking civic space, further limiting independent voices, advocacy capacity, and social development support to marginalised communities.

In response, ActionAid Zambia prioritised strengthening community organising, solidarity networks, and localised resource mobilisation, consistent with its feminist commitment to sustainability, autonomy, and movement-building.



ActionAid Zambia staff interacting with community members in Kalomo. Photo: AAZ

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

In 2025, ActionAid Zambia's work continued to be guided by its Country Strategy (2023–2028), which is firmly aligned to ActionAid International's Strategic Implementation Framework 3 (SIF3), themed *"Action for Global Justice in a Volatile World."* Within an increasingly complex national and global environment, this strategic framework has provided clear direction for advancing transformative change through feminist leadership, a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), and people-powered movements.

SIF3 offers a roadmap for confronting systemic inequalities and shifting power towards women, young people, and marginalised communities. ActionAid Zambia's Country Strategy contextualises these global priorities to Zambia's realities by focusing on accountable and equitable public finance, gender justice, democratic governance, meaningful youth participation, and climate-resilient communities. Through our programming and advocacy in 2025, we strengthened citizen agency, promoted economic and climate justice, and advanced inclusive governance systems that uphold human rights and dignity.

2025 Highlights

What We Achieved Together

Our Reach

In 2025, ActionAid Zambia's program reached an estimated 805,363 rights holders, demonstrating significant community-level engagement and growing influence at both local and national levels. Of this total, 98,393 people (12.2%) were reached directly through targeted interventions designed to strengthen agency, resilience, and participation in decision-making processes.

Our direct reach reflects a deliberate commitment to inclusion and equity, consistent with our feminist principles and Human Rights-Based Approach. Women constituted 60% (59,036) of those reached directly, reinforcing our priority to advance women's leadership and rights. Men represented 40% (39,357), while young people accounted for just over half at 50.3% (49,469), highlighting our strong focus on youth engagement and inter generational organising. Additionally, 3.8% (3,746) of direct participants were persons with disabilities, underscoring efforts to promote inclusive participation and reduce systemic barriers.

Beyond direct engagement, our advocacy, media outreach, and policy influence work generated an estimated indirect reach of 706,970 people, amplifying community voices and advancing dialogue on governance, economic justice, gender equality, and climate resilience at the national level. Together, this combined reach illustrates the scale and impact of our integrated, rights-based programming in 2025.

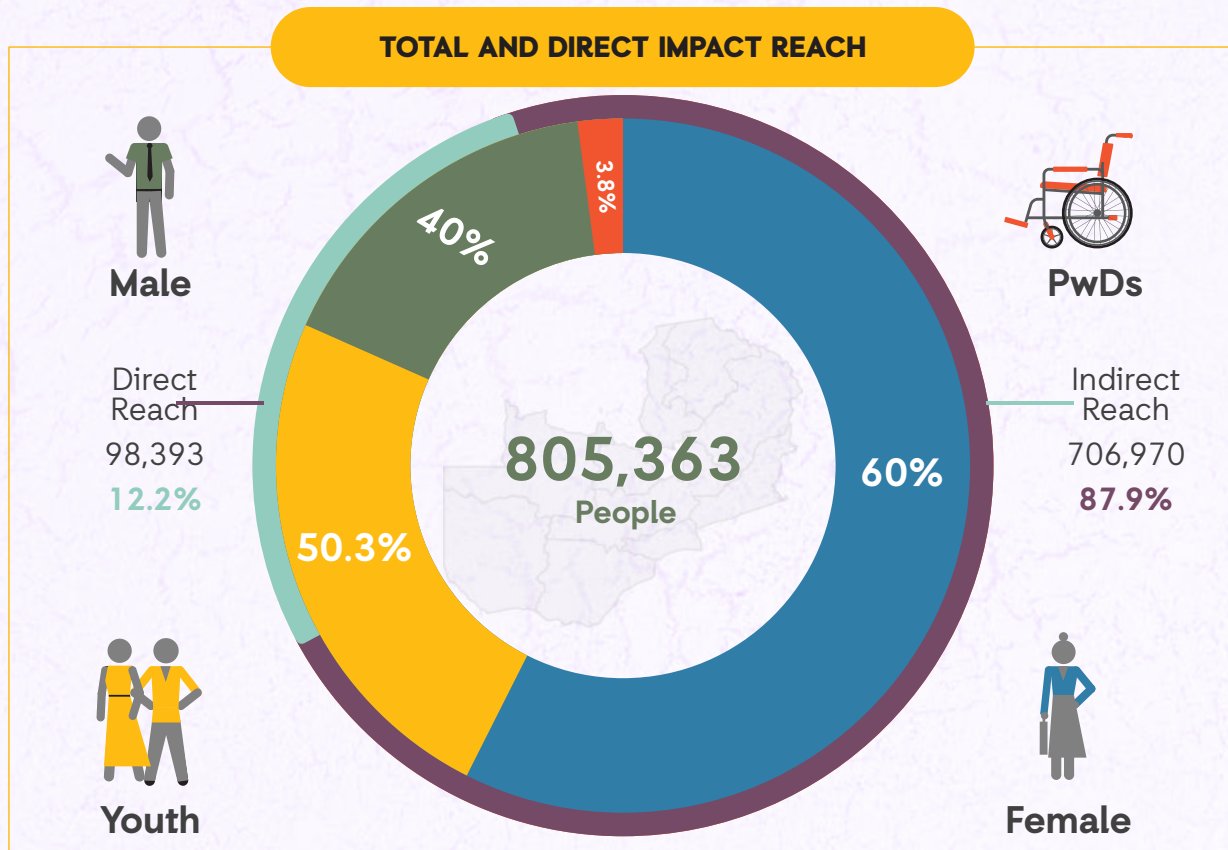


Figure 1: ActionAid Zambia total number of people reached

39,357 49,469 59,036 3,746

IMPLEMENTATION FOOT PRINT



Figure 2: ActionAid Zambia implementation foot print across the country

KEY IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout the year, ActionAid Zambia advanced Climate Justice, Gender Equality, Youth Leadership, and Democratic Accountability through integrated community action and systems-level influence, linking grassroots empowerment to national and global advocacy.



Women Farmers Driving the Adoption of Agroecological Practices

A total of 2,640 smallholder farmers in Nalolo and Sesheke adopted agroecological practices, with women representing 70% (1,848). These approaches strengthened climate resilience, reduced reliance on costly external inputs, improved household food security, and increased savings, advancing women's economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods



Communities Claiming Power Over Natural Resources

Communities and traditional leaders in Western Province collectively challenged exclusionary natural resource governance, demanding transparency and equitable benefit-sharing in carbon markets and timber extraction. In artisanal and small-scale mining, women expanded their leadership through accountability structures, including two GBV Watch Committees, while evidence generated informed more gender-responsive and environmentally sustainable programming.



Protecting Education Financing for Inclusive Futures

Through joint national advocacy, ActionAid Zambia contributed to safeguarding education financing in the 2026 National Budget. The Government increased the education allocation from K31.5 billion in 2025 to K33 billion in 2026, reinforcing commitments to inclusive and quality education despite fiscal pressures.



Amplifying Zambia's Voice on Fiscal Justice

AAZ strengthened its fiscal justice leadership through engagement at the Africa Conference for Debt and Development (AFCoDD V) and the UN Tax Convention negotiations. Coordinated advocacy amplified African civil society demands for fair and inclusive international tax systems, progressive taxation, gender-responsive public services, and action against illicit financial flows.



Citizens Holding Power to Account

Across program areas, citizens enhanced social accountability by monitoring public resources, engaging duty bearers, and utilising media platforms to demand responsive governance. In Batoka District, community-led advocacy under the Education Out Loud (EOL) project successfully upgraded Bbombo Primary School to a secondary school, improving access to education, reducing overcrowding, and demonstrating the power of evidence-based, participatory advocacy.



Youth Leading Change Today and Tomorrow

Young people actively shaped advocacy on SRHR, climate justice, and governance through participation in technical working groups, local governance structures, and peer education initiatives. More than twelve (12) youth were elected into Ward Development Committees, CDF leadership roles, and youth councils, strengthening youth representation, expanding access to youth-friendly SRHR services, and institutionalising youth voice in decision-making processes.



From Local Action to Lasting Impact

Together, these achievements reflect ActionAid Zambia's contribution to systemic change, challenging inequality, redistributing power, and advancing social justice by combining grassroots organising with policy and advocacy influence at national and global levels.



Political Party Participants at the Political Parties Peace Dialogue in Lusaka. Photo: AAZ



ActionAid Zambia staff carrying out a Mfuwe Parliamentary By-Election monitoring activity in Mfuwe Constituency. Photo: AAZ

IMPACT BY PRIORITY AREA

The 2025 achievements demonstrate that community-led action can effectively influence policy, safeguard public resources, and advance inclusive, rights-based development. Across our priority areas; environmental sustainability and climate justice, humanitarian response, civic participation and state accountability, democratic governance, economic justice, and transformative youth engagement. AAZ contributed to tangible, systemic shifts that promote human rights, protect vulnerable communities, and drive sustainable change at local and national levels. These achievements reflect ActionAid Zambia's strengthened collaboration with local partners, social movements, allies, networks, and coalitions to challenge structural inequalities and redistribute power.



Community members at the Agroecology Field Day in Maondo Ward. Photo: AAZ

Priority One: Environmental Sustainability and Climate Justice



Overall, the 2025 results demonstrate ActionAid Zambia's contribution to building climate-resilient communities, protecting biodiversity, strengthening natural resource governance, and advancing climate justice. By linking grassroots organising with policy influence, AAZ reinforced community power, gender-responsive environmental governance, and long-term sustainability.

Observed Change:

Disaster Preparedness and Early Warning

Enhanced climate resilience: A total of 135 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Committee members, 50% being women in Gwembe and Sesheke districts strengthened their capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to climate-induced hazards. This reflects a clear shift from reactive crisis management to proactive climate risk preparedness. Women such as Alice Jiwawa of Kalama Satellite Disaster Management Committee in Gwembe reported increased knowledge in sustainable agriculture practices, including ripping techniques, use of drought-resilient crops such as millet, and alternative livelihoods like rearing goats and chickens. ***I have gained enough knowledge in sustainable agriculture, ripping, use of drought-resilient crops such as millet. And also under alternative livelihood, I have also learnt the importance of keeping small livestock animals such as goats and chickens".***

Improved livelihoods and food security: Fifty Nine (59) women and 31 youth in Maondo, Research and Katongo communities have learned to grow sorghum, cowpeas, groundnuts, cassava, pumpkins, gourds, millet, and other revised local varieties. They have also learnt to use sustainable post-harvest loss management techniques, which have led to household food security and sharing of agroecology knowledge to their wider communities.

Stronger local leadership and sustainability: Women and youth emerged as recognised leaders in early warning systems and climate preparedness. Notably, 101 women in Gwembe and Sesheke took leadership roles in raising awareness on early warning information and promoting agroecology practices such as organic manure production and small livestock rearing (goats and chickens), diversifying income sources, and strengthening resilience.



Artisinal miner at the Black Mountain, Kitwe.
Photo: AAZ

Strengthened civil society coordination and policy engagement

ActionAid Zambia convened a national consultative meeting in March 2025, bringing together fifteen (15) civil society organisations to enhance cross-sector dialogue on agricultural policies and programmes. This resulted in the establishment of an online CSO coordination platform to facilitate proactive engagement with the government on service delivery gaps, policy bottlenecks, and farmer priorities.

Strengthened Institutional Capacity on Gender-Responsive Agriculture

ActionAid Zambia enhanced its internal capacity on gender-responsive agricultural programming and the Comprehensive Agricultural Transformation Support Programme (CATSP), to improve alignment with national agricultural transformation priorities, including climate resilience, agribusiness development, market access, digital agriculture, and agricultural financing. These investments have strengthened ActionAid Zambia's technical leadership, improved program quality, and increased effectiveness in policy engagement and partnership building.

Agroecology Practices and Sustainable Agriculture



Farmers demonstrating how to make organic (Bokashi) fertiliser. Photo: AAZ

Organic fertiliser making

Agroecology interventions in Nalolo and Sesheke districts resulted in widespread adoption of climate-resilient farming practices. A total of 2,640 farmers, the majority women, applied local seed varieties, organic fertilisers, biological pest and disease control, and post-harvest loss management techniques. Post harvest loss techniques like hermetic storage solutions have led to a reduction in post-harvest losses from 21 % before project intervention to 4 %, and this has assured household food security.



AA TIF Project supported women farmers of Sesheke and Nalolo districts exhibiting their natural and organic produced food at the 2025 Food and Seed Festival in Chilanga. Photo: AAZ

Protection of Biodiversity and Indigenous Seed Systems

Communities, traditional leaders, and policymakers intensified advocacy to protect indigenous seed systems and farmers' rights to save, share, and exchange seeds. Commitments were secured to consider integrating these protections into the Plant Breeder's Rights Act No.18 of 2007. ActionAid will continue to follow up on recommended policy provisions and ensure that they are added to the Plant Breeders Act. These actions support biodiversity conservation and long-term food system resilience.

Food and seed festivals further promoted climate-resilient crops, including sorghum, millet, cowpea, cassava, and honey, strengthening local markets, preserving indigenous and advancing biodiversity conservation

Improved environmental Governance and Natural Resource Accountability

Communities in Nalolo and Sesheke strengthened collective action to demand transparency and equitable benefit-sharing in carbon trading and timber extraction. Community-Based Natural Resource Management Committees (CBNPMC) were established in Siyanda, Sawmills, and Katongo to monitor carbon sales and timber harvesting. Communities challenged externally imposed profit-sharing models and demanded fairer terms, asserting their rights over forest resources. The CBNPMCs are demanding the right of the communities to determine what percentage of profits should carbon traders get as opposed to unfair external entity price determination ranging between 5 to 20%.



Advancing Climate Justice and Accountable Natural Resource Governance

At national, regional, and global levels, AAZ deepened advocacy on extractives governance and the just energy transition. Participation in the inaugural Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) Conference and Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) 2025 highlighted persistent gaps, including weak Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) mechanisms, inadequate compensation frameworks, limited gender inclusion, and insufficient environmental safeguards.

These engagements strengthened advocacy around the Mines and Minerals Development Act No.11 of 2015, corporate social responsibility, and artisanal mining reforms. A gender-sensitive review of the Environmental Management Act No.12 of 2011 and mining legislation identified gaps in women's participation, informing an advocacy-focused policy brief.

In Solwezi and Kalumbila districts, 94 community members (40 women, 54 men, including 18 youth) strengthened their knowledge of land rights, compensation processes, environmental protection, and corporate accountability. Communities developed and submitted a formal communiqué to the Permanent Secretary for North-Western Province outlining concerns on displacement, pollution, and gender impacts of mining. Public accountability efforts extended to media engagement, with community representatives participating in radio programmes reaching approximately 700,000 listeners across nine districts. In addition, AAZ supported Sino Mining's pollution-affected communities to demand corporate accountability through a press briefing, prompting local and national attention, with the vice president visiting the affected communities shortly after.



Artisanal miners at Kitwe's Black Mountain Photo: AAZ

Civic Participation and State Accountability



ActionAid Zambia advanced Civic Participation and State Accountability in a context marked by shrinking civic space, ongoing constitutional and legal reforms, and preparations for the 2026 general elections. Amid proposed legislation such as the Non-Governmental Organisation Bill No.6 of 2025, as well as broader concerns around freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, AAZ intensified its rights-based advocacy to safeguard democratic space and strengthen citizen voices.

Observed Change

Increased Citizen Engagement in Governance and Decision-Making

Communities demonstrated increased confidence and capacity to engage with local authorities, traditional leaders, and sector institutions. Women, youth, and community structures actively participated in dialogue platforms on agriculture financing, natural resource governance, education, mining, and climate-related decision-making. These engagements enabled communities to articulate priorities, raise grievances, and contribute to locally relevant solutions. For example, the radio campaigns led by Local discussants against political violence across 8 districts in 8 provinces received a total of 24 callers from listening citizens and 15 messages against the targeted number of 16, with multiple requests to extend the programme. Youth-led and community-driven platforms, including radio programmes, public forums, and school-based initiatives, expanded access to civic information and encouraged broader participation in governance processes. These spaces strengthened awareness of rights, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms at the community level.

Policy advocacy and accountability at national and regional levels

At the national level, ActionAid Zambia played a visible role in coordinating civil society advocacy in response to proposed legal reforms affecting civic space. Through collaboration with like-minded CSOs and INGOs, AAZ implemented a multi-pronged strategy including stakeholder meetings, public statements, parliamentary submissions, and community sensitisation to raise awareness of the implications of the Government's proposed Non-Governmental Organisation Bill No.6, 2025 (NGO Bill 6).

This collective advocacy successfully pushed back and contributed to the deferment of the Bill from Parliament to allow for broader consultation, demonstrating the power of coordinated civic action.

Similarly, AAZ engaged in advocacy around Constitutional Amendment Bill No.7 through awareness-raising initiatives, such as public debates, media engagement, and youth-led community 'Insakas' or dialogues to promote transparency, accountability, and inclusive participation in reform processes. These efforts strengthened citizen understanding of constitutional governance and reinforced demands for participatory law-making.

Participation in the Electoral Integrity Summit 2025 enhanced AAZ's internal institutional capacity on electoral governance and provided strategic insights from across Africa on safeguarding democratic processes. This learning is informing AAZ's civic education, youth empowerment, and governance programming ahead of the 2026 general elections. Further, strategic engagement with the Electoral Commission of Zambia identified four priority areas for collaboration: electoral reforms, monitoring, sensitisation, and capacity building, laying the groundwork for strengthened institutional partnerships in 2026.



Advancing Tax Justice to Protect and Expand Education Financing

In a context shaped by fiscal constraints, debt restructuring, and competing budgetary pressures, AAZ strengthened its advocacy on tax justice and equitable public financing. During the Global Action Week for Education (GAWE), civil society actors jointly developed and submitted a 2026 education budget proposal to the Ministry of Finance. A pre-budget dialogue in Lusaka convened government officials, Members of Parliament, and civil society representatives to highlight the link between progressive taxation, education financing, and socio-economic development.

These efforts unified civil society messaging against austerity-driven cuts and reinforced the importance of protecting social sector investments, particularly education.

The process positioned civil society as a credible and coordinated actor in national fiscal policy discussions, aligning with AAZ's broader economic justice and gender-responsive public services agenda.



L - R AAZ Programs and Policy Manager, alongside ZAM Board Chairperson, ZRA Commissioner General, Zambia Tax Platform Coordinator, and ZAM Executive Director. Photo: AAZ

Strengthening National and Global Advocacy on Financing for Development

ActionAid Zambia further deepened its leadership on financing for development through national, regional, and global engagements. At the national level, a multi-stakeholder dialogue on Financing for Development resulted in a joint civil society press statement ahead of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4). This consolidated civil society positions on debt cancellation, fair taxation, and climate justice, while deepening understanding of Zambia's fiscal constraints and global financial inequalities.

Regionally and globally, participation in the Global South Retreat and the Africa Conference on Debt and Development strengthened Zambia's contribution to debates on debt justice and international financial reform. Lessons from these spaces are now informing national advocacy, particularly the integration of Education and gender equity into tax and debt reform campaigns.

Translating Advocacy into Policy and Community-Level Change

At community level, sustained advocacy dialogue in districts such as Chipata and Choma strengthened grassroots advocacy on children's rights and education and demonstrated how local action can deliver tangible results. Communities, through Parent-Teacher Committees and Ward Development Committees, successfully engaged Government authorities to secure funding for classroom infrastructure in several wards. These outcomes reflect the effectiveness of linking grassroots organising with national policy advocacy to deliver concrete results.



ActionAid Zambia, represented by our Country Director, Faides TembaTemba, at the opening day of the Retreat for Countries in the Global South on Financing for Development. Photo: MC. Sakapi Photography



ActionAid Zambia staff after a successful partner capacity strengthening training in Lusaka. Photo:AAZ



ActionAid Zambia community member participating at the 2025 Zambia Alternative Mining Indaba in Lusaka. Photo: AAZ

Priority Three: Youth - Led Engagements



Youth creatives at the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence and Human Rights Day Commemoration in Lusaka. Photo: AAZ

In 2025, ActionAid Zambia continued to advance youth-led engagement as a transformative pathway for advancing human rights, gender justice, and inclusive governance. Through intentional investment in youth organising, leadership development, and movement building, young people, particularly young women and young people from marginalised communities, demonstrated increased confidence, critical consciousness, and agency to influence decision-making processes at community and district levels.

Observed Change

Strengthened Youth Leadership and Agency

More than twelve (12) young people were elected to formal leadership positions across program areas, including roles ranging from Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Chairperson to Youth Councillor in Chibulula Ward (Mpulungu District), as well as Satellite Committee representatives in Nalolo, Sesheke, Gwembe, and Chama. These outcomes reflect deliberate capacity strengthening efforts by local partners, Dzuka Cholinga Youth Zambia, Youth Life Project, Muchinga Corridors Zambia, and Mind Shapers Zambia, who equipped young leaders with skills in governance literacy, rights awareness, accountability monitoring, and feminist leadership.

The increased representation of young people in governance spaces signals

progress toward dismantling structural barriers that historically excluded youth, especially young women, from decision-making. It also reflects the operationalisation of ActionAid's Human Rights-Based Approach, which positions young people not as beneficiaries but as rights holders and agents of change capable of shaping policies and development processes that affect their lives.

Youth Engagement in Advocacy and Civic Action

Young people actively led advocacy initiatives on climate justice, natural resource governance, education rights, and inclusive development. Youth activists and environmental justice advocates publicly challenged harmful mining practices, condemning environmental degradation, unchecked pollution, and regulatory failures that undermine community health and livelihoods.

Their advocacy framed environmental destruction as a violation of human rights, reinforcing the indivisibility of environmental justice, social justice, and gender justice.

In Sompani community of Gwembe District, young farmers organised sustained advocacy engagements with local authorities to address chronic water scarcity. Through structured interface meetings and rights-based lobbying, they demanded the construction of a farming dam for harvesting rainwater.

Their efforts resulted in the allocation of CDF-supported machinery to construct a small dam. The solution was co-created through collaboration between the young farmers and the Young Emerging Farmers Initiative (YEFI), strengthening community climate resilience and adaptive capacity in drought-prone areas.

YEFI facilitated continuous civic education, advocacy training, and sustainable water management capacity building, ensuring that youth engagement moved beyond consultation toward meaningful participation and co-creation of solutions. This outcome exemplifies feminist movement-building principles, collective organising, solidarity, and locally driven alternatives to structural inequalities.

Youth Innovation, Feminist Solidarity and Community-Based Solutions

Young people demonstrated innovation and context-specific problem-solving in addressing climate adaptation, environmental protection, civic participation, and gender-based inequalities. Through community monitoring, data collection, and awareness raising, young people strengthened local accountability mechanisms and contributed evidence-based inputs into development processes.

In Gwembe, Nalolo, and Sesheke, young women, after undergoing targeted capacity building initiated the production of reusable handmade sanitary towels to combat menstrual hygiene poverty. This initiative directly addressed the structural

discrimination and stigma that disproportionately affect adolescent girls and young women, often limiting their school attendance, dignity, and participation in public life. By transforming menstrual health from a private burden into a collective rights issue, young women advanced bodily autonomy, dignity, and gender equality.

Additionally, 156 young women and 25 young men across Lusaka (Matero, Mtendere, Ng'ombe, Kalingalinga, and medical students from the University of Zambia) were mobilised and empowered during Menstrual Hygiene Week through Girl Zone Empowerment, working alongside partners to distribute free sanitary products. Youth activists further demanded that government institutionalise free menstrual hygiene kits as a public service obligation, reinforcing the principle that menstrual health is a human right and not a privilege.



Photo:AAZ



Demonstration of drought resilient farming methods in Sompani. Photo: AAZ



The Global Platform Zambia organised Public lecture at the University of Zambia. Photo: AAZ

Building Youth Leadership, People Power, and Democratic Accountability

Ahead of **COP 30**, youth activists, social movements, allies, networks, and student associations organised a pre-COP engagement that elevated youth demands for meaningful participation in climate action. Their advocacy focused on securing equitable financing, grants, green job opportunities, and sustained capacity support as integral elements of the broader *Fund Our Future* Global Climate Justice Campaign. This youth-driven initiative amplified calls for climate policies that reflect the rights, needs, and leadership of young people, particularly young women and marginalised groups across Zambia.

A key milestone was the establishment of **three Youth Sector Development Clusters**: Governance and Economic Justice, Climate Justice and Just Transitions, and Humanitarian and Sexual and Reproductive Health. These clusters provided structured platforms for sustained youth coordination, strategic agenda setting, and policy influence, enabling youth coalitions to engage duty bearers with clarity and coherence.

Youth leadership translated into tangible impact on national accountability processes. A youth-led press statement on the Public Order Act (Chapter 113, No. 38 of 1955) and the Public Gatherings Bill elicited an official government response and confirmation that the Bill had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice for review. Across the year, young people demonstrated increased confidence, strategic clarity, and collective action in shaping public discourse and strengthening democratic accountability.



Young farmers from a youth group, supported by our partner Muchinga Corridors Zambia in Sesheke District, leading the way in climate smart agriculture. Photo: AAZ

Strengthening Community Resilience and Humanitarian Preparedness

ActionAid Zambia supported hundreds of young people, farmers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and local disaster management committees with training in disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, humanitarian accountability, and climate-resilient livelihoods.

Participants reported a paradigm shift from viewing humanitarian assistance as charity to asserting it as a fundamental right. Equipped with practical action plans, youth and community structures applied their skills in real contexts, including climate-resilient farming practices, waste management for sustainable livelihoods, creative climate advocacy, and systematic hazard risk tracking.

In Sompani community, two young women pioneered the cultivation of *pearl millet*, a highly climate-resilient and nutrient-rich crop that offers a viable alternative to drought and disease-sensitive staples. This locally led adaptation strategy strengthened household food and nutrition security amid recurring dry spells and pest pressures that have historically undermined harvests. Across program areas, Satellite Disaster Management Committees trained with ActionAid support successfully conducted community risk assessments and issued early warnings ahead of the rainy season, demonstrating practical application of disaster preparedness mechanisms.

At the national level, sustained engagement with the Zambia Youth Parliamentary Caucus and humanitarian stakeholders influenced ongoing reviews of disaster response frameworks and the Disaster Management Act No. 13 of 2010.

A joint evaluation of the 2023–2024 drought response underscored the breadth of humanitarian reach as well as persistent gaps in long-term resilience, coordination, and inclusive systems. These findings reinforced the urgent need for preparedness-focused, community-centered humanitarian systems that prioritise the rights, voices, and agency of young people and crisis-affected populations.





PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

ActionAid Zambia strengthened strategic partnerships and collaborations across civil society, government platforms, youth networks, and community structures to advance shared goals for social justice, democratic accountability, climate resilience, and people-powered development. These multi-stakeholder engagements were essential in responding to the complex political, economic, and environmental challenges facing Zambia.

In 2025, the Strategic Partnerships, Grant Management, and Compliance function provided oversight to 30 partners, 19 under the CSO Project and 11 under the SPAIL Project, and managed a portfolio of 10 Donor Grants that were active during the reporting period. Partnership Agreements for projects that concluded during the year were formally closed out in line with donor requirements. Under the CSO project, five partners' agreements continued into the

next phase, while six received extensions into the next phase.

Technical backstopping and documentation reviews were conducted to strengthen financial accountability, safeguarding compliance, procurement practices, and audit readiness. The function also coordinated the revision of the Grants Manual, developing Terms of Reference and facilitating reviews through the PAT Team and Senior Leadership Team (SLT); the draft manual has been submitted for further review. Key outcomes included strengthened compliance oversight across all partners, improved quality and timeliness of narrative and financial reporting, successful close-out of completed partnerships, completion of the draft revised Grants Manual, and issuance of a call for proposals under the EU-funded project targeting 10 youth-led organisations.

Lessons learned highlight that continuous engagement and structured technical support improve partner compliance, financial management, reporting quality, and internal controls, while early review of documentation, budgets, and work plans reduces implementation delays.

Strong coordination between Grants, Programmes, Finance, and Hub teams further enhances oversight and accountability. Challenges arose from variations in partner capacity in documentation, financial management, and project implementation, which required sustained follow-ups, both onsite and virtual, as well as continuous verification and consolidation of reports.

Plans for 2026 focus on finalising and rolling out the revised Grants Manual and working closely with the newly introduced Internal Auditor to strengthen internal controls, partner compliance systems, and capacity building for both partners and staff. For the EU-funded project, the selection, due diligence and onboarding of 10 youth-led organisations will be completed in Quarter 1. Additional priorities include strengthening pre-award partner assessments, conducting departmental documentation spot checks in collaboration with the Internal Auditor, and continuing structured partner capacity strengthening initiatives.”

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

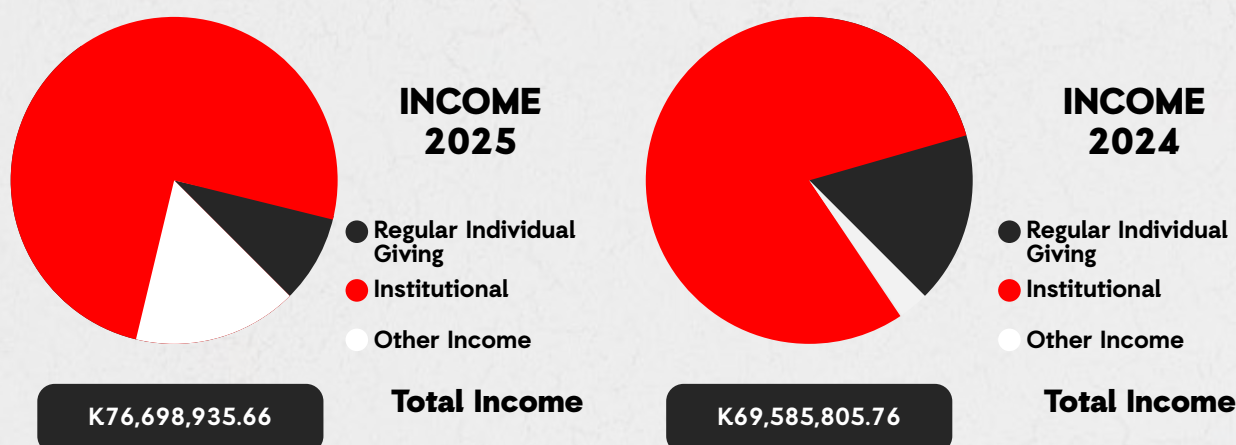


FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

During the period under review, Action Aid Zambia (AAZ) realized income worth Kwacha 76,698,936.00. This represents a 10% increase in income as compared to the prior year actuals of ZMW 69,585,806.00.

The total expenditure recorded during the period under review stood at ZMW 77,642,326.00 representing 12% increase as compared to ZMW 69,017,275.00 for the year 2024 actual expenditure.

INCOME



EXPENDITURE

2025

K77,642,326.83

K38,257,938.69

K39,384,388.14

Total Expenditure

K77,642,326.83

2024

K69,017,247.78

K20,724,598.23

K48,292,676.55

Total Expenditure

K69,017,247.78

Total

Programme

Support

2025

Surplus/(Deficit) for the year

-K943,391.17

2024

K568,530.98

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Annual Report reflects a year of resilience, solidarity, and transformative action. Despite operating in a challenging environment marked by economic pressures, climate shocks, funding constraints, and a fragile civic space, ActionAid Zambia remained firmly committed to advancing climate justice, gender equality, youth leadership, and accountable governance.

Our work demonstrated that sustainable change is achieved when communities, especially women and young people, are empowered to claim their rights and shape decisions that affect their lives. From strengthening agroecological resilience and natural resource accountability to safeguarding civic space and influencing national budget priorities, our integrated, feminist, and rights-based approach delivered both tangible local results and meaningful policy influence.

As we look ahead, we remain guided by our Country Strategy (2023–2028) and our commitment to shifting power, confronting structural inequalities, and building strong movements for social justice. Together with our partners, allies, and the communities we serve, we will continue working toward a more just, inclusive, and climate-resilient Zambia where every person lives with dignity and equal opportunity.

OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS



IMPACT STORIES



School child reading a thank you speech at the handover ceremony of a school and block and desks by ActionAid
Photo: AAZ

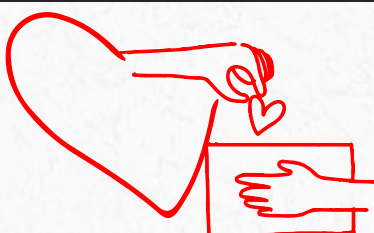
A Decade of Gratitude



ActionAid Zambia successfully concluded its 10-year Child Sponsorship Programme through the handover of community infrastructure to local stakeholders in Northern, Muchinga and Western Provinces, marking a transition from direct support to sustainable community ownership. With support from dedicated donors, the programme delivered classroom blocks, a maternity annex, school desks, and water reticulation systems, strengthening access to education, healthcare, and safe water for children and mothers, women and their families.

These investments leave a lasting legacy, demonstrating how donor contributions can drive sustainable, community-led development beyond the life of the programme.

Photos: AAZ



*Your support has gone a long way.
Ready to help us shape another
decade of impact?*

*Reach out to learn how you can donate
and continue transforming lives.*



Mining with dignity

The Zimba Women in mining cooperative (Copperbelt Province)

On the outskirts of Mufulira District is a story of courage, transformation, and empowerment. Over the years, a group of determined women worked for years in the business of mining silica and selling their minerals to middlemen for as low as K100 per tonne. Known as the Zimba Women in Mining, this group of women had the strength and skills to contribute to the mining industry by supplying silica, yet they lacked the recognition, voice, and opportunity to benefit fairly from their work.



Baptista Kafwaya, one of the women in mining in Zimba, Mfulira District - Photo AAZ

With support from ActionAid Zambia on the Swedish funded CSO Strengthening Project, this group of women received training in Natural Resource Governance, Advocacy, and Safe Mining Practices. This training was facilitated by Future-Primeurs, one of ActionAid Zambia's partners supported to facilitate such tremendous works on the Copperbelt province. The women learnt about their rights, environmental protection, and how to engage duty bearers with confidence.

What began as a simple awareness session became a turning point for this group of women from Mufulira as they came together and registered as Zimba Mining Cooperative. This act helped these women secure an Artisanal Mining License, their first step into formalized mining. This achievement changed everything as it opened an opportunity for them to formally trade with Mopani Copper Mines by being direct suppliers of silica and cutting out exploitative group of middlemen. As such, their income tripled as they began selling silica for the actual price of K350 per ton, directly to buyers.

Beyond Advocacy

For many years, the community of Batoka in Southern Province, Zambia struggled with limited access to secondary education. With only one overcrowded secondary school, learners were forced to travel long distances, often on foot, to attend classes or sit for their final exams. Teachers were overwhelmed by overcrowded classrooms, parents faced financial strain to cover transportation costs for their children, and community leaders tirelessly appealed for government support.

This crisis demanded urgent action but also revealed the potential for community-driven solutions. Amidst of these challenges, ActionAid Zambia recognised both the difficulties and the potential for transformative change. Through the Education Out Loud (EOL) Project, a platform was established to bring together teachers, parents, community leaders, local officials, and Ministry of Education representatives in a series of community dialogue meetings.

These meetings provided a space for open discussion of education sector challenges and the collaborative development of practical solutions. Key outcomes included the decision to upgrade Bbombo Primary School to a secondary school to accommodate the growing population among the learners, eliminating the need for learners to travel elsewhere for their final exams. The initiative also focused on empowering community members to hold

leaders accountable, advocate for effective public finance management, and use advocacy to secure better resource allocation to improve the education sector, laying the groundwork for sustainable, inclusive educational development.

Following the community dialogue meetings, a strong agreement was reached among all stakeholders, which prompted DEBS to take immediate action. There was a significant push to upgrade Bbombo Primary School to a secondary, aimed at addressing overcrowding of Secondary School learners at Batoka Secondary and ensuring that learners no longer had to travel long distances for their education.

These actions are beginning to change the local education landscape by reducing logistical challenges, easing the burden on learners and their families. The outcome of these interventions was both immediate and transformative. Following the community dialogue meetings, there was a demonstrable shift in how local education challenges were addressed. These changes have had a tangible impact learner now face shorter travel distances, examinations can be conducted locally, and the overall academic environment has improved, reducing stress on both learners and teachers. The initiative did not only address immediate logistical challenges but also established a replicable model of inclusive, evidence-based advocacy that has already spurred further policy dialogue on broader educational reforms.



Bbombo Primary School pupil recounting her school's transitioning to Secondary School through advocacy. Photo: AAZ



Social Agent and Farmer Munachoongo Muleya, in her field. Photo: AAZ

Women Championing Smart Agriculture in Zambia

Munachoongo Muleya is a Monze-based farmer, smart agriculture advocate, and one of the social change agents under ActionAid Zambia. Photo: Dalitso Lungu/ActionAid

In the heart of Monze town in Zambia's Southern Province, where visitors are warmly welcomed with a cup of freshly prepared Chibwantu, one of Zambia's common maize-based beverages, lives an inspirational farmer, mentor, and social change agent, Munachoongo Muleya. Located about 183 kilometres from Lusaka, her community is witnessing transformation driven by her passion for agriculture and inclusive development.

Through ActionAid Zambia's Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society and Grassroots Organisations in the Zambian Agriculture Sector Project, supported by GIZ Zambia through the Sustainable Agricultural Systems and Policies (AgSys) project. Munachoongo

has emerged as a leading advocate for smart agriculture and farmer empowerment.

Equipped with technical skills gained through project-supported trainings, she is helping translate national agricultural policies into practical solutions within her community. Her work contributes to improved implementation of agricultural frameworks promoting mechanisation, productivity, and sustainable farming practices.

Beyond her farm, Munachoongo uses media platforms to amplify farmers' voices. Through engagements with Chikuni Mission Radio, she discusses key agricultural challenges and opportunities, ensuring farmers access timely information that helps them make informed decisions.

Her impact goes beyond advocacy. On her farm, MC & M Specialised Horticulture and Dairy Production, Munachoongo has created employment opportunities for youth and young women while strengthening local agricultural value chains.

"We are working with 150 farmers who grow sunflowers for us. We process and package the products locally," she explains.

Her enterprise also operates an agro-shop and provides mechanisation services, including planting, spraying, harvesting, and transportation, helping small-scale farmers increase productivity and reduce labour burdens.

Munachoongo strongly believes women and young people must be at the centre of development.

"We cannot change the lives of women and youth if they are not involved from the beginning of any programme. Women are cardinal to agriculture, nearly 60 percent of agricultural labour is provided by women and young people," she says.

In a province where mechanised agriculture has historically been limited, she is championing a shift toward modern farming and skills development. She advocates for agricultural colleges and training institutions to equip young people with practical mechanisation skills and promote internships linking students with working farms.

"Students should come to farms for internships so that learning becomes practical, farmers and students can learn from each other," she adds.

Southern Province possesses vast agricultural potential, with over 3.57 million hectares of arable land and significant

irrigation resources drawn from the Zambezi and Kafue rivers. Yet challenges such as drought and costly irrigation infrastructure continue to affect productivity.

Munachoongo believes smart agriculture and diversification are key to resilience.

"Agriculture in Zambia should not only mean maize. We must diversify and grow commercial crops, especially as climate change affects rainfall patterns."

She emphasises the need for greater farmer awareness of agricultural policies and market opportunities, enabling farmers to position themselves within regional trade corridors and expand both local and international markets.

As Zambia advances agricultural reforms under national programmes, Munachoongo's journey demonstrates how empowered local leaders can drive lasting change. Her story reflects the power of investing in grassroots women farmers, not only as beneficiaries, but as architects of sustainable development.

Early marriage and early pregnancy

Early marriage and early pregnancy remain significant challenges affecting adolescents in Grace Nachande's community. These practices often disrupt education, limit future opportunities, and place young parents in situations where they are unable to adequately support their children. In many cases, this has contributed to social challenges such as child neglect, increased petty crime, and risky survival behaviours among young people.



Grace Nachande was empowered through capacity-strengthening trainings under the Strengthening Civil Society Effectiveness in Promoting Good Governance and Increasing Citizen Awareness and Demand for Human Rights – Phase II project, implemented by ActionAid Zambia, funded by the Swedish Government, and implemented in partnership with Mpulungu Youth Vision Centre (MYVC). The trainings equipped adolescents with knowledge and skills to promote positive behaviour change among their peers, with a strong focus on adolescent rights and the prevention of early marriage and early pregnancy.

Reflecting on the experience, Grace notes:

“One of the key takeaways for me from the trainings was learning about early marriages. I was able to pass on the knowledge I acquired to other young people.”

Following the trainings, Grace took on the role of a peer educator and mentor, actively engaging fellow adolescents in Kwenga Village of Isoka District, through discussions and awareness sessions. Together with other young people, she facilitated open conversations that helped uncover the extent of early marriages and early pregnancies within the community and encouraged adolescents to critically reflect on the consequences of these practices.

As a result of these youth-led engagements, positive behavioural changes have begun to emerge among adolescents in the community. Increased awareness has led to more informed decision-making, while some community members have acknowledged and appreciated the efforts of young people in addressing these challenges.

“Through the engagements we have been having with young people, there has been some behavioural change. Our efforts have also been appreciated by some members of the community,” Grace explains.

Grace's experience demonstrates that when adolescents are equipped with the right information, skills, and platforms to engage, they can become powerful agents of change. Peer-to-peer education has proven effective in addressing harmful practices, promoting adolescent rights, and fostering safer, more informed communities where young people are empowered to make decisions that protect their futures.

Sustained investment in youth-led initiatives is critical to addressing early marriage and early pregnancy. By continuing to support adolescent capacity-building, community engagement, and rights awareness programmes, stakeholders, including civil society organisations, traditional leaders, and development partners, can help amplify young people's voices and scale up positive change. Empowering adolescents today is an investment in stronger, more resilient communities tomorrow.

When Women Lead, Communities Heal



Senior Village Headman Gilbert Sinkala of Kawenga Village, Isoka District. Photo AAZ

For many years, leadership in Kawenga Village followed a familiar pattern, decisions were largely made by men, even on issues that affected women and girls most deeply. Sensitive cases such as gender-based violence were often difficult to handle, with survivors hesitant to speak out and justice delayed or denied.

That reality began to change under the leadership of Gilbert Sinkala, Senior Village Headman of Kawenga Village.

Recognising that women experience and understand certain challenges differently, Headman Sinkala supported the deliberate inclusion of women in village leadership

structures. It was a bold shift from long-standing norms, but one rooted in the belief that leadership should serve everyone.

"Since we started involving women in the leadership of Kawenga Village, it has made a significant difference. It has become easier to handle certain cases, especially sensitive issues such as gender-based violence. Some matters are better addressed by fellow women because they have a deeper understanding and create a safer space for survivors to speak openly."

Today, women leaders in Kawenga Village play a critical role in responding to cases of abuse, particularly those involving women and children.

Survivors now feel safer reporting violence, knowing they will be listened to with empathy and confidentiality. Women leaders are able to engage survivors directly, guide them through reporting channels, and ensure cases are followed through without fear or intimidation.

This change has strengthened trust within the community. Issues that were once hidden or mishandled are now addressed openly and responsibly. Men, women, and traditional leaders work together, each recognising the value that women bring to leadership and justice processes.

For Headman Sinkala, the impact is clear: inclusive leadership is not just about representation, it is about protection, dignity, and justice.

Kawenga Village's experience shows that when women are given space to lead, communities become safer, stronger, and more responsive. It is a powerful reminder that meaningful change often begins with a willingness to challenge tradition in the pursuit of fairness and humanity.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

News

1. [France 24](#) - Sex for Fish
2. [Euronews](#) - Sex for Fish

Digital Content

Documentaries/Stories:

1. **Women in Silica Mining**
<https://youtu.be/9TpWalbHfs4>
2. **Women Championing Smart Agriculture**
<https://youtu.be/aWgeiRwsJnk>
3. **Life of An Inspirator**
<https://youtu.be/F1oUJFum1Qc>
4. **16 Days Against GBV Campaign**
<https://youtu.be/R7uTRK5oopU>
5. **Podcast**
<https://youtu.be/wdjiEAie0DY>
6. **My Global Platform Zambia Experience Series**
<https://youtu.be/ndSgkPZrX3k>
7. **Climate Resilience and Preparedness**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msNLF5dlUu8>

Board Members

1. <https://youtu.be/R7uTRK5oopU?si=246IHvzoB-f4yUp5>
2. <https://youtu.be/mCrBtoxxz6Y?si=GBk1xRBaSiWUkQOG>
3. https://youtu.be/BBFLbS_Nn9g?si=kneaHOqgDxceemEz
4. https://youtu.be/mel6cITjsFI?si=mUKGAmE5PPDz3J_0

Campaigns

1. https://youtube.com/shorts/KZ5WdGWBGSk?si=nKV_Oox4q21Bj22J
2. <https://youtube.com/shorts/jF98OtFgTLM?si=FVlf2ur3mCJ1460N>
3. https://www.tiktok.com/@actionaidzambia/video/7580322391918677304?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7561093450512664120

Reports, Policy Briefs and Parliamentary Submissions

<https://zambia.actionaid.org/publications>

All Rights Reserved
Published by:
ActionAid Zambia
38G, Kabulonga Road
Ibex Hill, Lusaka.

Info.zambia@actionaid.org
www.zambia.actionaid.org
Phone: +260 966 453 677