





1. **Executive Summary: The 30th Anniversary**
2. **GALZ Vision, Mission and Values**
3. **Director’s Note**
4. **Programme’s Manager Note**
5. **Financial Overview**
   1. *Year on year overview*
   2. *Appreciation for contributors*
6. **Achievements from the year**

*6.1 Projects completed*

*6.2 Advocacy*

*6.3 Counselling and Psychosocial Support and Membership*

*6.4 Diversity, Integration and Sustainability*

*6.5 Information and Communications*

1. **The Advent of Covid-19**
2. **Contact Information**



AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ART Anti-retroviral therapies

CBD Central business district

CSO Civil Society Organization

GNC Gender non-conforming

HIV Human immunodeficiency virus

IBBS IBBS Integrated Biological &. Behavioural Surveillance Survey

IDAHOT International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

KP Key Populations

LBQ Lesbian, bisexual and queer women

LGBTIQ+ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer persons and other sexual minorities

MoHCC Ministry of Health and Child care

MSM Men who have sex with men

NAC National AIDS Council

PEP Post exposure prophylaxis

PrEP Pre-exposure prophylaxis

Trans Transgender persons who may be transgender men or transgender women

WHO World Health Organisation

ZHRC Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

ZNASP Zimbabwe National AIDS Strategic Plan

ZRP Zimbabwe Republic Police

GALZ, formerly known as the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, is a membership-based association of LGBTI people in Zimbabwe. The GALZ national office is in Harare, with three resource centres in Bulawayo, Mutare and Masvingo serving members over the age of 18. Through broader advocacy, lobbying and partner relationships with donors, GALZ resource centres offer information resources including a research library, legal aid, medical referrals and basic clinical services, counselling and psychosocial support and social activities to members. 

This report provides an overview of the major activities of GALZ undertaken in 2020, as well as events that unfolded within the broader macro environment that affected its operations. It focuses on the administration of the organisation, as well as the achievements of the programming department whose role in various units is to fulfil the GALZ mandate – the representation, protection and promotion of the rights and freedoms of LGBTI persons as equal citizens of Zimbabwe. GALZ celebrated 30 years of its existence as Zimbabwe celebrated it’s 40th year of Independence. These key milestones warranted reflection on the journey as well as an examination of where GALZ sees itself in future. The culmination of these reflections was the work started on the strategic plan for 2021-25, which was influenced in part by the dynamic and rapid changes experienced under the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Zimbabwe’s political balance remains delicate, and government has expressed an unwillingness to pursue wide-ranging initiatives to improve or acknowledge the rights of the LGBTI community. LGBTI persons continue to occupy a highly ambiguous place, legally and constitutionally in Zimbabwe. The growth in religious fundamentalism has impacted negatively on LGBTI social inclusion. It has acted as a sanction for condemning and victimizing LGBTI people. Religion has continued to be used by politicians to scape-goat the community as a alien and western, counter to the moral values and beliefs of Zimbabwe as a “Christian nation.”

Across the broader human rights sector, the acceptance of LGBTI human rights concerns as a collective priority remains tentative. The state, through various means, has used its unchallenged power to invade the privacy of people and on occasion used the media to publicise statements of hate speech by public officials to incite communities into targeting individuals and communities that are deemed to be undesirable by the powerful elite. Prejudice is widespread, including among those institutions that are in charge with safeguarding citizens from harm (such as the police). The broad state influence over the media, particularly through state directed media houses, has severely limited the media in its potential role to address LGBTI issues positively. Despite these challenges, GALZ continues to make considerable progress, particularly amongst civil society allies.





**Overall summary of 2020**

GALZ had a relatively successful year tied to issues of Advocacy, policy reviews and organisational development. The migration from physical to online engagement was largely influenced by the external environment and the various Government policy directions regarding Covid 19.Galz looked inwards for much of 2020 and was successful in reviewing its policies such as the Code of Conduct, Finance and Admin Manual, safeguarding and Human Resources policies. Given the growth of GALZ in the past three years, GALZ also realigned its structure and rationalised positions to reflect the increase in staff members across four cities.

GALZ was successful in engaging the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and the Gender Commission with a view to strengthening the relationship between GALZ and the commissions as well as fostering opportunities for engagement with the commissions in addressing LGBT issues. Through the support of National Aids Council, GALZ was successful in engaging traditional leaders ( chiefs and headman) for sensitisation session which created opportunities to dialogue with the traditional leaders.

Given that the landscape had changed and the GALZ strategy still had a year, it became apparent that there was need to review the Strategy to realign it to current issues and trends. We are proud to have co created our five-year Strategic Plan for 2021 to 2025. It builds on where we have come from and charts a courageous path for the course we seek to pursue in the future.

**Covid effects on operations**

Covid 19 has had adverse impact on our programming and operations as the unexpected pandemic saw a drastic decline in the physical engagements of communities. This change happened at short notice and under stressful conditions.

GALZ had to temporarily close the office in compliance with the regulations that were announced by Government. GALZ undertook an analysis of the impact of the Covid lockdown with the community that was very rapid to ensure that the measures taken by GALZ were consistent with the overall National strategies and policies to minimise the spread of COVID-19. GALZ sought to provide a working environment that was safe and without risks to its staff and membership and took steps that were reasonably practical to minimise or mitigate the risks or potential risks.

Membership encountered numerous challenges such as loss of income, employment and personal logistical problems, created by the lockdown measures. Members also experienced isolation, and psychological stress such as stress, stigma and instances of violence. GALZ redirected efforts into supporting members with a safety net ( food packs) and partnered City health through UNFPA to establish a mobile clinic at the Harare Resource Centre.

**2021 organisational goals**

We know unequivocally that we have contributed to transforming how Zimbabwean society treats LGBTI people who are amongst the most marginalized groups living in the southern African country. There is no doubt that LGBTI people face multiple intersectional reinforcing forms of discrimination, harassment, exclusion, violence, violations and suffering. Our safety and well-being as well as our dignity and personhood have been threatened in the private domain of family life, reinforced by the domination of heteronormative patriarchal models of family making. As well as in the public domain of leadership and decision making, social, economic, political, legal, health, spiritual and other areas of life. Yet we have unimpeachable evidence that we have contributed to creating spaces that are accepting, loving, nurturing and uplifting for LGBTI people.

With that past success in mind, we wholeheartedly recommit ourselves to continue to support and stand up for the promotion of all the rights of LGBTI people. It is our ambition to expand spaces that shift the tide from one of discrimination and exclusion, to one of representation, inclusion and well-being. We are committed to enhancing opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people to have employment opportunities that secure their material security, health access that ensures their bodily integrity and wellness, spiritual fulfilment and nourishment to worship or not without being demonized and accused of being the embodiment of sin, social opportunities that provide loving and caring family, friendships.

We are determined to build movements of institutions and individuals of activists that are committed to transforming attitudes, mindsets, behaviours, beliefs to end homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, lesbophobia and an aversion to intersex people. Our aim is to work together with our allies, with other LGBTI groups to mobilise resources that make our movements persistently relevant, dynamic and viable as well as effective and sustainable, ultimately availing meaningful opportunities that enable LGBTI people to fulfil their aspirations and dreams. We believe that collectively we can end injustices, claim all our human rights and continue to transform our societies.



* ***Chester Samba, Director***



**Vision**

A just society that promotes and protects human rights of LGBTIQ people as equal citizens

in Zimbabwe.

**Mission**

To promote, represent and protect the rights and interests of lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex people through

* Advocacy
* Lobbying
* Empowerment
* Education
* Research
* Provision of safe spaces in order to influence positive attitudes of the broader society

**Values**

* Dignity
* Respect
* Equality
* Accountability
* Fairness
* Accessibility









The year began with hope and enthusiasm from staff and board to serve the LGBTI constituency Nationwide. The Programmes team and Management took time to reflecting on the previous year through a planning meeting before the programme implementation started. The team did a SWOT analysis and it was clear from the deliberations that Zimbabwean context has not changed as expected within the “New Dispensation era, economically and political. Civil society space continues to shrink. The economy meltdown and high unemployment remains a challenge for all including LGBTI persons. However, the team was able to identify opportunities within government, Chapter 12 Commissions as per our Constitution, Civil society, Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and HIV sector.

Few months into the year Covid19 came in our midst as country and Global. This has an effect on the operations of business as the virus shutdown global economies, air travel and social life worldwide. Countries instituted country lockdowns as the virus affected many including frontline workers and healthcare workers. Zimbabwe, country lockdown started in March 2020. This affected GALZ program implementation plan as the team had to reconfigure programs and activities in partnership with funders and donors to respond Covid19 challenges and needs. GALZ team was able to quickly respond to the challenge and needs of communities. The community suffered from mental health issues, partner violence, shortage of basics for survival, lack of access to health and sexual reproductive services.

GALZ programmes team and management developed Covid19 operation response plan to protect staff and community from infection as service provision continued and activities. GALZ Harare recreational centre housed the Wilkins Sexual and gender-based violence clinic to serve membership and LGBTI constituency. This was done in partnership with Harare City Council clinic Wilkins and UNFPA. So far, the clinic has managed to serve at least 569 as of December 2020.

The Mutare, Bulawayo and Masvingo recreational centres continued with the referrals to PSI, city health and public health facilities. Health service provision remains a critical component under the GALZ services as communities struggle to navigate lockdown restrictions and accessing critical health services.

During the course of the year, GALZ programmes and management noted some critical gaps and trends presented by the community and stakeholders during the course of the year, 2020. These included the need to carry out a new Needs Assessment for the LGBTI constituency as the community needs have evolved and changed. The need for life skills and capacity building on the rights of the community that is transformative in nature for them to live healthy, safe and productive lives. The world has changed and technology has become the anchor for community engagement, information dissemination and interaction. GALZ needs to adopt new opportunities presented by new technologies and be innovative enough to sustain its programs during and beyond Covid19 era.

The programmes team need to model it’s work through Human Centred Approach and Human Rights approach to promote community participation, inclusion and diversity. Community feedback for the year showered the desire by communities to be involved in all spheres of GALZ work. This requires approaches that takes into account community diversity and inclusion and move away from the practice of serving part of the constituency. This conscious and unconscious culture of exclusion has been fostered by resource trends and allocation within the global donor world where HIV remains a threat to society if targets are unmet to end HIV and Aids. Men who have sex with men having a higher risk to HIV and Transgender community has seen some progress in resource allocation at National level in Zimbabwe. With at least two million allocated for MSM under the Global Fund for the past 3 years and about US500 000 earmarked for Transgender community. The LB women remain at the periphery of the HIV response and still have limited access to Sexual and Reproductive health services. GALZ programmes team took note of these trends and gaps which will be addressed in the coming year.

GALZ advocacy and programming recognizes that everyone matters in the change that the organisation is seeking. Human rights defenders and Peer Advocates have continued to play a critical role in GALZ’s work. Human rights defenders continue to amplify voices within social realms of life especially social media, public forum and in safe spaces. At least 11 Peer advocates worked throughout the country during the lockdown in the past year with the assistance of Program Officers. This eased access to communities and for GALZ to reach them with information, protective barrier methods, peer mental health support and linkage to services. Their support to the needy and those struggling with mental health issues became pivotal to GALZ work as covid-19 and its restrictions continue to affect the most vulnerable in the community. At least 413 were linked to counselling services nationwide in 2020. Awareness raising on the needs and rights of LGBTI community was scaled up through the engagements by programme 15 Officers and 10 advocates in various platforms and events held through online platforms.

Print, broadcast, social media and internet Media continues to played an important role in creating visibility of Gay and Bisexual men, Lesbian and Bisexual women, Transgender persons, intersex and non-conforming persons. Awareness and visibility efforts have, resulted in social perceptions and change in the past year as noted by the comments on various media articles produced by GALZ and other media houses. The interlink between community advocates and allies gave a strong message to the public through various media platforms for the promotion of social inclusion and protection of minority rights in Zimbabwe. GALZ continues to build partnerships Internally and External that have the interest of LGBTI community and GALZ Work. GALZ continues to explore and foster partnerships with Lawyers, Parliament, health sector, Commissioners, media, religious and traditional leaders to effect social change and promote a just society. The programmes team carried our sensitizations activities with allies, policymakers and other stakeholders as a to empower, and transform mindsets for law and policy reform. Various institutions with power and influence for social, economic and political transformation remain critical to GALZ work. GALZ will continue to foster relations with these institutions and donors to change the environment for the protection of LGBTI rights in Zimbabwe and social transformation.







As the organisation has grown in 30 years in terms of staffing, membership and scope of work, there has been need to adjust expenditure priorities in order to best accommodate staff, stakeholder and member needs. GALZ remains ever grateful to funding partners and donors within membership and wider society for their generosity which allows work to continue. ﻿During 2020, the following project grants and partners were secured to assist in the running of Programming work, maintenance of equipment and infrastructure as well

as staff retainment costs:

* Aidsfonds
* Amplify Change
* AVAC
* COC
* COMPASS
* Embassy of Sweden
* Embassy of the Netherlands
* GLOBAL FUND
* MEDICO
* MPACT
* OutRight International
* SAIH
* The Other Foundation
* ViiV

GALZ strives to be responsible with its funding, where annual audits ensure information is available in full to stakeholders, providing context behind major expense information. To this end, GALZ ensures its processes, policies and procedures are officialised and documented, with clear objectives and goals that ensure the standardisation of operations.

The Finance and Administration department also made strides in ensuring its Human Resources arm was improved to ensure streamlined activities to do with staffing and recruitment. GALZ embarked in a Job Rationalisation process that served to boost the efficiency of each unit, and the organisation as a whole.

Research carried out during the 2019-2020 audit processes reflected both a healthy financial position, but provided context for the need to stay vigilant in ensuring overall sustainability.

In recognition of the dynamic environment GALZ currently operates in, there has been need to assess the most sustainable ways to manage finances and resources. For example, with wider membership reach, and challenges experienced with travel limitations posed by Government due to the Covid-19 pandemic, logistics became a core area of development where the procurement of fuel and vehicle servicing is a key component that ensures Programming efficiency.





GALZ has been privileged to be selected to work with various complementary international funding partners . Their input work is mainly through programmatic support that allows officers to answer community needs and engage influential partners through advocacy efforts. In 2020, the PITCH and Bridging the Gaps (BtG) projects under AIDSfonds came to a close:

**Bridging the Gaps** responded to the expressed priorities and needs of sex workers, people who use drugs and people from the LGBTI community. Its community-led approach has been instrumental to achieving successful health and rights outcomes with and for key population communities. It has funded innovation and grassroots work that UN and USAID programmes do not fund, and has purposely aimed to complement and inform Global Fund and PEPFAR programmes.

**Bridging the Gaps** partners in Zimbabwe worked together towards ending AIDS among key populations through (1) a strengthened civil society that holds government to account; (2) increased fulfilment of human rights of key populations; and (3) increased SRHR and fewer infections.

**PITCH** supported community advocates to:  
• Bring about equal access to services for HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)  
• Further equal rights for marginalised people  
• Develop and strengthen the skills, organisational structures and resources needed to carry out effective advocacy, generate evidence and improve policies and practices in the HIV response  
  
**PITCH** helped individuals and organisations develop the technical skills, tools and strategies they needed to carry out effective advocacy. Through training and mentoring it has built capacities in key areas, such as political campaigning, evidence gathering, fundraising and communications, introduced rights monitoring and response systems and provided tailored technical support.  
  
PITCH has helped to build movements between population groups by encouraging coalitions to form and set joint agendas. It has harnessed the power of community advocacy by uniting multiple voices – not just within countries but regionally and across the world.

More information can be found at **https://aidsfonds.org/work/pitch** and **https://aidsfonds.org/work/bridging-the-gaps-zimbabwe**

﻿GALZ also received support from SIDA via the **Changing Faces Project** which came to an end in 2020. ﻿The Changing Faces project in the previous implementation year

strengthened capacities of policymakers, stakeholders, media houses, LGBTI community and their allies. In implementing “**Changing Faces Project**,” GALZ sought to strengthen existing and develop new tools and strategies to raise

awareness of LGBTI rights and realities in Zimbabwe. Various methodologies were adopted to achieve the such as engaging media practitioners, engagement of policymakers and strengthening the capacities of Government units and bodies that protect, promote and enforce human rights in Zimbabwe. The major thrush was to influence positive perceptions towards LGBTI persons that will in turn lead to the development of sensitive policies, a conducive environment and main-streaming of LGBTI on broader development discourse. Under this project 30 journalists were trained on sensitive and balanced reporting. ﻿To celebrate International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, IDAHOT, GALZ hosted a panel discussion under the theme “Breaking the Silence.” The panel comprised of the Dr Ruth Labode who is the Chairperson of thematic committee on health in the Parliament of Zimbabwe; Pastor Caroline Maposhere, a religious leader; Jeremiah Bamu, a renowned human rights lawyer and Samuel Matsikure a human rights Activist and GALZ Programme Manager. The panel brought to light the issues affecting LGBTI persons in Zimbabwe and the importance of speaking up hence the theme “***Breaking the Silence***.” The IDAHOT celebrations were only celebrated virtually due to adherence with Government of Zimbabwe COVID-19 regulations.









Advocacy for LGBTI persons is an overarching task that includes high level lobbying efforts, relationship building, research, training and membership coordination. The last 30 years have taught that Advocacy in a hostile environment is a process that requires persistent multichannel efforts to effect change. Having and following an advocacy strategy involving LGBTI in every process as key stakeholder is the first step, followed by identifying dialogue opportunities, key alliances and lobbying windows that serve the community.

In 2020, Advocacy initiatives had to adapt to the dynamic environment.

﻿GALZ engaged in various strategies such as grassroots advocacy where it engaged with stakeholders at community level that directly work or serve LGBTI persons. This included educators, healthcare workers,

law enforcement agencies, religious and cultural leaders. This is a measure to improve quality of life and access to services that include health and social services. GALZ worked on the inclusion of LGBTI people in mainstream development processes, including submissions to Parliamentarians and engagement with the judiciary and human rights commissioners.

**Key Activities included:**

1. Sensitization and Dialogue with the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
2. Sensitization and Dialogue with the Gender Commission
3. Participation in the Global Fund application process and concept note development representing the MSM/KP groups
4. Dialogue with Traditional Leaders across Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Bulawayo Peri-Urban
5. Dialogue with members of the ZRP Milton Park Station
6. Dissemination of the IBBS survey to strategic MSM partners i.e. NAC, MOHCC
7. Development of a Gender Diversity and Inclusion Policy
8. On-going Development of a Legal Strategy
9. Initiating the establishment of Clinical services at the Harare Resource Centre
10. Training of Human Rights documentation of GALZ Staff and other organisations in the LGBTI sector
11. Inclusion of Policy Makers namely MPs for IDAHOT Dialogue and other activities at the office
12. Training of Healthcare workers through the establishment of Health centre committees at institutions like Mpilo Central Hospital, Magwegwe Clinic, Wilkins Hospital and Tariro Hopley Clinic.
13. Training of Journalists
14. Development of a students advocacy strategy
15. Two students awarded Munhu Munhu scholarships at tertiary institutions

**2021 intended Advocacy focus areas:**

1. Decriminalisation of sodomy/ same-sex consensual sex
2. Increased engagement with law enforcement
3. Strengthening of regional and international networks and establishment of GALZ as a sector thought leader
4. Assessment of community needs as a foundation for future programming initiatives







LGBTI people in Zimbabwe live in a climate of intense Homophobia. Subsequently, LGBTI people suffer institutional, interpersonal, marginalisation, stigma and discrimination, often on a regular basis, from society, family members, peers, co-workers, classmates and even law enforcement and medical personnel. Also pertinent to the LGBTI community and sexual identity issues is the “coming out” process, and coping with the reactions of friends and family.

﻿Counselling and Advocacy are two parts of a whole; advocacy and counselling work revolves around helping diverse people and communities in need. Training of counsellors began in 1994. GALZ now has a fully fledged Counselling Department which provides health services of a broad nature to the community and has a well established referral system. GALZ counsellors are therefore a critical part of the GALZ advocacy team not just on an individual level but on the LGBTI community and systemic level, and subsequently play an essential role in documenting any violations community. Due to its highly interpersonal nature, this

Unit also works hand-in-glove with Membership officers.

The Counselling and Psychosocial support unit works with a team of “Ordaa” Advocates and Community Focal Persons at grassroots. *Ordaa* is colloquial for LGBTI person. These are trained in basic counselling skills & peer education fundamentals that enable them to identify LGBTI community challenges and ﻿needs and make appropriate referrals.

﻿GALZ established a wellness centre during the Covid-19 national lockdown period in April 2020 to serve as clinical & mental health centre that serves the medical, counselling & psychosocial support needs of the LGBTI. The clinicians are well trained for holistic management and sensitised to work with the LGBTI community.





**Trends and challenges observed from virtual counselling and mental health initiatives under Covid-19**

* 100% increase in virtual counselling & general counselling with WhatsApp therapy sessions taking bulk of time for assisting of clients
* Increased intimate partner violence among LGBTI couples die to job losses
* Increase in pressures to marry or find a partner; anxiety emanating of feeling of stagnation under lockdown
* Noted increase in blackmail, threats and extortions during the Covid-19 lockdown period
* Increase in clients verbalising and exhibiting symptoms of depression as result of the forced national lockdown emanating from restricted movement to collect medical supplies. At times there were verbal outbursts regarding why resource centres did not open everyday and why officers did not work into the night, noting feelings of safety at the resource centres than at home
* Movement restrictions deterred those who would have liked to join GALZ as most people prefer physical visits.
* Limited and delayed attendance to reported violations by the police and medical institutions
* Network challenges and faults during Covid-19 as mobile networks were clogged with so many users.
* Difficulties in conducting physical home visits and in-person sessions because of rising Covid-19 infections

**Highlights:**

* 60 new trans persons reached through dialogues on mental health
* GALZ held a 3 day Peer Educator’s training between the 1st and 3rd of September 2020. The event was conducted at Chivendera Villa, Waterfalls, Harare. A total of 55 participants attended the training workshop from organizations affiliated with the Global Fund; Sexual Rights Centre (SRC), Bulawayo & Gweru Hands of Hope (HoH), Harare GALZ from Masvingo, Mutare, Gweru, Bulawayo.
* 24 Community Directed Intervention Focal persons trained from Harare (Mufakose, Kuwadzana, Budiriro, Mufakose, Dzivarasekwa), Chitungwiza, Norton, Chinhoyi and Karoi.
* GALZ Survey (below) conducted on impact of Covid-19 on LGBTIQ community was published on **galz.org**







**Diversity is a foundational GALZ principle – acknowledging, respecting and celebrating differences of persons and subsequently supporting equality for all. GALZ as an acronym evolved to become all encompassing of all sexual and gender identities. As an association of all LGBTI people, efforts In 2020 sought to integrate the interests of all groups represented and ensure needs were met. Key to this was strengthening Affinity Groups.**

GALZ, formed in 1990 in Harare, was at the time the only place where LGBTI people could find a space. Later on in time another resource centre (Bulawayo) was opened. Most recently in the past two years, resource centres were opened in Masvingo and Mutare. While these physical centres have made it easy for LGBTI people and allies in the areas to have easy access to GALZ services and resources, the same could not be said for other LGBTI members scattered around Zimbabwe. It is as a result of the desire to ensure that services and self organizing of LGBTI people across the country is a reality, that the Affinity Groups strategy was born.

GALZ Affinity groups are a creative strategy to complement the main strategic pillar of movement building. Community members (ten and above) make up an Affinity group which is a movement-building and social empowerment exercise. Its goal is to upgrade services to LGBTI people who are members of the association and to ensure that all vital services offered by GALZ are readily accessible to all members throughout the country. It is intended that every member shall have equal opportunity to acquire training in the delivery of these services and/or equal access to them. To date GALZ has at least sixteen (16) active Affinity Groups across the country. While the Affinity Groups are self-led and their ultimate destiny self-determined, the collectives are integrated within the GALZ structures until/unless they decide to be autonomous.

﻿GALZ uses its strategic movement building pillar to sustain its gains realized over the past thirty years focusing on :

﻿• Sustaining HIV and SRHR services

﻿• Sustaining advocacy initiatives

﻿• Sustaining programmatic resources







The GALZ Information and Communication Unit was developed to carry out 4 key tasks (1) documentation (2) media monitoring and engagement (3) awareness raising and (4) material production and dissemination. The unit is primarily responsible for the coordination of information needs in the organization and thus facilitating evidence-based programme planning and implementation. Serving a support function, this Unit in 2020 was of strategic position in assisting with migration to predominantly digital communication and coordination of programming activities.

It is important that GALZ raises awareness on issues affecting LGBTI people in Zimbabwe through various mechanisms such as increasing the public profile of GALZ and building capacities of supportive Civil society organizations and engaging in dialogue with various sectors such as health, gender, religion and politics. These groupings are pivotal in advancing GALZ’s

objectives of contributing to the creation of democratic spaces that are vital for GALZ to ensure that LGBTI people enjoy the fundamental freedoms such as speech, association, assembly and expression.

GALZ’s involvement in the broader human rights movement aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society leaders to enable them to positively contribute to the work done around human rights, health rights, women’s rights and to amplify the voice of the LGBTI population in Zimbabwe to influence policy and law formulations that might eventually lead to decriminalization of consensual same sex conduct.

The unit worked to enhance the public image of GALZ and LGBTI people through positive portrayals and documentation.

**Highlights include:**

* Development of an online membership form and integration into the GALZ website
* Publication of historic half page statement in state-run newspaper *The Herald* to mark World Day of Social Justice
* Placement of GALZ anniversary series that ran 4 full page articles in *The Standard* newspaper
* Production of full-length documentary, *Hidden Voices*, to document lived realities of LGBTI people when accessing healthcare services
* Sponsorship of 2 awards at the National Journalist Awards
* Hosting of 30th anniversary virtual discussion *Kwatinobva/Esivela khona*, streamed Live to a Facebook audience
* Growth of following on GALZ social channels, including reach of up to 30,000 impressions on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Soundcloud and LinkedIn
* Facilitation of webinars and online panel discussions involving various GALZ staff and members such as the **African Stigma and Discrimination Forum** on 11 November 2020
* Revival of GALZ Jacaranda Drag Pageant via virtual channels



**Revival of the GALZ Jacaranda Queen Pageant**

The Miss Jacaranda Queen Drag Pageant, named after the tree which blooms around this time, was previously established as an opportunity for Zimbabwean LGBTI persons to celebrate Pride locally. The first official Jacaranda Queen Drag Pageant took place in 1995. The last of these were held in 2013 whereafter the political administration made it difficult to hold an event of such nature. Drag artistry is generally  associated with gay men and gay culture, but in modern times artists can be of any gender and sexual identity. Usually, Jacaranda Queen was held publicly but due to effects of the coronavirus pandemic there was need to provide a digital alternative that members could freely participate in privately without the dangers of public event.





**The 2020 edition – contestants, judges, prizes and the winner**

With the spread of the coronavirus (2019-2020), planned activities had to evolve to be cognisant of the limitations to physical contact and holding of gatherings but still create platforms for LGBTI people to express themselves even during the restricted period to reassure that even while the world has changed the need for visibility in the community is still celebrated.

The revival of the pageant was also a complement toGALZ’s 30th Anniversary celebrations.

The pageant was offered virtually to allow artists to take part in the privacy of their own homes. The 2020 edition was also welcoming of interpretations from all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions (SOGIE). It ran from 30 October to 15 November 2020. Contestants had to be GALZ members, who sent images via WhatsApp for Judging to be done privately and safely. The judges included trusted activists across the LGBTIQ+ rainbow, who are incredibly knowledgeable about fashion, beauty and pageantry in their own right. They are also located across the world – namely Mutare, Harare, Joburg, Bulawayo and the USA – to give a diverse and balanced perspective on beauty standards. Each winner walked away with a cash prize in USD. The **2020 Jacaranda Queen was Bigyoncé from Plumtree.**



**SOCIAL MEDIA AND RADIO ENGAGEMENT**

On 12th August, GALZ published a statement on International Youth Day. This was accompanied by a social media invitation for young people to share what they felt were key considerations or needs under the tag #IYD2020.Despite the stressing of anonymity (participants were to wear masks or cover their faces), only 2 submissions were received and shared. This revealed how there is still trepidation on being ‘out’ fully.

GALZ hosts profiles on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. From Facebook Insights, it can be seen that young people make up % of GALZ membership and engagements. Research has found that young people have greater interest in consuming information via audio-visual sources as opposed to plain text. GALZ set up a SoundCloud profile to host audio material such as interviews, podcast episodes and jingles. Members and other parties are able to access these audio recordings online.

Two interviews on LGBTIQ student access to education and experiences in tertiary institutions were facilitated through the GALZ Information Unit. Two students were invited to Community Radio Harare’s studios for interviews: KD (21) is a beneficiary of the MunhuMunhu Scholarship. They are enrolled at Midlands State University, pursuing a degree in Local Governance. Bobbie (22) is a GALZ Ordaa Advocate for Harare province. Bobbie is also a student with HEAT studying towards a Counselling degree.

**Listen here:**

Interview 1: <https://soundcloud.com/user-330797944/saih-youth-radio-interview-1>

Interview 2: <https://soundcloud.com/user-330797944/saih-youth-radio-interview-2>

In addition, the jingle ‘A New Day’ sought to provide a memorable clip of the youth Asks in regards to their rights and future. It was produced in partnership with Roman Catholic church-run Community Radio Harare (CORAH).

**Listen here:** <https://soundcloud.com/user-330797944/a-new-day-galz-youth-jingle>





**Serving the Communities Health Needs Under the shadow of Covid-19**

In response to growing coronavirus infections, Zimbabwe went under preventative lockdown from March 28, 2020. This period saw the restriction of movement to slow the spread of the disease. A report published by GALZ after extensive research among members and with partner organisations revealed that under isolation, LGBTI persons faced challenges such as:

* living with homophobic families
* loss of income
* gender-based and intimate partner violence
* mental distress due to lack of human contact
* subsequent hunger due to the effects on livelihoods
* limited access to LGBTI-friendly sexual and reproductive health facilities, which in turn affected access to PrEP, PEP and Anti-retroviral treatment

GALZ mandate is to look out for the welfare of the membership. With that in mind, the following interventions were set up between March and April 2020:

**Capacitation of Counselling Unit**

Mental health was a special focus area for GALZ in 2020 in response to growing community need for holistic support services. The capacitation of the Counselling and Psychosocial support seeks to ensure members have access to



therapies that support an improved quality of life and to sustain 24/7 digital availability for these therapy sessions. GALZ social media channels also serve as a support function in this regard, channelling member enquiries to relevant departments.

**Set up of a wellness clinic at GALZ Harare, to provide basic health services to members**

Noting that economic, social and cultural rights are just as important as civil and political rights, the right to health must be guaranteed. Therefore under its service ethos, GALZ included efforts to uphold the right to access to basic healthcare for its members. Over the years this has been seen in providing health referrals to medical facilities, health workshops, sensitisation of healthcare workers and the distribution of barrier methods in partnership with allied organisations.

In the 2019 funding cycle, Zimbabwe was selected as a recipient of the Global Fund, under which resources were distributed for provision of HIV/AIDS interventions for Key Populations (KPs), under which men who have sex with men (MSM) fall, and by extension LGBTI persons under the mandate of GALZ. This assisted in the further capacitation of GALZ and subsequently partner KP-friendly facilities in the provision of health services.

After working with GALZ in the research phase, PositiveVibes, a South African-based organisation whose partners include The Global Fund, ViiV and Amplify Change amongst others instituted a programme known as Setting the Levels in 2017. This process involved the identification and capacitation of health facilities for improvement of access by KPs in Zimbabwe and other countries across the region.

It was identified that LGBTI community members (under the KP umbrella) were uncomfortable with using mainstream facilities for fear of stigma, discrimination and possible outing. GALZ had recorded these qualitative markers in previous Violations Reports as well, where infection rates of common STIs were also shown as increasing.

Following political changes in Zimbabwe in 2017-18, the Ministry of Health and Childcare in 2018 acquiesced on the need for provision of services to KPs. Permissions were granted to make use of the city-run clinics to answer the medical needs of Key Populations.

Wilkins Infectious Diseases Hospital in Harare has long provided OI (opportunistic infection) services including TB treatment and HIV/AIDS programmes. It was identified for its convenience with proximity to Harare CBD as well as closeness to the GALZ head office. Two major full-staff sensitisation workshops were done and a specialised ‘KP Desk’ was set up in the GBV clinic to accommodate the needs of the community. IEC material, condoms and lubricants, pregnancy tests, family planning interventions, HIV tests including post and pre-test counselling were provided.

The relationship with Wilkins staff and administration is a positive and ongoing project to create a dedicated ‘one stop shop’ for sexual and reproductive health services in a sensitised environment, with healthcare workers who have the adequate skills and discretion to serve the community. Wilkins has continued being a health referral partner of choice for GALZ and the preferred option for the majority of members in 2020 due its supportive nursing staff.

However, from the onset of the spread of the coronavirus into the African sub-region, KP-friendly health facilities in Zimbabwe were earmarked for use as centres specifically to fight the pandemic. This channelling of resources meant uncertainty in the continuity of sexual and reproductive health services offered to members of the LGBTI community, who had become comfortable with their preferred safe medical spaces and staff who had undergone prior sensitisation in 2017 and 2019.

Furthermore, with the Government of Zimbabwe’s announcement of a nationwide lockdown cautionary period towards the end of March, There was alarm raised within the community groups about access to medical services, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), STI treatments and anti-retroviral treatments (ART). GALZ Peer Coordinators continued to receive cases of sexually transmitted infections, as well as cases of gender-based and intimate-partner violence which require medical attention.

This prompted GALZ and other partner organisations to discuss and plan how best to serve the community’s health needs during the restrictive period. The GALZ KP clinic was conceptualised to provide basic SRH services, such as PrEP, PEP and ART medications, HIV testing, counselling and distribution of condoms and lubricants. Because of the complex nature of genital warts, a special consultative service was set up for treatment referrals at a partner institution.

The clinic is currently held every Tuesday and Friday morning, between 9am and noon. It is supported by the City Health Department and UNFPA who seconded two nurses and a Doctor on site and selected GALZ staff. Covid-19 prevention protocols followed include compulsory wearing of masks at all times, hand sanitising/washing and temperature checks upon entrance, provision of hand washing basins and social distancing of one metre between persons. Where members have indicated they are not able to source transport, GALZ has provided a ‘pack and drop’ service. The vehicle is thoroughly sanitised before each trip, with the driver wearing PPE to ferry one individual at a time.

Reminder notices are shared weekly via social media and community WhatsApp groups and include the basic precautions for the prevention of Covid-19 as well. Information on Covid-19 is also availed to the community through social platforms, with posters set up within the clinic. All clients come by appointment to limit overcrowding at the facility. In many of the cases there are overlaps where a client requires more than one service. To date the clinic has served over 3000 community members, serving an average of 9 clients per day. While the clinic is currently only operational in Harare at the GALZ main office, response has shown that there may be need in future to evolve provision at the various drop in centres to provide health services. As an offshoot in the mental health sphere, GALZ has also capacitated its counsellors to be reachable via electronic methods at all times for counselling and arrangement for other therapies.

This clinic operates on Tuesday and Friday mornings under strict Covid-19 prevention protocols. Services include basic clinical treatments and management for chronic conditions, wound care, family planning services, HIV testing, STI treatment including warts treatment referrals, access to PrEP, PEP and ART, access to barrier commodities (condoms, lubes). Members can also make special arrangements with GALZ if they require transport to and from the clinic





**Distribution of food aid packs to identified members in need**

Kicking up efforts to aid community members, a donation call was made to members requesting assistance to help other members in need. Within a fortnight, members and other well-wishers had generated $4,200. This was then used to acquire food and other necessities in bulk, to be sorted for nationwide distribution. This is coordinated by the sites in various regions across Zimbabwe.

These are just some of the ongoing efforts by GALZ and its strategic partners to ensure basic human rights of LGBTI persons are protected at all times. The Covid-19 response is ongoing, with a research study launched by the GALZ Information and Communications Unit to further gauge effects of this unprecedented global crisis and its micro-effects, to further guide the organisation’s response to its community’s most pressing needs. Further information can be found on the GALZ website.



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