

**Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC)
10th Anniversary Commemorations – Press Conference Statement**

By the ZGC Chairperson,

Commissioner Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe

Date: 23 May 2025

Venue: ZGC Head Office boardroom

On behalf of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), I am honoured to welcome you to this press conference as we officially begin the Commission's 10th Anniversary Commemorations running under the theme ZGC @10: Reflecting on Achievements and the Future for Gender Equality in Zimbabwe.

Today marks more than a milestone. It is a celebration of a decade of collective action, resilience in the face of challenges, and progress in advancing gender equality, justice, and inclusivity across Zimbabwe.

Institutional Background

The first Zimbabwe Gender Commission was established under Section 245 of the 2013 Constitution and became fully operational through the ZGC Act (Chapter 10:31) in 2016.

As one of the independent commissions supporting democracy under Chapter 12 of national constitution, ZGC was created to promote gender equality, investigate gender rights violations, monitor compliance with gender laws, and advise on policy and legislative reforms.

The Commission was officially launched on 3 September 2015, with the appointment of nine inaugural commissioners by then President Robert Mugabe. These pioneers laid the institutional foundation of the Commission's work.

Profiles of Inaugural ZGC Commissioners (2015–2020)

1. Mrs. Margaret Mukahanana-Sangarwe

I was appointed by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe to chair the Zimbabwe Gender Commission. My initial role was to set up the Commission and get it running. With the vast experience in the civil service, I managed to establish the Secretariat of the Commission which has grown from an initial two (2) support staff to an establishment of two hundred and thirteen (213) with one hundred and fourteen (114) currently in post. In the ten years of existence, the Commission has managed to decentralise to five provinces and is looking forward to further decentralise to all the ten provinces. I am proud that the ten years have seen progress towards achieving gender equality in Zimbabwe but this has not been without challenges. I will go through the profiles of the inaugural Commissioners, four men and four women as per the Constitutional dictates:

2. **Dr. Paul Kadzima**

A former Member of Parliament and church leader, Dr. Kadzima was deeply committed to grassroots gender advocacy, using his community-based approach to promote equity.

3. **Mrs. Naome Chimbetete**

An expert in public administration and gender mainstreaming, she spearheaded the Commission's work on gender-responsive budgeting and environmental justice, chairing the Public Education and Environment Committees.

4. **Mr. Obert Matshalaga**

A former teacher, Deputy Minister and MP, Mr. Matshalaga chaired the Legal & Investigations Committee and Finance Administration & HR Committee. He also led the Thematic Working Group on Gender, Politics, and Decision-Making, helping shape ZGC's internal policy, legal investigations framework and work around Women's Political Participation.

5. **Mr Peter Mawonera Chief (Chikwizo)**

With a background in accounting and a traditional Chief, Chief Chikwizo chaired the Audit Committee and co-chaired the Thematic Group on Socio-Cultural and Religious Issues. He was instrumental in integrating traditional norms with gender advocacy, especially on inheritance rights and GBV in rural communities.

6. **Dr. Nyepudzai Mercy Nyangulu**

A public health and economic development expert, Dr. Nyangulu led the Commission's economic empowerment agenda, particularly in supporting women's access to finance and collaborating with institutions such as the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank.

7. **Mrs. Tsungirirai K. Hungwe-Chimbunde**

A trained nurse and former Deputy Minister of Health and Child Welfare, Mrs. Hungwe-Chimbunde drew on her deep experience in women's health and rural development. She contributed meaningfully to the Commission's public health and community engagement efforts especially around maternal rights.

8. **Mrs. Sibongile Mauye**

A gender and development specialist, Mrs. Mauye co-chaired the Thematic Working Group on Socio-Cultural and Religious Issues and served on several committees including Public Education, Audit, and Finance & HR. She was a key advocate for GBV prevention and outreach.

9. **Mr. Victor Nkiwane**

A legal academic and Dean of Law at Great Zimbabwe University, Mr. Nkiwane brought valuable legal insights to the Commission's work on gender and justice. While his committee roles were not publicly documented, he contributed to shaping the Commission's legal policy stance from its inception. He also chaired the hearings between the Commission and members of the public

I salute the founding Commissioners of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission for their visionary leadership and selfless dedication. As champions of gender equality, they sacrificed their time, expertise, and resources to lay the foundation of the Commission we know today. Their legacy continues to inspire our ongoing pursuit of justice, inclusion, and equality for all.

We also extend sincere gratitude to the media sector for your steadfast partnership over the past 10 years. You have played a pivotal role in:

- Amplifying ZGC gender equality messages.
- Exposing gender inequalities and systemic abuse.
- Challenging social norms like child marriage, toxic masculinity, and workplace harassment and amplifying survivor's voices.
- Informing and influencing public discourse and policy as well as providing alternative narratives.

Your role remains indispensable.

The purpose of today's conference is threefold: firstly, to reflect on the Zimbabwe Gender Commission's 10-year journey — highlighting key institutional milestones, lessons learned, and the challenges that remain; secondly, to officially announce the commemorative activities planned as part of the Commission's 10th Anniversary celebrations; and thirdly, to reaffirm and strengthen strategic partnerships with the media and stakeholders, as we continue to drive forward the national gender equality agenda with renewed commitment and collaboration.

Over the past 10 years, through our four strategic units — Research and Programming; Legal Services; Complaints Handling and Investigations; and Public Education and Information — we have made significant progress in driving systemic change.

Allow me to briefly highlight some of our key milestones:

- **Monitoring gender equality across sectors**, resulting in improved gender-balanced appointments on parastatal boards and institutional reforms aimed at inclusivity.
- **Establishment of a national Call Centre**, improving accessibility for citizens to report gender-based violations, which led to a marked increase in resolved cases.
- **National Inquiries and Research initiatives**, such as the Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Young Girls and Child Marriages, which exposed systemic vulnerabilities and informed critical national policy shifts.
- **Advisory recommendations to Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary**, addressing structural gender inequalities and calling for the removal of legal and policy barriers.
- **Annual National Gender Forums**, providing a platform for multi-sector dialogue, and influencing legislative and cultural reforms.
- **Implementation of the Women Rise in Politics Programme**, which equipped women with leadership and campaign skills, many of whom successfully contested in the 2023 elections.
- **Gender audits of political parties**, alongside the creation of mechanisms to track and evaluate gender inclusion within political and electoral processes.

These achievements are further supported by our long-term pillars of action:

1. Constitutional & Policy Reforms

- Actively monitoring the implementation of Section 17 (gender balance), Section 56 (non-discrimination), and Section 80 (women's rights).

- Influencing progressive amendments in legislation addressing sexual harassment and maternity rights.
 - Facilitating gender audits across government ministries to promote and clarify accountability in a participatory manner.
2. **Grassroots Outreach & Survivor Support**
 - Establishing provincial offices in Harare, Bulawayo, Manicaland, Masvingo, Midlands, and Mashonaland West to improve accessibility.
 - Collaborating with the Victim Friendly Unit and other multi-stakeholders to support survivors and increase access to legal aid.
 3. **Regional & Global Engagement**
 - Attending, reporting & programming around Commission on Status of Women (CSW) agreed conclusions.
 - Submitting shadow reports to the UN CEDAW Committee and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.
 - Partnering with the UN Spotlight Initiative to train over 600 traditional leaders in GBV prevention.
 4. **Cultural Shifts & Male Engagement**
 - Hosting Male Engagement Symposiums annually, creating platforms for men and boys to become allies in gender justice.
 - Supporting traditional leaders to implement community by-laws against child marriage, which has led to the rescue of over 340 girls since 2020.
 5. **Institutional Legacy**
 - Acquiring the **House of Gender Equality** in Harare — the Commission's first permanent headquarters — which will serve as both a symbol of progress and a centre for public engagement and knowledge exchange for gender equality.

These achievements would not have been possible without the support of our partners, particularly the media. Your efforts in shaping public opinion, amplifying the voices of the marginalized, and holding institutions accountable have been critical to our mission. Together, we continue to work toward a gender-equal Zimbabwe where every person is empowered to participate, lead, and thrive.

We acknowledge the role of the UN Women in helping the Commission with technical assistance before we had a secretariat. They have walked the 10 year journey with us.

We also appreciate UNDP for providing us with tools of trade in our inception days. They have continued to support us in the past 10 years.

Acknowledgements

ZGC would not be where it is today if it was not for the support we have received since inception. The Government of Zimbabwe, in fulfilment of the Paris Principles, that require the setting up of independent human rights institutions, has funded most of our operations. ZGC has also collaborated with all Ministries as part of its monitoring. As one of the Chapter 12 institutions, ZGC has partnered NPRC, ZMC, ZHRC and ZEC as relevant.

The UN family over the years has also consistently supported ZGC with technical and material assistance. The UNWOMEN in particular, funded a Technical Advisor for two years when we had no secretariat until now when we have 116 staff including in some provinces. UNDP provided ZGC with its first vehicle, among other tools of trade. ILO supported our

work around eradicating violence and harassment in the workplace. UNESCO supported work around disability.

ZGC has many partners among civil society organisations most of whom participate in our Thematic Working Groups. They have also supported immensely in our mobilising and organising Zimbabweans on gender equality, lobbying and advocacy, direct support to survivors of GBV, and networking. The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe has been instrumental in our growth to date among other women's rights organisations, ZWLA, WLSA, Musasa, WIPSU, WALPE. Other development agencies that have walked with ZGC include RWI, EU, OXFAM, HIVOS, DFID, ActionAid & SARDC. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches has also supported ZGC as well as Transparency International of Zimbabwe in the work around gender and corruption. ZGC has also received support from the private sector including Securico who have provided security pro bono.

Challenges & Call to Action

While we celebrate our gains, the journey is far from over.

Persistent Challenges:

- Budget constraints have consistently affected our planned programming.
- Structural patriarchy continues to limit rural women's access to land, economic assets, and justice, political and decision making positions.
- Digital gender divide: Only 22% of women in remote areas access online GBV resources or services.
- Our electoral system continues to perpetuate under representation of women in Parliament and local governance.

Our Call:

- To Government: Expedite process towards enactment of a Gender Equality Bill and dedicate 10% of the national budget to gender programming.
- To Media: Deepen coverage of under-reported issues like workplace violence, harassment and customary law barriers.
- To Citizens: Challenge harmful practices and report violations

Let me also highlight to you some of the activities we have lined up as part of the 10th anniversary which include:

- 27 June 2025 – Gender Equality Golf Tournament at the Country club Golf course
 - A fundraising and private sector networking event.
- June/July –Provincial Gender forum Dialogues
 - Community-led gender reflections in all 10 provinces.
- June– Official Opening of the House of Gender Equality
 - Featuring exhibitions and dialogues with youth, women's groups, and policymakers.
- June/July – Male engagement symposiums in Manicaland
- July – National Gender Forum and Gender Equality Awards

- Recognition of outstanding contributions from media, private sector, community, civil society, faith-based networks, local and central government actors.

In Conclusion

As we approach a decade of service, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission recommitments itself to the vision of a just, inclusive, and equal Zimbabwe.

The House of Gender Equality is not just a building. It is a symbol of permanence, progress, and purpose, showing that ZGC is a going concern.

Let us continue building this house — together — brick by brick, story by story, until no woman, man is left behind, no girl, boy is silenced, and no community is forgotten.

Thank you.

For Gender Equality

For media inquiries and further information, please contact ZGC Chairperson, Commissioner Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe 0712214203/ 0772869214, or Chief Executive Officer Mrs Virginia Muwanigwa 0712899543/ 0772327955.