

# Green Living Movement project, Zambia

## Project summary

Green Living Movement (GLM) Zambia is a community-owned organization in Zambia that uses gender-responsive and justice-focused approaches to support resilient and sustainable agroecological systems and economic opportunity for local communities. GLM was started in 2000 by Zambian environmental and social activists, and has since expanded its operations to help rural farmers reduce and adapt to climate impacts (Pers. Comm. 2022d).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland provided GLM Zambia with funding through GLM Finland, which was founded in 2007 by Finnish former volunteers of GLM Zambia aiming to further support its mission. The local agency and leadership of GLM Zambia has enabled the organization to foster a constructive relationship with its funders and supported highly adaptable and flexible project models. GLM Zambia works closely with rural communities, aiming to strengthen their capacity and knowledge so they can manage their own projects. In many farmer groups that GLM works with, women form the majority (GLM n.d.). The organization uses a variety of strategies across its initiatives—including storytelling campaigns and income diversification through the introduction of small livestock—to promote gender-transformative climate resilience in rural areas, which are becoming increasingly dry due to the climate crisis. GLM seeks to address barriers to women's access to land and management of natural resources, male-dominated governance structures, technological livelihoods that put men's needs first, and traditional cultural and social norms that prioritize men's voices, decisions, and knowledge over women's. One interviewee noted that if they could start GLM again, they would place more emphasis on changing government policies, given the influence of policy on women's status and agency (Pers. Comm. 2022d).

This case study highlights its work across programs. For instance, GLM Zambia's program with 10 communities in the Mumbwa, Monze, and Luanshya districts worked to codesign gender-responsive measures to help sustainably manage natural resources and provide training to women on livestock breeding, deforestation, leadership, and project management (Women & Gender Constituency 2019c). Outcomes of the project include the creation of marketing cooperatives, cross-sectoral partnerships, and 25 women leaders being elected as treasurers in development committees, a position typically occupied by men (Barre et al. 2020).

## Green Living Movement case study overview

**Location:** Zambia

**Years active:** 2000–present

**Key agricultural climate risks:** Increasingly dry landscapes, drought

**Financially supported by** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland through Green Living Movement Finland

**Approximate number of people involved:** 6,000 women and men

**Gender-responsive LLA activities:** Supporting women in decision-making roles, codesigning activities with women, integrating women farmers' needs through a community-owned approach to develop sustainable food systems, elevating local women's traditional knowledge sharing through storytelling

**Gender outcomes:** Enhanced financial independence of women, participation of women in traditionally male-held community committee roles

**Adaptation outcomes:** More climate-resilient sources of income and livelihoods

*Sources:* Authors; Barre et al. 2020.

## Analysis of enabling factors for gender equity and LLA

From the outset, GLM's activities aligned both with the Government of Zambia's 2014 National Gender Policy and its 2018 Climate Change Gender Action Plan, and with the mandate of GLM's funder. Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the primary funder of GLM Zambia's projects, prioritizes both gender equity and locally led initiatives in its development policy (Pers. Comm. 2022k). MFA Finland promotes gender-equitable, locally led adaptation through its own ministerial capacity, with designated advisers for both gender and climate adaptation teams. Additionally, the funder provides flexible project funds after the initial grant decision, which implementers can alter based on their needs and use to request capacity trainings on gender, climate, and project management (Pers. Comm. 2022k). The context of strong country- and funder-level gender frameworks, in tandem with the flexibility in GLM Zambia's funding obtained through GLM Finland, enables the organization to better promote locally led and gender-equitable adaptation through its projects.

Inclusive community consultation is a key part of program design for GLM Zambia. In some projects, staff noted that some sections of the communities were not participating as much as others. The staff then decided to course-correct and consult with women and men to understand women's needs and barriers to their participation in the programs. Women reported that some of the activities proposed to reduce vulnerability and poverty were too tedious and time-consuming for them, and they proposed new activities based on their comfort level and to decrease their labor burdens. GLM's flexible and adaptable program design allowed for these activities to then be implemented, according to an interviewed program manager. GLM Zambia promotes "asset-based development" planning, wherein women are supported in communicating what resources they have available and what additional resources they need to fill gaps. This strategy has led to noticeable results: participation by women in the GLM project expanded significantly when women were brought into leadership roles (Pers. Comm. 2022d).

GLM Zambia's approach involves deliberate steps that consider gender norms and meaningfully involve women in projects: staff identified accessible times and locations for women and girls to participate in the program's activities and considered women's different needs, roles, and responsibilities (Pers. Comm. 2022d). In GLM Zambia's project in Mumbwa, Monze, and Luanshya districts, for example, women farmers informed decision-making on how to access and manage natural resources, as well as provide rural employment, a safe environment, and food sovereignty (i.e., determining the quantity and quality of their food by controlling how it is produced and distributed) (Women & Gender Constituency 2019c). The project also introduced solar stoves, providing women with benefits from technology, including a reduced labor burden and increased climate resilience through improved water and soil conservation from reduced deforestation (Barre et al. 2020).

Limited access to resources like land and credit was identified as a key barrier to women's engagement in programs. GLM Zambia facilitated women-led cooperatives to tackle some of these barriers, which has helped provide evidence of women's financial responsibility. Many projects rely on a livelihood fund that allows women to do short-term planning based on existing climatic conditions and rainfall patterns, which tend to change annually. Devolving decision-making for programmatic activities to the lowest appropriate level has enabled local women to meaningfully inform project design and produce interventions that work for them (Pers. Comm. 2022d).

One of GLM Zambia's projects helped establish four marketing cooperatives to enhance product sales and safeguard women's income. It offered small grants that improved women's financial independence by providing the means to purchase small livestock (Barre et al. 2020). The project also invested in women's technical and management capabilities, which further promoted gender-equal access to and control over resources, including finance and land. Leading cooperatives allowed women to demonstrate their financial management qualifications when seeking financing, thereby better positioning women-led cooperatives as safer borrowers (Pers. Comm. 2022d). These activities align with multiple LLA outcomes, including leadership of local women and the elevation of traditional and local knowledge.

GLM increased women's agency by conducting public-facing community campaigns, highlighting women's climate leadership, and helping them get elected to development committees. The projects also engage with men to support women and promote gender-transformative norms and relations. The interventions deliberately establish men's groups to discuss the value of women and try to address men's apprehensions about women in leadership roles. This meaningful engagement of men confronts institutions and norms that constrain women while also fostering safe and productive dialogue.

GLM's approach centers on local agency and flexible, adaptable program design—prioritizing community knowledge rather than adopting strategies designed and imposed from outside that can cause apprehension among local partners, according to one key informant. The GLM approach highlights the centrality of local agency to successful gender and adaptation processes. Through devolved decision-making, prioritization of local women's knowledge and leadership, and a flexible, responsive funding structure, GLM's projects serve as a model of good practices for locally led adaptation.