

**STUDY TO
EXPLORE
EXPERIENCES
OF LGBTIQ+
ORGANISATIONS
IN ZIMBABWE ON
WORKING WITH
THE BROADER
CIVIL SOCIETY**



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Executive Summary

This research report delves into the experiences of LGBTIQ+ organisations in Zimbabwe as they collaborate with the broader civil society. The study reveals significant challenges faced by these LGBTIQ+ organisations and provides valuable insights for fostering inclusivity and promoting LGBTIQ+ rights. The historical context highlights a troubling history of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals in Zimbabwe. Political figures, religious leaders, and pressure groups have perpetuated discriminatory rhetoric, creating societal barriers to the recognition and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ rights. The study examines the presence of explicit non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIESC). It reveals that while some organisations have implemented such policies, there is still a need for broader adoption and implementation across the civil society sector. Furthermore, the study explores the policies and frameworks within organisations that address the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals. It emphasises the importance of developing comprehensive strategies that encompass the unique challenges faced by this community and foster a supportive environment. The findings reveal that various factors, including organisational values, perceived benefits, and potential risks, influence decision-making processes regarding collaboration. The study highlights the need for increased collaboration and partnership to amplify the voices of LGBTIQ+ organisations and advance their rights agenda. The report also explores the perception of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights. Encouragingly, the findings demonstrate a growing recognition of LGBTIQ+ rights within civil society. However, more work is needed to mainstream these rights and ensure their full inclusivity across organisations and sectors. Based on these findings, the report provides recommendations for improving collaboration, advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights, and strengthening partnerships. These recommendations include addressing barriers to sensitisation on SOGIESC, enhancing organisational policies and frameworks, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ organisations. In conclusion, this research report uncovers the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ organisations in Zimbabwe and provides valuable insights for promoting inclusivity and advancing LGBTIQ+ rights. By implementing the recommendations, civil society organisations can create a more equitable and supportive society for all individuals in Zimbabwe. The findings of this study serve as a catalyst for change, encouraging dialogue, understanding, and action toward a more inclusive and accepting future.

Abbreviations

CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics.

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1.0 Introduction

This research study focuses on understanding the experiences of LGBTIQ+ organisations in Zimbabwe as they collaborate with the broader civil society. It aims to shed light on their challenges, the policies and frameworks to support their needs, and the dynamics of collaboration within the civil society sector. By understanding these experiences comprehensively, the study provides valuable insights and recommendations for fostering inclusivity, promoting LGBTIQ+ rights, and strengthening partnerships to create a more equitable and supportive society for all individuals in Zimbabwe.

1.1 Background and Context

1.1.1 Historical Context and Evolution of LGBTIQ+ Movements in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's postcolonial era is marked by a troubling history of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals and their rights. Leading the opposition are political figures, religious leaders, pressure groups, and other entities (Muparamoto, 2021; Youde, 2017; Evans and Mawere, 2021; Epprecht, 1998; Campbell, 2000). The late President Robert Mugabe's anti-queer rhetoric was a popular tactic in a time of political and socio-economic turmoil. Some leaders have employed traditional/cultural, religious/Christian, patriotic, and nationalist arguments to frame LGBTIQ+ individuals as a threat to the state, people, or culture. These narratives have impacted the extent to which LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations collaborate with government ministries, local and international civil society organisations (including human rights organisations), and funding agencies. It is crucial to comprehend the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer) organisations in Zimbabwe as they work alongside civil society organisations (CSOs). Still, there is a scarcity of information on this topic. This research delves into the experiences of LGBTIQ+ organisations in Zimbabwe as they engage with the broader civil society.

The history of the Zimbabwean Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and other Queer people's movement can be tracked to the formation of GALZ-An Association of LGBTI People in Zimbabwe (then known as the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe) in 1989 and subsequently registered in 1990. GALZ operated nationally as the sole LGBTI organisation until 2007, when the Sexual Rights Centre was formed. These were the only two organisations directly working on LGBTIQ+ work for some time. Since 2011, when Pakasipiti was formed, an estimated 16 known LGBTIQ+ Collectives and Organisations have emerged, forming the LGBTIQ+ Sector, a platform for leaders to strategise and network for collective advocacy work. It is important to note that Zimbabwe has maintained its colonial-era 'penal code', which criminalises consensual sex among men and prohibits same-sex marriage, despite other developments in the country.

1.1.2 Evolution of LGBTIQ+ organisations and movements

Over the years, the LGBTIQ+ movement in Zimbabwe has navigated a complex landscape of cultural beliefs, legal restrictions, and political rhetoric that often positions LGBTIQ+ identities as un-African (Tamale, 2013; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005). This challenging environment has necessitated a nuanced approach on the part of activists, balancing visibility with safety and strategically integrating international human rights frameworks to garner broader support (Tamale, 2013). The strategic framing of LGBTIQ+ issues as matters of equality, privacy and non-discrimination has proved effective in some

contexts by appealing to universal rights rather than focusing exclusively on sexuality or identity-based claims (Lixinski 2021). At the same time, activists have foregrounded African voices and experiences while challenging simplistic notions of culture deployed to oppose rights (Epprecht, 1998; Van Klinken, 2018). This nuanced two-pronged approach recognises both local specificities and global connections.

Digital platforms and social media have also played a significant role, enabling Zimbabwean LGBTIQ+ activists to connect, share information and mobilise supporters locally and abroad more safely (Sibanda and Ncube, 2023). Online spaces have been effectively utilised to change public discourse, counter stereotypes, and give voice to diverse lived experiences within the movement. However, challenges remain. Stigma persists in communities, and the enforcement of laws such as Section 73 of the Criminal Code continues limiting basic freedoms of expression and assembly for LGBTIQ+ groups (Meer et al. 2017). Violence stemming from discrimination also threatens LGBTIQ+ people's security (Muparamoto and Moen, 2022). Despite the challenges, we can see the resilience of LGBTIQ+ activists and a gradual shift in public discourse on online platforms and other spaces. This can be interpreted as a sign of a slow but impactful evolution of LGBTIQ+ movements in Zimbabwe.

1.2 Current Landscape of Civil Society Collaboration

Civil society collaboration in Zimbabwe has come a long way. It has taken various dimensions but has mostly been an issue-based form of collaboration and synergising. It is worth noting that for a long time, the country has been dominated by toxic politics and patronage networks that have curtailed civil society's work. Whilst the intense hostility under Mugabe seems gone, the system he created is still intact. Hence, the optimism following his downfall in November 2017 has become despair, particularly after the PVO Amendment Bill was gazetted in 2021. If signed into an Act, the Bill aims to limit and even halt the existence and operations of all voluntary organisations. It is within this context that collaborations need to be understood. The Bill targets and isolates organisations in the human rights and governance sector deemed unpatriotic or anti-state. As indicated above, civil society groups coalesce around particular issues. Historically, the formation of NANGO in 1962 as a welfare organisation laid the foundation for collaborative efforts. NANGO was formally registered in 1968 following the promulgation of the Welfare Organisations Act in 1967, later transformed into the PVO Act in 2001. As of June 2022, NANGO had 1,246 NGO affiliates.

These members or affiliates work together on various old and emerging issues. Some civil society groups have forged collaborations as Forums, Platforms, Coalitions, Clusters, and Working Groups. The Church and Civil Society Forum (CCSF) is a collaborative platform of the Church and civil society formed to address what they believe to be the absence of a national institutional, policy and legislative framework to address past injustices and human rights violations in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum is also a coalition of twenty-one human rights NGOs in Zimbabwe who, while having their objectives, are concerned with the level and nature of organised violence and torture in the country perpetrated mainly, though not exclusively, by state agents and their ancillaries. The National Transitional Justice Working Group is a platform established by various non-state Zimbabwean stakeholders to provide an interface between transitional

justice stakeholders and official processes. The Gender and Extractives Platform (including ZELA, WLSA, CNRG, and Action Aid) provides continuous oversight and monitoring of mining companies' activities.

Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) has also brought women's and girls' rights organisations under its leadership to promote collaboration and give the semblance of a united women's movement in Zimbabwe. Members work in diverse fields and are grouped into thematic clusters: health, legal and constitutional rights, education, gender-based violence, economic empowerment, peacebuilding, environment, media and ICT, politics and decision-making. The GBV Cluster (including Musasa and ZWLA) works to end gender-based violence and harmful practices rampant in the country. At one point, the Cluster on Women in Politics launched the Civic Engagement for Accountability and Democracy in Zimbabwe to increase the influence of Zimbabwean citizens, acting collectively through formal and informal groups for more democratic and accountable governance. The end goal was to reduce barriers to participation in politics. Some collaborations revolve around research and funding. Organisations that cannot conduct research and have data gaps in their programming create synergies and outsource research capacity. In 2020, WCoZ requested Stopping Abuse and Female Exploitation (SAFE) Zimbabwe Technical Assistance Facility to conduct an analysis of violence against women during COVID-19 (though the experiences of LBQT persons are not highlighted in this work).

The space for collaboration has been fraught with challenges. For instance, intergenerational tensions have derailed progress within the women's movement. Emerging issues like revenge pornography, leaking sex tapes, miniskirt movement are popular with young activists, whilst older generations perceive these as not important. There is also no shared ideology within the movement. As noted by UNWomen (no date), specific issues are being tackled by the young activists, such as LGBTI issues, termination of pregnancy, and sex work, which the older activists are not comfortable with because they have no shared ideology. Outside the women's movements, the NGOization and professionalisation of civil society organisations have generally affected civil society collaborations. It has been pointed out that NGOs are a source of employment, and in a country stuck in a socio-economic crisis, an elite class of NGO workers has emerged. With poor funding and the role of donors in shaping priorities, some civil society organisations have been pitted against each other. Hence, competition rather than meaningful collaboration has been rife.

1.3 Study Purpose and Objectives

From 2014 onwards, Key Population, Diversity and Inclusion programming began gaining prominence among the broader Civil Society Organisations/Networks (CSOs), government ministries and parastatals in Zimbabwe. With the simultaneous growth of the programming by the broader CSOs and the LGBTIQ+ movements, relationships of different forms have been formed. Partnerships, Collaborations, Consortiums, Implementation Partners, grantees, sub-grantees and fiscal hosts have existed and continue to exist. The relationships have brought about unique and similar experiences among the LGBTIQ+ Organizations. However, the experiences have yet to be studied or evaluated. It is against this background that GALZ commissioned a study to understand

the experiences of the LGBTIQ Sector in Zimbabwe in working with the broader civil society as part of its strategic quest to generate new knowledge and evidence.

The study explored the experiences of LGBTIQ Organisations in working with the broader civil society. The study explored the experiences, captured lessons learnt and provided recommendations to the LGBTIQ Organizations, the broader CSOs and Funding Agencies. This study documented the experiences of LGBTIQ organisations in Zimbabwe when working with the broader civil society. By understanding the challenges faced and strategies employed, this research enhances collaboration between these organisations and ultimately advances Human Rights (including gay rights) in Zimbabwe. Precisely, the study does the following:

- Document the nature of the relationship between the LGBTIQ Organisations and the Broader CSOs.
- Identify the critical shifts in knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the LGBTIQ Sector, on the one hand, and those of the broader CSOs, on the other.
- Identify key lessons learnt and recommendations to get the most out of the relationship(s)

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), developed by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith in the early 1980s, is a tool for analysing policy processes. It focuses on understanding the formation and maintenance of advocacy coalitions within policy subsystems, defined by a geographical area, an issue, and policy actors. These coalitions, formed based on shared core beliefs, play a crucial role in policy change, which the ACF analyses over a long-term perspective, often spanning a decade or more. The framework emphasises the importance of scientific and technical information in shaping policy actors' belief systems. It acknowledges that policy actors are boundedly rational, with limited cognitive abilities to process information. The ACF has been applied globally across various political contexts to explore advocacy coalitions, policy learning, and the factors driving policy change. It offers a structured method to analyse how groups and individuals engage in policy-making, adapt through learning, and drive changes in policy over time. Serving as a conceptual tool, the ACF aids in deciphering complex policy environments, such as LGBTIQ+ rights, by highlighting the roles of coalitions and the dynamics between allies and opponents in shaping public policies. It underscores the importance of adaptation and learning in the evolving policy-making landscape, particularly by integrating scientific and technical insights. In addition, the ACF notes that as transformation comes largely from the policy subsystem, the framework aims to achieve policy change and learning. Policy learning refers to enduring changes in understandings or intentions by coalition members regarding the precepts of policy beliefs (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1993: 41-58).

2.0 Research Methodology

2.1 Study Design and Approach

This research adopted a mixed-methods design, which emphasised the importance of data triangulation to enrich research data and improve its validity and trustworthiness. This ensured that evidence from multiple sources would be cross-checked and evaluated for regularities. The qualitative and quantitative research methods presented a common

purpose because the strengths of these two methods enabled the researchers to address important questions at different stages of inquiry, thereby increasing and improving past knowledge by filling gaps that studies using a singular approach could not accomplish.

Using a mixed methods approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the topic. Quantitative data provided foundational information about trends, while qualitative data granted deeper insights into issues. By evaluating findings from both methodologies, a more robust analysis could be conducted that capitalised on the advantages of each. This reinforced conclusions and enhanced understanding of the phenomena in question. Though priority was given to qualitative data, incorporating numerical data supplemented results and strengthened their validity. The combination of methodologies synthesised perspectives that may have remained unseen through a uniform lens. Therefore, this research design optimised opportunities to address the research problem and fulfill objectives comprehensively.

Both primary and secondary data sources were utilised. Qualitative primary data involved with civil society and LGBTIQ+ organisations. This allowed for rich descriptions of personal narratives and localised understandings. Quantitative primary data consisted of a survey distributed to a larger sample for descriptive statistical analysis. Secondary data included reviewing previous research studies, government reports, NGO documents, and media/advocacy publications to provide contextual background and triangulate primary findings. International best practices were also examined. A thematic analysis approach was used for the qualitative strand to code and organise interview/focus group transcripts according to emergent themes. Comparative methods identified commonalities and differences in perspectives.

Quantitative survey data underwent descriptive statistical analysis using statistical software. Frequencies, distributions and cross-tabulations revealed trends. Finally, an integration phase was conducted where qualitative and quantitative findings were combined. This involved joint displays to contrast results and narrative discussions to merge and confirm interpretations. By employing varied yet complementary methods, valid and well-rounded insights could be gleaned regarding realities impacting LGBTQ+ communities and organisational operations. The mixed research design successfully fulfilled the aim of gaining an in-depth and evidence-based understanding of the issue under investigation.

2.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

Zimbabwe has over 1000 non-governmental organisations working across a range of areas.¹ A total of 63 organisations participated in the online questionnaire, providing valuable insights and perspectives on the subject under investigation. The questionnaire served as an initial data collection method, offering a broad understanding of the topic. Additional interviews were conducted with 16 selected organisations to enhance the depth of the research. These interviews allowed for more in-depth discussions and provided a deeper understanding of the organisations' experiences, challenges, and

¹https://zimfact.org/ngo_governmental_organisations_in_zimbabwe/#:~:text=There%20are%20over%201%2C000%20non,across%20a%20range%20of%20areas

strategies related to the topic at hand. Combining the online questionnaire and the interviews ensured a multi-faceted approach to data collection, capturing a wide range of perspectives and allowing for a comprehensive analysis. The organisations involved in the interviews were selected based on their expertise, experience, and relevance to the research objectives. The insights gathered from both the questionnaire and the interviews formed the foundation for the findings and analysis presented in the study, offering a rich and diverse understanding of the subject matter.

2.3 Data Collection Tools and Techniques

- **Online Questionnaire:** An anonymous questionnaire was utilised to collect quantitative data from broader civil society organisations. This was done to ensure they provided truthful answers without fear of reprisal. The questionnaire gathered information about experiences partnering with or supporting LGBTIQ+ groups.
- **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from selected LGBTIQ+ organisations and Zimbabwe's broader civil society network members. These interviews gathered firsthand accounts of challenges faced, strategies employed for partnership-building, and perspectives on enhancing future joint efforts to advance equality and human rights.
- **Document Analysis:** Relevant documents such as program reports, policy briefs, advocacy papers, and contemporary news articles were analysed to understand the socio-political context and dynamics surrounding collaborations between LGBTIQ+ groups and allied organisations in Zimbabwe. Formal policies and informal practices were evaluated.

Together, these mixed methods approaches explored perspectives from the field to comprehensively understand dynamics in a way that moves beyond singular sources of data or the researchers' viewpoint alone.

2.4 Ethics Considerations

Informed consent was a top priority during this research study. Plain language statements and consent forms were provided to all participants in English and local languages to ensure comprehension. Researchers explained the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, potential risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality measures, and participants' rights. Written consent was obtained from all individuals only after this explanation and before their involvement began. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any time. Privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the entire research process. Identifying information of any participants or organisations was removed from all collected data and replaced with anonymous codes. Data files containing raw responses were password-protected to guarantee only the approved researchers could access this sensitive information. The safety of all study contributors was the utmost priority, especially given the sensitive nature of discussing LGBTIQ+ issues in Zimbabwe's context. All interviews were only conducted at locations privately chosen by participants to minimise any potential discomfort or risk. Robust protocols were also implemented to protect all research data. Access to electronic information was limited only to the investigators. All materials will be retained and destroyed securely following the publication of findings. These measures aimed to respect participants' privacy and well-being above all other considerations.

2.5 Demographic Analysis of Respondents

2.5.1 Sectoral Analysis of Organisations

The survey was completed by representatives from 63 civil society organisations operating across Zimbabwe. As indicated in Table 1, most organisations implement multi-sectoral programs that address several development areas simultaneously. Health, HIV, and sexual/reproductive health and rights (SRHR) were the most common fields of operation, with engaged organisations making up 44.4% of respondents. For example, GALZ has long provided crucial health and educational health services to promote the inclusion and well-being of LGBTIQ+ individuals. This is also similar to organisations working in the human rights sector (28.5%) and women's rights (28.5%), an important area where LGBTIQ+ organisations operate. Other organisations operate in areas such as environment and climate justice (19%), water and sanitation (7.9%) and agriculture and food security (6.3%), which are important areas that LGBTIQ+ organisations require more capacity to operate in (Muparamoto and Chiweshe 2023). For instance, the health consequences of global warming may disproportionately impact LGBTIQ+ Zimbabweans without family support networks. The study did not show significant differences in organisations' responses across the questions based on their work sectors.

Table 1: Sectoral Analysis

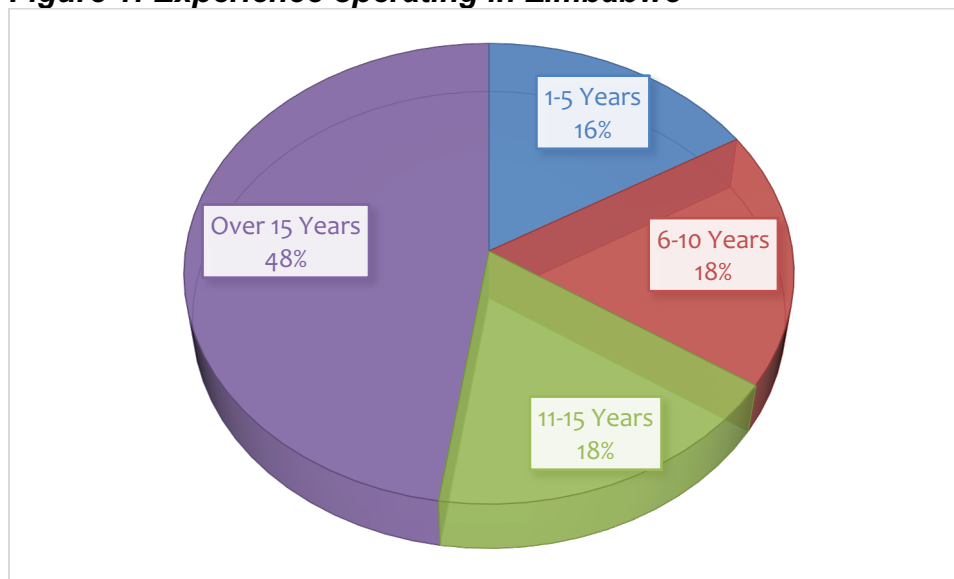
	Number	Percentage
Environment and Climate Justice	12	19%
Governance and Democracy	12	19%
Human rights	18	28.5%
Water and Sanitation	5	7.9%
Agriculture and Food Security	10	6.3%
Women's Rights & Gender	18	28.5%
Health, HIV and SRHR Rights	28	44.4%
Humanitarian	7	11.1%
Youth Empowerment	1	1.5%
Social Development	15	23.8%
Donor agency	2	3%
Natural Resource Management	1	1.5%

N=63

Figure 1 illustrates the experience levels of the surveyed organisations operating within Zimbabwe. Nearly half (47.6%) reported over 15 years of contextual experience, suggesting a strong understanding of the nuanced socio-political landscape surrounding

LGBTIQ+ issues. Organisations with extensive histories would possess valuable institutional knowledge of effective advocacy and partnership approaches over time. Another 16.4% had 1 to 5 years of experience within the country. While relatively newer, these organisations still offered important perspectives on emerging priorities and challenges. Notably, no respondents indicated having less than 1 year of experience working in Zimbabwe. This implies that all participants had sufficient grounding to reflect insightfully on strategies and collaborate systematically with recency and longevity of focus. The data demonstrates an experienced sample well-positioned to discuss realities for LGBTIQ+ communities and the civil society response. Over 60% had more than 5 years of navigating this environment. However, it also allows for the continued welcoming and strengthening of newer players who complement longstanding efforts with fresh perspectives and energy. Continual learning across all experience levels also remains prudent as issues evolve. A diversity of views, united in purpose, can optimise understanding and progress toward rights and equity.

Figure 1: Experience operating in Zimbabwe



N=63

3.0 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Nature and Dynamics of Collaborations

The study uncovered that while collaboration between LGBTIQ organisations and Zimbabwe's broader civil society sector was still relatively limited in scope, some promising relationships had begun to form. Various partnership models, from informal to formal, were being utilised for mutual benefit. However, there remains significant potential to strengthen collaborative approaches in the future further. Only a handful of examples could be identified from the data, suggesting the space for coordination was still nascent. Organisations largely operated independently, lacking opportunities to jointly leverage their complementary skills, networks, and resources to maximum effect. The factors influencing relationship-building were also examined. Access to funding appeared a primary determinant, as collaborations tended to materialise where joint projects could pool support. Shared policy agendas also drove some coordination, especially around advocacy events. However, building inter-organizational understanding and trust over the

long term seemed equally key to fostering sustainable partnerships. With a continued commitment to engaging diverse perspectives and interests, the realm for collaboration was expected to grow richer. Participants acknowledged the benefits collaboration could provide, from knowledge-sharing to unified voices. However, tangible barriers, resource constraints, and differing priorities sometimes hindered deeper alignment. Overcoming such challenges with openness, empathy, and mutual learning could help optimise social progress.

3.1.1 Partnerships

Key elements of successful partnerships include clear roles and responsibilities, regular communication, flexibility, jointly developed work plans, sharing skills and resources, documented partnership agreements, measuring impact, and reviewing relationship quality over time. Strategic partnerships, in particular, require ongoing commitment and adaptation.

- Project-based partnerships are where organisations collaborate on specific initiatives, such as advocacy campaigns, programs delivering services, or research studies. An example is GALZ working with the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum to publish an edition of Human Rights Monthly on 'Sexual Rights'.
- Involve long-term collaboration around mutually agreed goals, combining skills and resources for greater impact. ZLHR and the Counselling Services Unit work on legal aid, counselling, education and advocacy for LGBT rights. ZLHR provides legal representation for clients, while CSU offers counselling support and community education.

3.1.2 Consortia

Loose coalitions of like-minded organisations that come together around a common issue or cause, such as a consortium of health rights groups. Loose coalitions tend to form organically as organisations with similar missions recognise the potential for collaboration. They have low barriers to participation. Membership is open and flexible, allowing new groups focused on the shared issue to join as they emerge. Groups can also leave the coalition freely. Coalition structures are informal, without additional registration. Coordination is loosely delegated among rotating members. Activities may involve periodic meetings to align agendas, co-sign letters, and join awareness campaigns or protests organised by individual members. Resources are pooled informally as each group contributes what they can, like sharing event venues or printed materials.

3.1.3 Collaborations

Informal collaborative relationships where organisations openly share resources, data, knowledge, and networks to support each other's work emerged in the study. Event-based collaboration organising workshops, forums, or commemorations around events like IDAHOBIT. For IDAHOBIT, the Counselling Services Unit partners with the Sexual Rights Centre (SRC) to host a joint workshop bringing together 50 LGBT activists and mental health professionals to strengthen support networks. ZimRights coordinates an annual forum where diverse organisations give presentations on their programs, and members can network. This has led to referral partnerships and identifying opportunities for new collaborations. Youth Gate Zimbabwe Trust works with the National AIDS Council to do joint activities such as engagement meetings. It also works with the Zimbabwe

National Network for People Living with HIV and the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council. It is also currently hosted by CESHAR. Hands of Hope indicated that they have been funded by Hivos and partnered with Population Solutions for Health, BHASO, VOVO and NAC. Such informal and event-driven relationships are important modes of initial interaction and relationship-building between civil society that pave the way for deeper ongoing coordination. However, it is important to note that for most LGBTIQ+ organisations and networks, the initial process of establishing collaborations has yet to be smooth. As noted by one key informant, *“Yeah, at first in the National KP Forum, we were excluded. When the National AIDS Council first introduced us, we were a young group that was coming in, also doing similar work that other colleagues were doing. We faced challenges the first days, but as time passed, people started seeing the fruits of our actions.”*

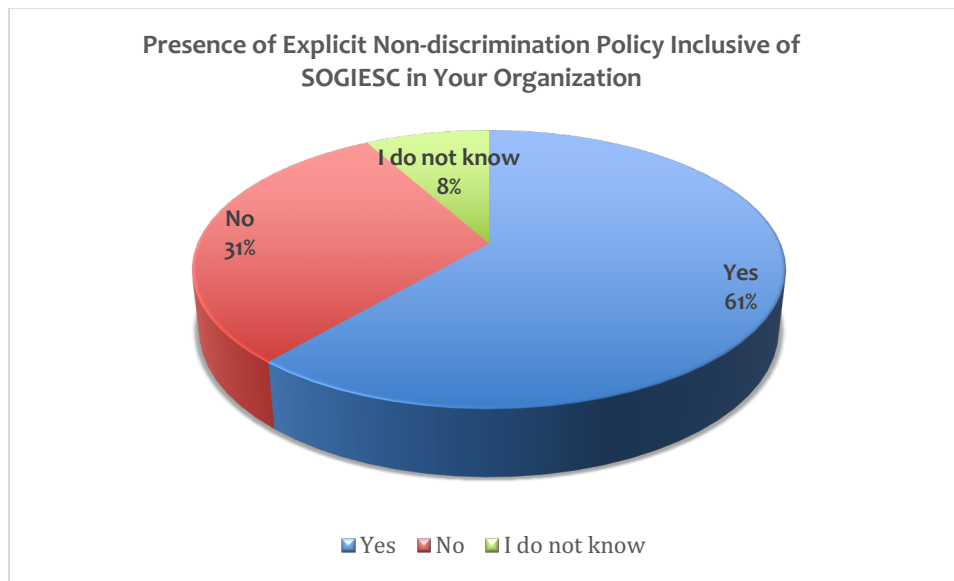
3.1.4 Other models

In referral networks, organisations refer clients and constituents to partner groups for complementary services. The Zimbabwe Sexual Rights Alliance refers victims of abuse to counselling partners. Umbrella bodies representing a sector and supporting member organisations. The Counselling Services Unit trains and certifies other counsellors working on LGBTIQ+ issues. ZANNP+ coordinates the national HIV response, including outreach through community groups.

3.2 Organizational Characteristics and Policies

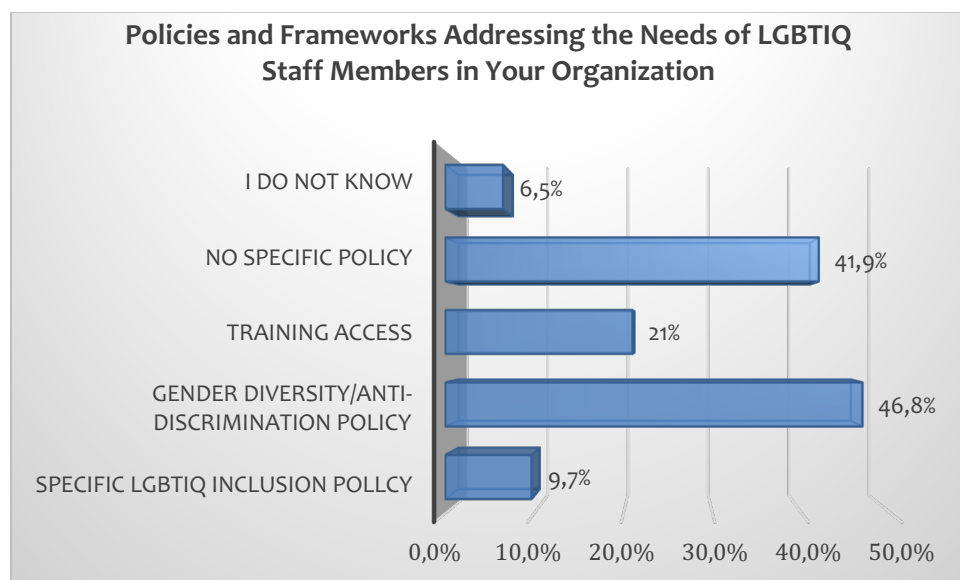
Figure 2 provides useful insights into organisations' policies around non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Having an explicit non-discrimination policy that includes these factors is an important step towards promoting inclusion and protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals. The majority (61.3%) of respondent organisations reported having a non-discrimination policy that explicitly includes SOGIESC. This demonstrates that issues of sexual orientation and gender diversity are being recognised and addressed in policy at many organisations. However, over a third (30.6%) still need such inclusive non-discrimination policies. This represents a significant gap, as individuals within these organisations may need robust protections from discrimination or avenues for recourse.

Figure 2: Presence of an Explicit Non-discrimination Policy that includes SOGIESC



The data in Figure 3 below provides a useful comparison of policies that broadly address diversity and non-discrimination versus those that specifically focus on including LGBTIQ populations. It is positive that nearly half (46.8%) of organisations reported having general diversity/non-discrimination policies in place. This indicates many recognise the importance of promoting inclusive and equitable workplaces. However, the much lower percentage that has an actual specific LGBTIQ-inclusive policy (only 9.7%) suggests issues facing LGBTIQ+ employees may not be directly and comprehensively addressed in most organisations. One organisation that works on GBV noted, *“But our policies are very clear that we don’t discriminate on gender or sexual orientation. I think we haven’t programmed around LGBTIQ+ as a project per se, we haven’t responded to that. I’m looking at a woman who has been abused, that’s my interest. I don’t have to then go into the specific details of asking whether you are a lesbian woman or whether you are a trans woman, if you are a woman, you are a woman”*. General policies alone may not adequately convey support or protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals, who often face unique forms of discrimination. Policies need to name issues like sexual orientation, gender identity, etc., explicitly. The large proportion (41.9%) with no dedicated policy at all indicates significant gaps in support and safeguards for LGBTIQ+ staff that require attention.

Figure 3: Policies and Frameworks within Organisations to Address the Needs of LGBTIQ



3.3 Sensitization and Training

There was also a need to examine the presence of sensitisation and training on SOGIESC issues in the wider civil society organisations. The data suggests that while over 40% of organisations have provided some sensitisation or training on SOGIESC issues, nearly half (46.8%) have yet to offer any training. With training and awareness-raising, policies alone may translate to true cultural change or acceptance within an organisation. Staff may need help understanding issues facing LGBTIQ+ colleagues. Training helps ensure non-discrimination policies are properly implemented and concerns are appropriately addressed when they arise. It builds capacity for inclusion. The organisations surveyed had various experiences with LGBTIQ+ inclusion training over the years. Regarding training, one key informant highlighted that *“Not specifically (LGBTIQ+), but it's embedded in other trainings on the definitions of gender, on the stigma, on appreciating everyone, on issues of inclusion rather, because we are an inclusive organisation as well”*. Some recalled the specific events that had educated their staff.

In 2022, one organisation remembered attending provincial stakeholders' meetings focused on sexual orientation, gender identity and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) hosted by advocacy groups. This provided their employees with important updated knowledge on related issues. Others noted that “the past years” generally saw discussions incorporated around gender expression and sexual orientation, though exact dates were unclear. Workshop topics shifted and matured over time to embrace broader concepts. One respondent recalled a 2016 training held by GALZ titled “Boxes and Binaries” that examined rigid social expectations. This suggested the early adoption of critical theory. Workshops organised by the Sexual Rights Center, such as Looking In Looking Out sessions promoting thoughtful reflection, were also mentioned. Inclusivity and protection from harassment were developing priorities, too, as one policy from last year illustrated. However, they noted content addressing LGBTIQ+ communities specifically was missing. While approaches and years varied, most had engaged with the issues to some degree through collaborative efforts. There appeared room to strengthen understanding and safeguarding as acceptance evolved in Zimbabwean society and workplaces. Ongoing participation in such events remained important.

The findings suggest that while many civil society organisations want to provide sensitisation training to promote inclusion, significant obstacles prevent them from doing so. As seen in Table 2, the most reported barriers were lack of funding and skills to conduct such training. Even the most well-intentioned organisations will need proper resources to host educational sessions. However, it is concerning that some of the barriers appear rooted in underlying homophobic and transphobic attitudes, particularly at senior leadership levels. Over a quarter of respondents claimed that sensitisation on SOGIESC issues was somehow separate from an organisation's core work. This suggests that some organisations do not view such issues as legitimate diversity concerns. A small portion noted that training must be consistent with “cultural values” - a dog whistle often used to justify the exclusion of LGBTIQ+ identities. Additionally, the lack of will from top managers to support sensitisation implies that inclusion may not be a real priority for those in power. When senior officials do not champion diversity, it sends a signal that bias will be tolerated. Perhaps most troubling was the acknowledgement that Zimbabwe's hostile political climate towards homosexuality, as set by the state, filtered down to make supporting training difficult. This demonstrates how negative national discourse and policies can undermine inclusion efforts even within civil society. While resource constraints present practical barriers, the survey findings point to more profound ideological resistance within organisational culture as barriers, too.

Table 2: Barriers to Sensitisation on SOGIESC by Mainstream CSOs

	Number	Percentage
Lack of funding	22	35.5%
Not part of our core business	17	27.4%
Staff disinterested.	6	9.7%
Operational environment	24	38.7%
Not consistent with our cultural/societal values	14	22.6%
Lack of required skills	13	21%
Not compatible organisational culture (We don't entertain such kind of people at our organisation)	1	1.6
Staff disinterested	1	1.6%
Lack of will by senior management	1	1.6%
Shrinking civil space to promote such ideas	1	1.6%

3.4 Collaboration Experiences

The data presented in Figure 4 provides insight into the level of collaboration civil society organisations in Zimbabwe have engaged in with LGBTIQ advocacy groups. Somewhat

positively, over half (51.7%) of respondents indicated they had previously partnered with GALZ, Zimbabwe's foremost LGBTIQ+ rights organisation, or other similar groups. This signals that at least a portion recognise the importance of including sexual and gender minorities in their work. However, the finding also implies that nearly half (48.3%) of surveyed organisations have never engaged with or worked alongside LGBTIQ+ advocates. For these groups, issues impacting the LGBTIQ+ community may not be on their radars or priorities at all. Without outreach and partnership with LGBTIQ+ leaders, it is difficult for allies to truly understand the lived challenges and advocate effectively on related matters. While showing some progress, there appears to be significant untapped potential for increased partnership between civil society and LGBTIQ+ advocates. Broader linkages could strengthen inclusion programming and policy reforms and make communities safer and more equal for all.

Figure 4: Working with an LGBTIQ Organisation in Zimbabwe

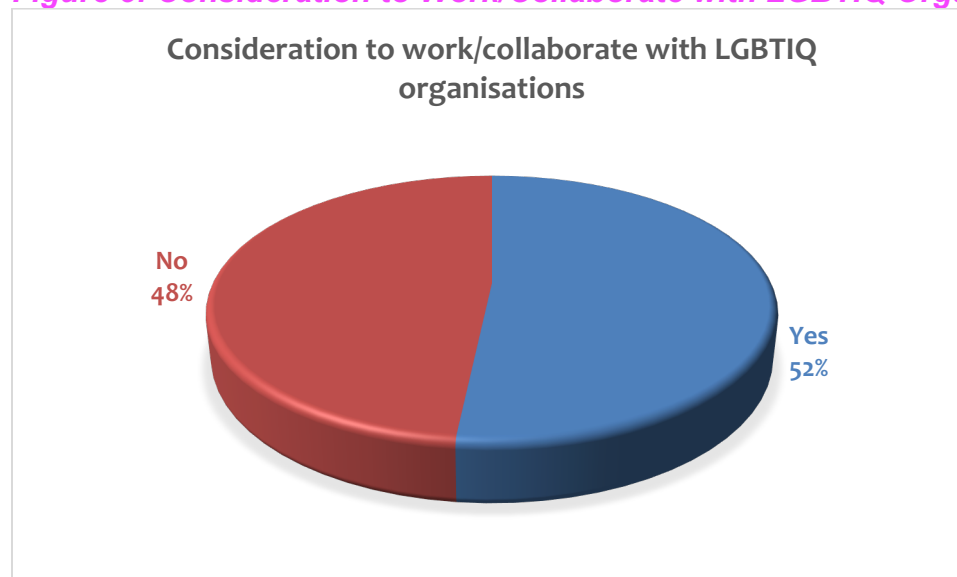


The survey findings provide an important perspective on perceptions versus reality when collaborating with LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe. Of those organisations that previously partnered with groups like GALZ, the majority (71%) reported facing no negative reactions or backlash from other entities. This suggests that for most, fears of repercussions are unfounded based on experience working alongside LGBTIQ+ leaders. While homophobia and transphobia are undeniably problems in Zimbabwean society, the data implies that, in practice, cooperation may be more accepted than some assume. When civil society establishes relationships grounded in principles of inclusion and human rights, the state and peers do not actively punish this approach for many organisations. However, it is still concerning that nearly a third did perceive or experience some form of negative response. Even one incident of reprisal remains too many. Furthermore, although the survey did not examine the possibility that some groups self-censor due to anxiety over potential future blowback if advocacy became too visible or vocal, qualitative data through interviews shows this is the case. In this case some organisations would then rather prefer to stick to familiar territories rather than explore opportunities for collaboration outside their everyday landscapes. This highlights how important it is for allies to overcome preconceptions and make judgments based on taking real action

instead of unfounded worries. Reducing stigma requires leadership that sets an example through solidarity in action rather than inaction led by self-stigma. At the same time, more must be done to eliminate all forms of reprisal over time.

The data in Figure 5 sheds light on attitudes toward future collaboration among those civil society organisations that had not previously partnered with LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe. Encouragingly, over half (51.7%) expressed willingness to work with such organisations if the opportunity arose. This demonstrates open-mindedness within at least a segment of the surveyed population toward the worth and importance of inclusion. However, nearly as many (48.3%) indicated they were not willing to engage LGBTIQ+ organisations in the future. For these entities, factors like bias, lack of education, or restrictive mandates may still present barriers to embracing the full diversity of Zimbabwean communities. Without buy-in and active support among this segment, progress in promoting the rights of sexual and gender minorities will likely remain uneven.

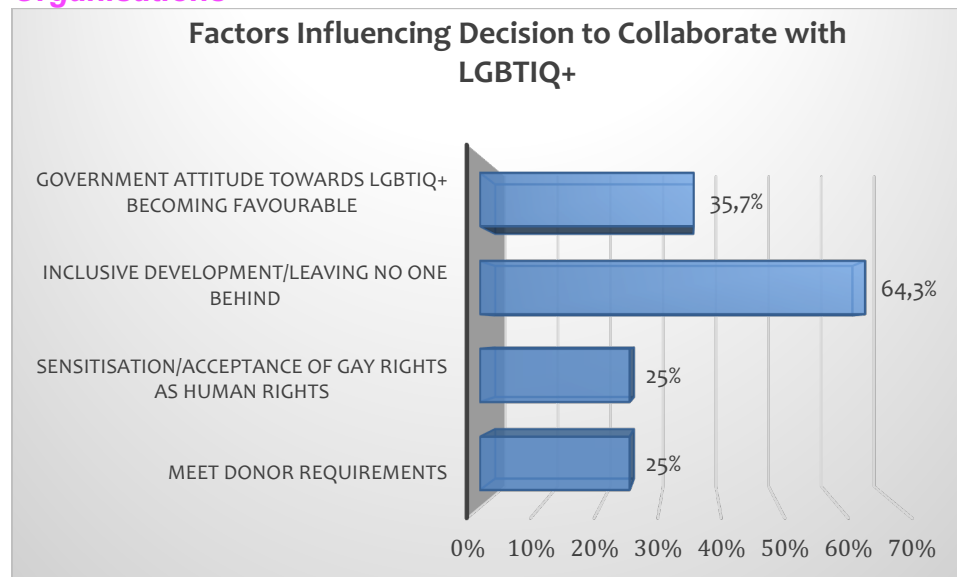
Figure 5: Consideration to Work/Collaborate with LGBTIQ Organisations



The survey results provide insight into key considerations that may drive civil society organisations' decisions around partnering with LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe. Meeting donor requirements appeared prominently as a potential motivation, with one-quarter citing this as an influencing factor (Figure 6 below). This underscores how reliance on external funding sources can shape behaviours and priorities within the sector. Gaining acceptance from their members also ranked highly for one-quarter of respondents. This points to the ongoing need for sensitisation among the public and within organisations. Most notable was the strong majority (64.3%) who felt meeting inclusive development criteria would impact willingness to collaborate. This emphasises a growing realisation within development circles of the importance of “leaving no one behind”. However, over one-third highlighted that negative government attitudes still present a major hindrance. As long as state rhetoric and policies propagate stigma, some organisations may have to tread carefully. The findings demonstrate how perceptions are influenced through multiple avenues - not just internal philosophies but also donor pressure, peer views, and the overarching political landscape. A holistic strategy is

required to address these levels' barriers through advocacy, capacity-building, and ally mobilisation over the long haul. As one key informant noted, "I would like to see other civil society organisations being involved in LGBTIQ+ work of their own volition respectfully, involving communities, "not just to conform to donor pressures or gain legitimacy from donors.

Figure 6: Factors Influencing the Decision to Collaborate with LGBTIQ Organisations

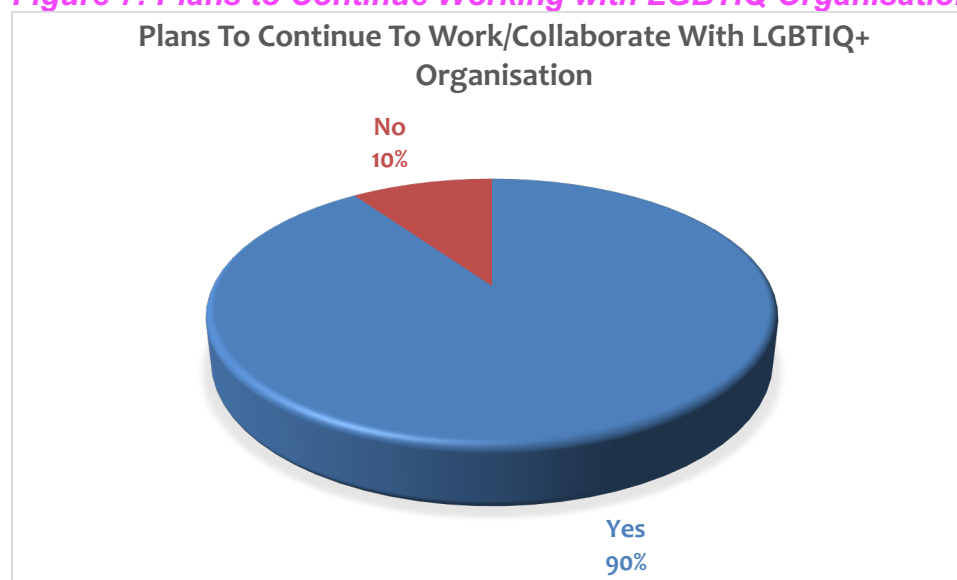


The results provide valuable insight into how civil society organisations in Zimbabwe have viewed the impact and outcomes of past partnerships with LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups. Encouragingly, over half of the respondents (51.6%) who collaborated with such groups considered the experience highly effective, signifying that meaningful work was done through these alliances. Nearly a quarter also saw benefit, though to a lesser degree. Only a small minority maintained a neutral perspective. 6.4% reported perceiving collaboration as ineffective, suggesting that the results are often positive rather than negative when outreach is undertaken. This bodes well for additional relationship-building in the future. The results point to collaboration as a worthwhile approach when implemented well. By learning from past successes, new relationships could be strategically forged to chip away at remaining skepticism and benefit a wider portion of Zimbabwean society.

The data provides positive insights into the future partnerships between civil society organisations and LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe. An overwhelming majority (90.3%, Figure 7) of those collaborating with such groups expressed their intention to continue doing so. This demonstrates high levels of commitment among allies who have directly experienced the benefits of inclusion. Their ongoing support will help drive progress. However, it's important to recognise the small yet significant percentage (9.7%) who do not plan to sustain these relationships. Addressing root causes preventing even a few partners from remaining engaged long-term is important for strengthening the sector's cohesiveness. Ensuring sustainability requires ongoing evaluation of efforts to maintain effectiveness over the changing landscape. Still, the overwhelmingly positive

outlook bodes well if paired with follow-through. With continued efforts to support, learn from and bring new actors on board, partnerships show great potential to advance rights and well-being for LGBTIQ+ communities in Zimbabwe into the future.

Figure 7: Plans to Continue Working with LGBTIQ Organisations



The survey findings provide insight into the barriers preventing some civil society organisations from partnering with LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe. Fear of negative repercussions appeared as a primary deterrent, with over two-fifths (Table 3) acknowledging concerns over potential backlash. Given the violent history and brutal struggles LGBTIQ+ organisations have been through, this is not surprising. In an environment with ongoing homophobia and transphobia, trepidations around blowback are understandable, though unfortunate. Nearly as many also cited inconsistencies with cultural values as a hindrance. However, this reveals how culture is often wielded as a justification for exclusion rather than as a complex, evolving set of traditions. True cultural shifts take dialogue. Similarly, fears over mere association with LGBTIQ+ communities reflected ongoing stigma. Reducing such anxieties requires confidence built through compassion. Interestingly, financial limitations were only selected by just over a quarter as an issue. This implies that resource barriers alone do not fully explain reluctance and that cultural factors also play a powerful role. Somewhat concerning was the one-fifth who cited disinterest from their staff, pointing to the need for internal sensitisation within all organisations. While practical challenges exist, much resistance appears rooted in prejudice rather than pragmatism. Comprehensive strategies must simultaneously address fears, biases and knowledge gaps through relationship-building over the long term.

Table 3: Reasons influencing not working with LGBTIQ organisations

	Number	Percentage
Lack of funding	8	27.6%

Not a priority	7	24.1%
Staff disinterested.	5	17.2%
Fear of backlash	13	44.8%
Not consistent with our cultural values	12	41.4%
Fear of being associated with LGBTIQ+	10	34.5%
Not consistent with our religious beliefs	2	6.8%

N=29

3.5 Challenges and Barriers

One challenge that emerged from qualitative discussions is isolationism. LGBTIQ+ organisations face hostile and homophobic attitudes from organisations that are outside their communities. As one key informant noted, *‘And you will then find that you know, if you are talking to anti-LGBTIQ groups, the moment that they realise that you are an LGBTIQ organisation or leader, they will completely tune out...So, I think that isolationism is a problem. It is detrimental’*. Another key informant added that:

However, stigma and discrimination remain a big challenge. And even when you look at the current supporting partners that we have, whilst they support the LGBTIQ agenda as far as HIV prevention is concerned, mental health and other issues, you still find individuals within those organisations who have a negative attitude towards the LGBTIQ and who are likely going to be giving you support because it's their role in the organisation to do that, because it's part of their job. But in actual essence, you find that they are not committed personally.

On the one hand, LGBTQ groups understandably keep their distance for safety reasons, given hostile societal pressures. When outright dismissed or feared by the opposition, withdrawing into one's community feels necessary. However, as the respondent notes, this isolation is also “detrimental” - it prevents bridging differences through open exchange that could foster understanding over time. When any side automatically “tunes out” the other, no room exists for influence or coalition. In this case, LGBTIQ+ organisations would rather hold back and work in familiar territories.

It was also noted that *“We tend to want to lean into working with people who we feel comfortable with, rather than extending to try and build that allyship.”* Interestingly, even within the LGBTIQ+ sector itself, some isolation was reported due to fears of infiltration or backlash. It was explained that *‘And again, working within the LGBTIQ+ movement, I think there often is some isolationism that tends to happen. I think it comes from a space of, you know, partly fear because a lot of LGBTIQ+ organisations are often scared of either being infiltrated, they are all cognisant of being criminalised, either directly or indirectly. This intra-community divide suggests fears have grown so strong that unified solidarity becomes threatened. Another concern, however, is the limited capacity of LGBTIQ+ organisations around effective coalition/partner building. The research did not come across any training or capacity-building initiative geared towards increasing the capacity of organisations to build effective coalitions. Even key informants did not provide*

any stories on capacity-building initiatives they have or are engaged in. To make gains against injustice requires drawing together diverse voices, not keeping them segregated. While self-protection must be balanced with outreach, overcoming isolation demands rebuilding trust through compassionate, consistent engagement wherever feasible. Small confidence-building measures could help, like establishing open communication protocols or joint training emphasising common ground. Fear-based withdrawal may gradually transform into courageous interconnection and mobilisation with care and consistency.

The LGBTIQ+ space is fraught with tension regarding identity politics and the safeguarding of 'one's space'. In the first instance, some LGBT groups claim no one else can speak on their behalf. Hence, they are anti-collaborating with those outside their 'turf'. The insider-outsider discourse is very strong. There appear to be ongoing tensions between valuing distinct community spaces while embracing collaboration across differences within the LGBTIQ+ advocacy sphere in Zimbabwe. Conversely, marginalised groups understandably wish to self-determine priorities and define their narratives without outside co-opting issues. After facing erasure, safeguarding hard-won platforms is crucial. However, adopting an overly rigid "insider-outsider" mindset risks alienating potential allies and dividing advocacy power. No single issue or identity encompasses all discrimination fully. Intersectionality demands recognising shared interests across diverse experiences of injustice. An "anti-collaboration" stance also overlooks how networking can cultivate understanding to dismantle categorical divides. With care, outsider groups may become knowledgeable supporters without appropriating leadership. Rather than antagonism, a cooperative approach balancing autonomy and unity holds promise. Community-driven work sets the agenda, while open communication helps forge cross-cutting solidarity based on mutually agreed principles of dignity. Leadership does not demand insisting no one else can represent an issue but inviting diverse voices aligned in purpose. An "insider" identity need not preclude seeing shared humanity across everyone striving for justice. Both safeguarding distinct platforms and embracing strategic collaboration will likely strengthen advocacy - if approached with empathy, nuance and consensus around priorities. Strict boundaries may protect, but partnerships can empower.

There are ongoing challenges regarding resource politics, perceptions, and lack of cultural competency that hinder partnership-building between LGBTIQ+ communities and broader CSOs in Zimbabwe. This can be linked to the insider/outsider politics discussed above where organisations may feel 'entitled' to specific sector resources. Firstly, in the context of limited funding, some LGBTIQ+ groups view mainstream CSOs more as competitors than potential allies in jointly leveraging resources. These siloed groups could otherwise strengthen one another. Secondly, toxic confrontations may arise if CSOs are perceived as inadequately understanding minorities' lived experiences and culture. When outsiders lack knowledge of community terminologies and practices or demand adaptation without sensitivity, resentment builds. However, assuming everyone inherently knows these intricacies also risks alienating potential supporters. Prejudging others as intentionally insulting neglects the learning process needed for cross-cultural exchange. Both communities would benefit from recognising their interdependence amid scarce funding while embracing learning as an ongoing process. LGBTIQ+ organisations must

utilize an intersectional approach in their activities to ensure a shared understanding and advocacy of oppression. An intersectional approach offers a counterweight to the tendency to flatten and invisibilise the distinctions between LGBTQI+ experiences within the community itself and in their engagement with broader civil society. The LGBTQI+ community is made up of many distinct groups from across a broad spectrum of identities.

LGBTIQ organisations must understand how gender, sexuality, race, class and other identity factors intersect and cumulatively influence people's lived experiences. This will help recognize the importance of collaborating through an intersectional lens. Advocacy under an intersectional lens will bring united diverse voices to lobby government for a more inclusive society protecting rights of all. Amplifying intersecting lived realities will drive impactful policy changes. CSOs must proactively boost competency, and LGBTIQ+ networks nurture patience and guidance as awareness grows. Constructive engagement is key - through open yet prudent discussions clarifying needs without accusation, shared exploration of issues respectfully addresses misconceptions over confrontation. With care and commitment, collaboration based on mutual growth in cultural humility can strengthen all.

Several mainstream civil society organisations were blunt that they do not engage with the LGBTIQ+ community because it is against their moral standing and organisational culture. "These have been part of the pushback against LGBTIQ+, since historically the civil society space has always been tenuous, now imagine bringing in controversial LGBTIQ+ issues", said one key informant. Another key informant refused to participate in the survey, noting, "Sorry, I am not interested in this topic. Next time, explore the pros and cons of LGBTIQ+ versus polygamy and who benefits." This perspective highlights a significant barrier to greater collaboration - opposition from within the civil society sector itself due to moral objections or fears related to LGBTIQ+ issues. As one respondent bluntly stated, for some organisations, working with LGBTIQ+ communities go against their institutional culture and belief systems. In a context where the space for advocacy is already tense, introducing "controversial" topics is understandably viewed as risky. However, framing LGBTIQ+ rights as solely a moral debate risks normalising discrimination by denying people's lived realities. Further, refusing all engagement risks alienating sexual minorities while doing little to change stigmatising views over time through principled discussion. A more constructive approach recognises the sensitivity around establishing trust and the moral imperative of upholding dignity for all. With care and commitment, sensitisation shows how equality defends shared humanitarian values rather than violating them. Outright refusal to engage also overlooks the complexity of social issues and the possibility of common ground. While immediate cooperation may not be feasible, establishing open communication channels to reduce fear and build understanding presents long-term opportunities. Pragmatic perseverance in cultivating a willingness to learn from diverse perspectives, not rigid stances, seems most conducive to progress - even if incremental. Dialogue tends to transform stigmas more than separation.

Some mainstream organisations claim diversity policies, but these remain on paper. They cited the need for more resources/funding to allow them to extend beyond their current mandates. In this case, diversity policies are simply for window dressing. This response

reveals a key challenge - that diversity policies within mainstream organisations are sometimes more rhetoric than reality due to resource limitations constraining implementation. While establishing inclusive policies on paper signifies an intent toward non-discrimination, meaningful change also demands concrete operationalisation through dedicated funding and priorities. Without proper follow-through, policies risk becoming merely superficial "window dressing." For organisations with mandate restrictions and tight budgets, upholding diversity policies comprehensively across all activities may seem infeasible. However, this should not preclude smaller, strategic steps to embed inclusion even within existing constraints. Sensitivity training, informal referral networks, or joint community initiatives requiring minimal expenditure can help move policies from paper to practice without massive overhead. Demonstrating an ongoing good-faith effort builds credibility. Lack of funding may constrain scope but not willingness to advocate or advise where able. Commitment to empowering diversity's defenders signals true allyship over empty sloganeering. With open communication and a solution-oriented focus, resource scarcity need not justify inaction or call into question commitments. Proving policies more than performative involves humility about limitations and perseverance in cultivating understanding through action.

A key aspect that has also made it difficult for LGBTIQ+ organisations is that they are themselves disjointed. There is no movement but collectives and loose networks who fight against each other, focus on bringing each other down and misinforming funders about each other. One key informant noted, *"Before we even talk about other organisations outside. No, we are not united. I think in Zimbabwe, we are disjointed, I guess, because you would realise that the L wants to stand as L and doesn't want to associate with the G. If I am a G, I want to stay in the lane of G's, I don't want to associate with the L's, the G, they don't want to associate with the T, the T does not want to associate with the L."* Another key informant also noted that:

"What I have personally experienced is that there's a lot of mistrust, a lot of pretences, a lot of, I don't know how to put it, but you don't have people coming together, maybe it's because of trust issues, maybe it's because of competition, which I think is also another reason, competition for limited resources, and for that reason, you find each organisation pushes its agenda, and you are likely going to have XX talking about HIV prevention, treatment and care interventions without thinking of the other organisations".

This militates against working as a united movement to confront especially hostile mainstream civil society groups. It was further noted that "And there are a lot of fights around that (identity). I think we have a problem in developing a stronger movement in Zimbabwe. We don't have a movement; everything is just disjointed because everyone wants to stay in their lane." Acknowledging that even mainstream civil society is not united just like the women's movement, it is perhaps helpful for LGBTIQ+ to put their efforts together to forge collaborations outside their communities. In most cases, each LGBTIQ+ member is doing their own thing, sourcing their funding and if the funding they get is finished, they move on, they do not reach out to each other to pull resources together amongst themselves or broader civil society.

Specifically on collaboration with women civil society groups, it has been noted that the difficulty is that they disregard intersectionalities and that women's struggles, whether

LBQ or not, can be the same. Women's movements have their agendas that serve heterosexual groups, and some are openly homophobic. They speak loudly about women's rights but forget LBQ rights. A key informant reported, *"So you find the women's spaces are not yet open. Yes, we can sit down and talk about this and give each other the correct picture of LGBTIQ+ because this is what it demands. But looking closely into the institutions, they are not open"*. Feminist solidarity with LBQT does not exist within the women's movement. There were views that the women's movement is a toxic space where gains that have been made for women do not include LBQT. They are regarded as women insofar as they don't speak about their sexual orientation in the women's movement space. One women's organisation admitted that "..., Not to say we discriminate transgender people and everything. What we have done, our definition of a woman has been mostly biological. The sex split, either you're male, or you're female".

A key informant noted, *"So everything I start to say becomes irrelevant in that space. But if I go into that space and talk about my issues without talking about my sexuality, the movement is more accepting. People will sit with you, have lunch, and talk about everything. But the moment you speak about your sexuality, you automatically become a predator. Everyone wants to be away from you"*. To reinforce that intersectionality is not applied to LBQTs, a key informant from a women's organisation stated, "Well, we do recognise there is woman-to-woman abuse, even outside of those relationships, the LGBTIQ+ relationships, there is just woman to woman abuse. So, for us, it's just you have been abused by a partner, by a woman or whatever; that doesn't matter". This failure to embrace the intersectionalities, sexual orientation and gender identity of LBQI has fueled tension and hostility, hence making collaboration between mainstream women civil society groups and LBQI communities a challenge.

3.6 Perceptions and Attitudes Towards LGBTIQ+ Communities/Organisations

The data presented in Figure 8 provides encouraging insight into how civil society organisations in Zimbabwe currently view the human rights of LGBTQ+ populations. An overwhelming majority of respondents (93.5%) affirmed their perception that LGBTIQ+ rights are human rights. This strong consensus demonstrates that among this surveyed sample, the philosophical understanding exists that all people deserve equal protection and dignity regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Such a perspective aligns with international human rights standards and rejects marginalisation based on characteristics over which individuals have no control. It signals openness within the NGO sector in Zimbabwe to champion inclusion and justice for gender and sexual minorities. While the remaining 6.5% who did not share this perception is concerning, such an overwhelming proportion agree is a promising indicator. It suggests many in this field are guided by principles of non-discrimination and compassion rather than bias. As we advance, the challenge will lie in translating this philosophical belief into concrete actions, policies and advocacy that systematically tackle ongoing discrimination and lack of legal safeguards for LGBTIQ+ Zimbabweans. Ensuring all organisations walk the talk of human rights representation in practice will require sustained commitment.

Figure 8: Perceiving LGBTIQ Rights as Human Rights



Most respondents (90%) perceive attitudes within their organisations as trending in a more positive direction over time. This indicates that for many groups, cultures of inclusion are gradually becoming more entrenched. Acceptance and sensitivity do not automatically follow but are shaped through ongoing exposure, education and relationship building. The surveyed organisations are experiencing this process of changing mindsets and norms due to their work on diversity and human rights. The 10% who felt views were not improving warrant further examination. A key informant noted,

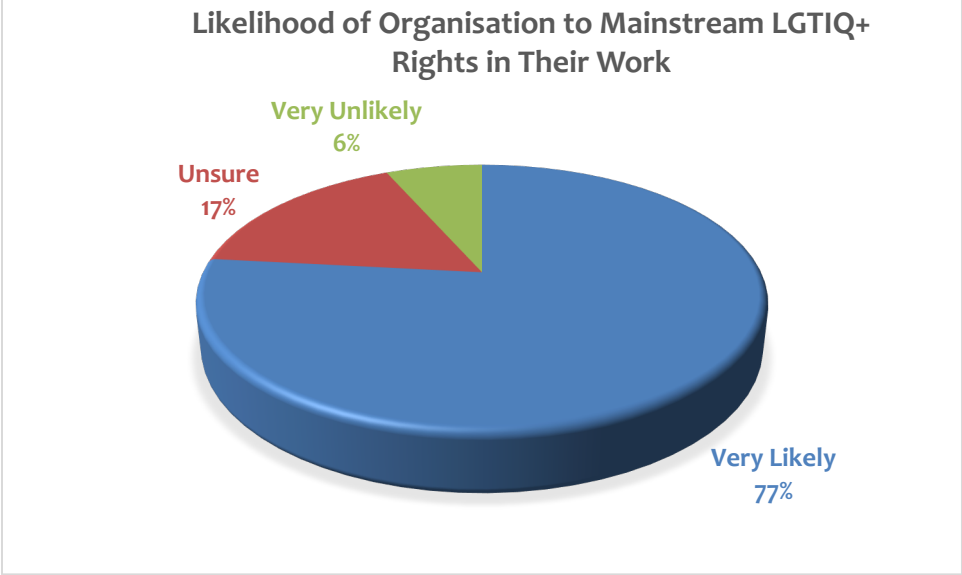
“You are more acceptable if you are going to mention key populations than LGBTIQ. I'll give you an example of the ministerial officials. They were not comfortable supporting us if we were to use LGBTIQ, but if we would come as key populations, we would be more acceptable. So that shows you the extent to which the community's identity can influence the decisions and support levels you can get different partners out there”.

Whether their roles, sectors, locations or other factors influence this disconnect remains to be discovered. Understanding why progress seems stagnant in some contexts could help boost advocacy and allyship efforts. As with many social issues, attitudes are dynamic rather than static. Continued efforts will be needed to sustain this trajectory and ensure growth in positivity leaves no one behind. Factors like leadership buy-in, practical policies and impactful programmatic partnerships will play key roles as we advance.

The survey findings provide a mostly positive outlook on the future path of LGBTIQ+ inclusion within civil society organisations in Zimbabwe. Most respondents (76.7%, Figure 9) indicated their workplaces were very likely to mainstream and protect the rights of sexual and gender minorities in the future. This demonstrates a high commitment among these organisations to embracing diversity and non-discrimination. Seeing most entities foresee themselves advancing inclusion concretely through their policies and practices over the long run bodes well. Mainstreaming rights help safeguard against backsliding when advocacy landscapes shift. That said, the 16.7% who remain unsure signal some hesitation remains. Deeper engagement may be needed to convince doubters of the

merits of comprehensive representation fully. Understanding specific reservations could guide targeted support. While relatively small, the 6.6% who deemed inclusion unlikely also warrant attention. Determining what hinders this group from pledging the same commitment as others presents an opportunity for constructive dialogue and problem-solving.

Figure 9: Likelihood to Mainstream/Be Inclusive of LGBTIQ Rights



The survey findings provide useful recommendations for strengthening partnerships between civil society organisations and LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups. Respondents emphasised the value of regular information exchange, with over 60% (Table 4) noting sharing data, research and lessons learned could enhance collaboration. Open communication was also deemed important by over half. This underscores how building understanding through transparent dialogue can foster cooperation. Raising awareness among peer organisations on LGBTIQ+ issues ranked highly, with over half favouring this approach. Ongoing sensitisation within the sector appears key to shifting mindsets and gaining buy-in over time. Identifying joint initiatives and shared causes of mutual interest was also seen as impactful by 51.6%. This points to how collaboration becomes more achievable when framed around synergistic goals rather than differences. 41.9% suggested cultivating champions and allies in leadership could boost inclusion. While challenging, influential supporters in key roles can help advance partnerships systematically. The respondents emphasised primarily information-driven, relationship-centred strategies like education, outreach and joint planning to advance collaboration. If implemented well, these recommendations promise to deepen support networks for rights and equity.

Table 4: Ways of Improving Effective Collaboration

	No.	%
Establish open communication channels and regularly engage in outreach	18	58.1%

Identify shared causes and joint initiatives of mutual interest	16	51.6%
Build awareness within other CSOs on LGBTIQ+ issues and needs	16	51.6%
Train staff on diversity, inclusion and addressing unconscious biases	16	51.6%
Coordinate advocacy messaging and actions for greater strategic impact	14	45.2%
Exchange knowledge, skills and resources through mentorship programs	13	41.9%
Include LGBTIQ+ representation in Technical Working Groups and all levels of other CSO governance	9	29%
Issue joint public statements affirming commitment to inclusion	7	22.6%
Share data, research findings and lessons learned	19	61.3%
Cultivate champions and allies within the leadership of other CSOs	13	41.9%
Develop accountability mechanisms for maintaining partnerships	11	35.5%

N=31

A respondent noted that they were not interested in promoting effective collaboration, arguing, “This may be controversial, but I am in a season where I refuse to give power to the things against us. Let the hard lines be drawn.” This response provides an important counterpoint for consideration, though a potentially limiting one if not properly understood. The respondent advocates refusing to engage or empower viewpoints they perceive as oppositional. On the one hand, this reflects understandable weariness with controversial issues that spark pushback. Taking stands comes with risks, and 'picking battles' has tactical value. However, outright disengagement from collaboration risks further entrenching divides and missing opportunities for constructive progress. As with many social justice topics, attitudes often shift most meaningfully through open yet principled discussion, not dismissal of differing views. Collaboration does not require compromise on core values but sharing space to influence perceptions respectfully over the long term. While the sentiment of avoiding giving power to oppression is valid, the view assumes views cannot change with care, patience and relationship-building. Strategic cooperation aims only to please some and carve step-by-step understandings where possible. Hard lines rightfully signal resoluteness on equality and dignity yet closing doors risks leaving people behind unnecessarily. Balance is key - standing firm on principles without writing off potential allies. Strategic solidarity considers creating buy-in, not just reacting to resistance. Complete disengagement may feel cathartic but risks forfeiting impact. With nuance and community support, one can refuse compromise without refusing progress.

The survey provided useful suggestions for how civil society organisations can productively champion LGBTIQ+ rights in the future of Zimbabwe. Respondents emphasised information-driven approaches, with the majority favouring public education to cultivate social acceptance over time (60%, Table 5). Changing perspectives requires meaningful engagement and dialogue to dispel myths. Closely related, over half (51.7%) pointed to the power of strategic communications campaigns to reframe narratives and issues. Messaging plays a key role in advocacy. Forming policy-focused coalitions that amplify collective voices also ranked highly (51.7%). United front help convey the strength and breadth of support for equality. A similarly large portion pinpointed the importance of directly inputting on law and policy reforms. While gradual, these systemic changes can make durable differences. Nearly half additionally highlighted coordinating widespread awareness efforts through press and publicity. Outreach expands understandings. 40% also identified training security forces as important to curb potential mistreatment. Protecting communities requires multifaceted support. Respondents emphasised the influence of education, alliance-building, and leveraging communications, showing how rights take root through policy work and shifting societal tides. A holistic strategy incorporates these complementary approaches.

Table 5: Ways Civil Society Organisations Can Better Advocate for LGBTIQ+ Rights and Inclusion

	Number	Percentage
Build strategic communications and public campaigns.	33	55%
Provide direct legal aid and social services for the LGBTIQ+ community	21	35%
Form coalitions and alliances to amplify advocacy impact	31	51.7%
Engage in legislative and policy reform initiatives	31	51.7%
Monitor and report on human rights violations	19	31.7%
Train law enforcement on non-discriminatory treatment	24	40%
Educate the public to promote social acceptance	36	60%
Mobilise international pressure through multilateral bodies	10	16.7%
Pursue strategic litigation of discriminatory laws and policies	18	30%
Coordinate media outreach and public awareness campaigns	29	48.3%
Fund LGBTIQ initiatives	1	1.7%

N=60

Yet a few respondents noted reservation in answering this question, with one noting, “Not obligated if it is not core business or in specific grants” and another one saying, “I don’t envy to be part of it [LGBTIQ+], so I don’t know.” These outlier responses highlight some

of the lingering hesitations that still exist around LGBTIQ+ advocacy among certain civil society actors in Zimbabwe. The first respondent implies that LGBTIQ+ rights promotion may fall outside their organisation's work's designated scope or funding parameters. While pragmatic organisational priorities are reasonable, framing equality as a tangential risk enables discrimination through inaction. Even without specific grants, opportunities likely exist to embed inclusion universally. The second respondent conveys personal reluctance rather than conscientious objection. Not personally identifying as LGBTIQ+ is understandable but should not preclude basic empathy and allyship. Dismissing advocacy due to a lack of envisioned involvement perpetuates othering of marginalised communities. Equality impacts all. These perspectives betray an absence of realising human rights as universally held, regardless of one's identity or predetermined priorities. While integrity to the mission is important, framing social justice as optional risks alienating and reifying stigmas. CSOs would do well to view inclusion through a lens of shared humanity rather than self-interest or direct affiliation alone. With openness to growth, such reservations could shift through sensitisation, highlighting how defending dignity for all upholds core values of compassion and fairness. Progress requires ongoing education and relationship-building, even within progressive spaces.

Table 6 provides valuable data on the critical skills and capacities they considered essential to strengthen future collaboration between CSOs and LGBTIQ+ organisations in Zimbabwe. The most emphasised area was leadership and diversity/cultural awareness training, with a high proportion of respondents (78%) identifying this as necessary. This suggests that their voices are crucial in shaping the future of our organisations. Closely following were networking and relationship-building skills (54.2%), showing the value placed on forging new connections. Collaborative goal-setting and assessment abilities were also considered vital by nearly half (49.2%) for joint planning and impact measurement. Over 45% pointed to fundraising and joint proposal writing skills and language and communication sensitivity training as worthwhile, highlighting the significance of financing opportunities and sensitive dialogue. Consensus building and conflict resolution received a moderately high ranking (39%), perhaps recognising partnership challenges. Similarly, around a third highlighted mentorship program. Respondents prioritised competencies such as cultural competence, teamwork facilitation, and outreach - showing how technical and social acumen can bolster LGBTIQ+ inclusion through alliances and capacity strengthening over time. Addressing these areas methodically lays the groundwork for future collaboration to thrive.

Table 6: Skills and Capacities Required to Strengthen Future Collaboration Between CSOs and LGBTIQ Organisations

Leadership and diversity/cultural awareness training	46	78%
Consensus-building and conflict-resolution skills	23	39%
Collaborative goal-setting and assessment abilities	29	49.2%
Networking and relationship-building	32	54.2%
Mentorship	18	30.5%
Fundraising and joint proposal writing skills	27	45.8%
Language and communication sensitivity training	27	45.8%

Participatory facilitation techniques	22	37.3%
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4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Recommendations for LGBTIQ+ organisations

- **Sensitisation workshops:** These sessions provide crucial cultural competence training, equipping CSOs with the understanding of issues like preferred terminology, health/legal discrimination faced, and ways to be supportive allies instead of offending wrongly. Regular brief sessions ensure skills stay updated, fostering a more inclusive and understanding organisational culture.
- **Shared priorities:** Organisations must utilise an intersectional approach to build shared priorities with broader civil society. This means focusing on everyday experiences of marginalisation and oppression that affect many minority groups. Advocating for anti-discrimination laws and inclusive policies will benefit all. We can frame our messages around mutual humanitarian values by advocating for common causes such as hate crime laws, stigma and discrimination. This approach helps facilitate buy-in across sectors and strengthens our collective impact. HIV/STI/TB and all healthcare services emphasising mental health and non-communicable diseases should be easily accessed, available and affordable across the divide. These issues affect everyone, irrespective of gender identity. Research on at-risk populations in mainstream society and LGBTIQ+ communities is also something that can be a point of convergence of different organisations.
- **Designate liaisons:** Assigning dedicated points of contact within organisations is a strategic move that formalises our partnership infrastructure. This ensures ongoing coordination through scheduled check-ins, planning discussions, and troubleshooting concerns, fostering a more efficient and effective collaborative environment.
- **Educational materials:** Fact-based briefing sheets condense topics into one-pagers. Digital/print info campaigns raise awareness of the needs of underserved populations through social media graphics and publications distributed widely.
- **Advocacy networks:** Formal communities unite sectors for idea-sharing, events, and proposing collaborative submissions to oversight bodies. Institutionalised forums signal high-level backing.
- **Mentorship:** Pairing encourages skills transfer like proposal writing, fundraising, and activism strategies through guided support relationships that strengthen both parties' capacities over the long run.
- **Amplify allies:** Uplifting voices of leaders internally championing inclusion within larger organisations helps inspire and apply pressure for more equitable policies from within.
- **Communication protocols:** Guidelines for promptly/respectfully addressing incidents prevent escalation and restore trust through transparency and problem-solving.
- **High-impact initiatives:** Smaller joint projects establish cooperation proofs-of-concept through achievable goals requiring minimal logistics that serve communities directly.
- **Patience and consensus:** Maintain a commitment to equality while embracing an ongoing open learning curve through inclusive decision-making and flexibility.

4.2 Recommendations for broader CSOs

- **Inclusive policies:** State zero-tolerance for harassment; outline protections and procedures for raising/addressing issues to make LGBTIQ+ partners feel safe.
- **Designate liaison:** A dedicated point person makes coordination easier by acting as the primary contact for planning meetings and facilitating group introductions.
- **Cultural competency:** Training workshop topics could include pronoun usage, relationship recognition, health disparities, and historical/legal discrimination to foster empathy. A key informant added, “I think it has more to do with education and bombarding people, flooding people with information. Because people can only welcome an idea spent on them.”
- **Joint work opportunities:** Examples include advocacy events on policy reforms, community forums on legal rights, health drives & research on at-risk groups to benefit the missions.
- **Attend LGBTIQ events:** Visiting pride festivals/meetings raises awareness without dominating the agenda or resources. It also builds name recognition as an ally. A key informant noted, “I’d like to see other civil society organisations become involved in LGBTI work of their own volition in a respectful way that involves communities.”
- **Mentorship:** Pair junior LGBTIQ+ & CSO staff for guidance on proposal/report writing, public speaking, and fundraising best practices through scheduled check-ins. Mentorship efforts must be based on the co-creation of knowledge and equal participation, as LGBTIQ+ organisations often complain of imposed mentorship plans.
- **Amplify impact:** Circulate LGBTIQ+-authored petitions, share social media campaigns, and sign onto joint submissions to demonstrate a united front vis-à-vis lawmakers.
- **Collaborative proposals:** Pursue funding by pairing LGBTIQ+ issues expertise with CSO project management experience to multiply organisational capabilities.
- **Open communication:** Ensure regular networking allows a flow of information on newly forming partnerships, challenges arising, and ways to support one another.
- **Ongoing education:** Schedule refresher workshops every 6-12 months to reinforce understanding of evolving community perspectives and terminologies.
- **Institutionalise LGBTIQ+ rights in organisations:** One key informant noted, “But let’s move to the institutions. So that we start to institutionalise the whole process to allow LGBTIQ in the spaces. So, let’s move away from the rhetoric and dig deeper into the institutions that should be umbrellas for these issues.”

4.3 Recommendations for Funding Agents

- **Targeted collaborative funding:** Call for proposals requiring joint LGBTIQ-CSO initiatives budgets, mentorship, materials, etc., incentivising partnerships.
- **Capacity building:** Support sensitivity training, skills exchanges, organisational assessments that boost retention, and proposal writing those benefits funded organisations.
- **Demonstration initiatives:** For example, fund causes addressing health and advocacy through a united coalition of 5+ organisations showing strength in diversity.

- **Flexibility:** Permit using a % of awards on collaborative costs like meetings to cement relationships and coordinate plans.
- **Engage LGBTIQ+ leaders:** Consult communities in designing selection committees, criteria, and funding cycles to uphold equitable access.
- **Research:** Prioritize studying criminalisation impacts, barriers facing intersex groups, etc., filling data gaps on intersectional issues.
- **Train program officers:** Include periodic workshop modules familiarising staff with issues to offset potential bias in evaluation.
- **Champion inclusion:** Publish impact stories emphasising how funded projects bring groups together for greater collective impact.
- **Networking forums:** Convene every 6-12 months for partners to meet, explore synergies, troubleshoot, showcase work, inspiring future cooperation.
- **Multi-year funding:** Provide 3yr+ operational grants allowing long-term goal planning versus piecemeal projects and short funding cycles.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research report illuminates the experiences of LGBTIQ+ organisations in Zimbabwe as they collaborate with the broader civil society. It uncovers a history of discrimination and highlights the challenges these organisations face due to societal attitudes and political rhetoric. Despite the obstacles, the report reveals the resilience of LGBTIQ+ movements in Zimbabwe. Activists have strategically navigated a complex landscape, balancing visibility with safety and leveraging international human rights frameworks to garner support. The report acknowledges the significant role of digital platforms and social media in connecting activists and amplifying their voices. The study emphasises the importance of addressing barriers to sensitisation on SOGIESC and promoting a comprehensive understanding of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights. It highlights the need for improved collaboration and partnership between civil society and LGBTIQ+ organisations. By fostering inclusivity, advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights, and strengthening capacities, civil society can contribute to the gradual but impactful evolution of LGBTIQ+ movements in Zimbabwe. This research report provides valuable insights and recommendations for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ organisations and individuals in Zimbabwe. These findings will inform and guide future efforts to promote equality, non-discrimination, and human rights for all.

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