



ZWLA
ZIMBABWE WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

2013
Annual Report

Justice & Equality for all



Welcome to ZWLA's 2013 Annual Report



Sara Moyo - Chairperson

In 2013, ZWLA embarked on a challenging journey which saw the appointment of 2 National Directors within the space of 9 months following the departure of Ms Emilia Muchawa who had been at the helm of ZWLA for the past 10 years.

The past year also saw ZWLA lay a firm foundation for the implementation of the 2013 – 2017 Strategic Plan whose critical objective is to capacitate ZWLA to mobilise sufficient resources (both financial and technical) to be able to better the quality and effectiveness of its activities under the Access to Justice and Transformative Justice Programmes and to be able to better meet the professional interests of its diverse members who are drawn from private practice, the judiciary, commerce, government and civic society.

To this end, ZWLA conducted a critical review of past funding and developed a new fundraising strategy that identified new potential funding sources and diverse activities for raising funds in the short term and long term. This exercise had an immediate positive impact on the organisation.

In the past year, ZWLA also took concrete measures to recruit a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in order to build internal capacity for the continual review of the quality and impact of ZWLA's work against its action plans and strategic plans as well as to distil best practices within the organisation that can be applied to increase the quality and impact of the organisation's work.

Under the Transformative Justice programme,

ZWLA argued the appeal against the High Court judgment in the strategic litigation case of Mildred Mapingure v Minister of Home Affairs and 2 Others Civil Appeal No. 406/12 which dealt with the right to protection of the law for rape victims and the right to civil compensation arising from dereliction of duty by public officials.

Building upon its successes in the Constitution making process of 2009 to 2013, ZWLA embarked on research into the alignment of the existing statutes with the new Constitution of Zimbabwe from an engendered perspective.

In fulfilment of the organisation's mandate to promote and advance the professional interests of members, the ZWLA Board established a Professional Interests Committee that has identified a wide range of measures and activities that will be pursued in order to make this objective a reality.

After a 2 year hiatus, the organisation with the support of the Law Society of Zimbabwe revived the ZWLA Human Rights Defenders Award which is an important Award launched in 2007 to give due recognition to the significant efforts made by lawyers towards the promotion and progressive realization of women and children's human rights. The recipient of the 2013 ZWLA Human Rights Defenders Award was ZWLA's past National Director, Ms Muchawa.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all our funders and donors for their financial contributions and technical support without which it would be very difficult to carry out ZWLA's important work which is much needed in our developing nation.

I would also like to thank our partners and stakeholders including ZWLA members for their invaluable support of the organisation.

I would also like to pay special tribute to the new National Director, Ms Chiedza Simbo, who has played a big role in steadying affairs at ZWLA.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation of the ZWLA Board and staff whose expertise and passion for ZWLA stood the organisation well during the past year- so much so that ZWLA was awarded the 2013 NANGO Human Rights Defender of the Year Award.

Sara Moyo



About ZWLA

Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) champions the rights of women and children by providing free legal aid and working towards creating frameworks that allow for an environment where women and children's rights are enjoyed and protected. Through legal education and advocacy, ZWLA empowers women to lead social change and be able to articulate, demand and enjoy their rights.

The grassroots development experience with women in communities shapes the organisation's global advocacy agenda. ZWLA is inspired by principles of truth, accountability and a commitment to the creation of a society that promotes and protects women's human rights. ZWLA affirms that women's human rights are universal, indivisible and can only be enjoyed in an enabling environment.

Vision:

Justice and equality for all

Mission:

To develop, defend and pursue women's human rights at local, regional and international level through lobbying and advocacy, provision of legal aid services, legal education, professional and capacity development for the primary benefit of women as well as children and membership.

Regional Coordinators' Report

The year 2013 was a year full of challenges and achievements for Zimbabwean women. ZWLA continued with an ever rising demand for its legal services. Women attended to in the Access to Justice Programme were women whose rights had been infringed in relation to their property and family law matters ranging from divorce, guardianship, custody, property sharing, etc. Cases of domestic violence were on the increase as more and more women

sought Protection Orders from the Courts. The media also increased its reporting of such cases as the violence also increased. ZWLA reached 21 598 women, men and children through its Community Legal Education Programme as it strongly believes that knowledge is power. The more people are armed with knowledge of their rights, the better they are in demanding the protection and respect of their rights.

The year 2013 saw the long awaited COPAC Draft Constitution of Zimbabwe becoming law in the country. Women managed to ensure that 50% of the demands they advocated for were embodied in the Constitution. Women had lobbied for the recognition of their equality with men, equal opportunities in decision making, the recognition of socio-economic rights and rights that are specific to them. All the above rights are now embodied in the Constitution. By end of the year ZWLA had already started testing the protection of rights by the Constitution by filing a constitutional case at the Constitutional Court on the right to life.

ZWLA expanded its methods of defending women's rights by encouraging women to participate in national processes by standing for public office in the harmonised elections and by encouraging women to vote for their chosen representatives. ZWLA was accredited to observe elections. ZWLA managed to strengthen its regional partnerships with human rights organisations such as Interights, South African Litigation Centre and Equality Now from Kenya who assisted us by sharing their advocacy and litigation skills.

We therefore would like to whole heartedly thank all those who made our work possible especially our members, funding partners, and other stakeholders.

ZWLA Legal Officer doing Community Education



Performance

Strategic Planning Retreat

At the beginning of the year ZWLA had a strategic planning retreat where priority areas and activities for 2013 were flagged out of the 2012-2017 strategic plan. The organisation's broad strategic outcomes are as follows:

- 120 000 women and 50 000 children in 16 communities rebuild their lives and live free from violence and discrimination as a result of their increased capacity to assert their rights and prevent human rights abuses by 2017
- A more supportive environment for all women and children in Zimbabwe as a result of improved legislation, practices and policies and their implementation at the local, regional and international levels
- Increased capacity of ZWLA to provide and promote a safer and supportive environment for women and children by 2017.

This report speaks to the progress made in implementing programmes that help achieve the organisational outcomes.

Outcome One

Outcome 1: 120 000 women and 50 000 children in 16 communities rebuild their lives and live free from violence and discrimination as a result of their increased capacity to assert their rights and prevent human rights abuses by 2017

Progress towards this outcome was made through work done in the Access to Justice Department. The Department has legal officers, paralegals and interns who see women individually and collectively, and gives legal advice, drafts Court papers and represents women in Zimbabwean Courts. In 2013, a total of 21 598 women were given legal advice by ZWLA, during one on one sessions with a lawyer or paralegal, at the

Harare and Bulawayo offices and at Mobile Legal Aid Clinics. Of these women, 8 358 were seeking assistance to in the area of domestic violence. Domestic Violence cases therefore represented 80% of cases that were taken to court and received favourable judgements.

In 2013 ZWLA increased the knowledge of 9,287 women and their 3,512 children on their rights. Our client records show that our clients came from all over the country to our offices or mobile clinics. This was achieved through interventions such as provision of legal aid services at our offices and mobile legal aid clinics and community education and mobilisation activities. For instance, at the community level, community legal educators supported women with specific legal cases with information about their rights or referred them to ZWLA for further support. Our target for the year was 15,000 women and 5,500 children with legal cases would demonstrate increased awareness of their rights. We achieved only 63% of our target, failing to meet the target mainly due to the fact that it was an election year which also coincided with the enactment of the new Constitution, meaning that more efforts were being directed to campaigning for a new Constitution which protects the rights of women and children.

Our strategic plan articulates our aim to work in a more systematic and comprehensive way with community legal educators in 16 communities. We managed to carry out small scale training for 100 legal educators in Gweru and Inyanga communities due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the first half of the year was occupied by the final stages of the Constitutional reform process and then the elections in August which meant that it was difficult for us to start any new community work at that time. Community legal educators are an important target group for the success of our community mobilisation programme. We appreciate that in order to effectively work with more communities in a sustained way we need to have strong links with the communities which can be achieved through the legal

educators. Our previous experience demonstrates that they are an effective local resource. The 100 trained in 2013 bring ZWLA's community legal educators to a total of 314 in various communities of Zimbabwe.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Our success in increasing women and children's knowledge and awareness of their rights is demonstrated through the Monitoring and Evaluation data we collected. For instance, interviews conducted with 44 women who had sought our support showed that 100% reported increased knowledge of their rights in relation to the matters they had brought to Court. These include issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody and guardianship and property rights. The responses all the women interviewed showed they were able to name at least one area of women's rights law they were aware of and these were mostly the issues that they had reported to ZWLA. Also 55% reported that they had shared or would share information with other women in their communities or families which demonstrated confidence in the knowledge they had acquired.

Women's Increased Knowledge

In addition to specific knowledge on the content of laws, the women interviewed also demonstrated knowledge of where to seek help or support. The most common places identified in the interviews were the Police, Courts, the Victim Friendly Units, the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development local offices, and local women's organisations such as ZWLA. Women's capacity to identify places for support was very encouraging as ZWLA promotes services providers at the local level to have a coordinated approach in supporting women and children. For example, we are one of the agencies involved in the operation of a One Stop Centre in Rusape where women and children can seek services from a number of services providers all located in the same office.

Typical responses from these interviews can be

summarized in the response from one woman from Norton who said:

ZWLA assisted us to get where we are....ZWLA told us what the law was, we didn't know before, and they instructed us on what we should do get help. Afterwards the community came to ask us how we did this and we told them about ZWLA, they thought it was impossible.

Another woman from Harare said,

Taking up my divorce case increased my knowledge on my rights and the law and how it works. The process gave me confidence in myself. If I was in a similar situation again I would know where to go for help.

80% of the women we gave legal information and advice pursued the matters through the Courts. Many other women decided not to pursue legal cases seeking recourse through mediation whilst others did not have legally viable cases. Our assessment of women's experiences is that by having increased knowledge of their rights and processes to assert them, women gained confidence to actually do something about it. As a result of this confidence and increased capacity, these women were able to assert their rights in Court and gain control of their property, custody of their children and leave violent relationships.

Women's Increased Confidence

From interviews with women who consulted ZWLA, we were able to demonstrate that women increased their confidence to assert their rights. All the women interviewed indicated that they had improved their self esteem and 50% reported that they are much more confident to assert their rights in Courts. Our Change Log database made up of direct quotes from women we have interviewed

showed that most of them reported increased confidence as a result of ZWLA support. For instance, one woman in Norton said,

After going to ZWLA I saw the light, it dawned on me what I had not known, and I gained confidence and stood on my own. My case is not yet finalised but I know the steps I should take - ZWLA has stood by me throughout and helped me with alternative dispute resolution.

This was further supported by the data on our client feedback forms, which are filled in anonymously by clients. 100% of the clients who filled in the form, which is done at the completion of a case expressed satisfaction with how ZWLA lawyers handled their matters and those who had to represent themselves in Court did so with confidence and had favourable outcomes. Also our experience of working with women coupled with findings from our monitoring processes demonstrates that a number of key factors contributed to increasing women's confidence and ability to assert their rights in Courts.

Typical responses from women interviewed were that

They taught me a lot by explaining the law and teaching me to self represent. If I see anyone being abused I am able to be a whistleblower, no one can oppress me, and I know my rights.

Through our empowerment sessions, women became aware of Court procedures enabling them to represent themselves in Zimbabwean Courts. This was especially the case for at least 90% of the women that we supported through our empowerment sessions where women with maintenance cases are given information on the maintenance law and the Court procedure in the Maintenance Court. One woman who benefited from an empowerment session said,

I was so scared of the idea of going to court but having gone through it, I realised that as long as you are clear about what your child needs, the Magistrate listens.

By supporting 9,287 women and their 3,512 children we contributed to enabling many of them to rebuild their lives and live free from violence. Our support through interventions such as provision of legal services through our offices and mobile legal aid clinics, community education and community legal educators' work, women were able to make informed decisions and take their cases to Court or use other dispute resolution mechanisms.

Women Living free from violence

Our monitoring data through interviews and focus group discussions with women we have supported and court monitoring shows that our interventions have made a difference. For example in Norton, we sampled 10 women who had applied for protection orders under the Domestic Violence Act for a focus group discussion to get their feedback on whether or not their situation had changed as a result of being granted the protection orders. The women aged between 21 and 55 years had experienced different forms of domestic violence namely physical, emotional and economic violence. Within this group 6 women reported that they had not experienced any other form of violence since receiving the protection orders. For the 6 women, the key factors for this included:

- Having obtained court protection orders deterred their partners from committing further acts of violence. Their partners were afraid of being arrested if they breached the protection orders.
- 4 of the 6 women reported that they were no longer living in the same premises as the perpetrators thus eliminating the source of violence.

Women filling in their Monitoring and Evaluation Forms



- Also ZWLA's support increased women's confidence and knowledge of their rights meant that women were able to stand up for their rights and avoid incidence of violence. For instance, one woman said,

The lawyers would listen to me and that showed me I was important and that they respected me, they taught me to make my own decisions.

However, not all women we supported reported that they were now living free from violence after the first cases they brought to us. Our experience and observations with women clients is that sometimes by applying for protection orders or taking other matters to Court, they start to experience other forms of violence or discrimination. Our Court monitoring indicates that at least 21 out of 354 women granted with protection orders reported that their partners breached them and they had to report them to the police to be arrested.

Therefore, in reality a woman who has applied for a protection order against physical violence may return a few months later with a divorce or maintenance case. One of the women we interviewed in the focus group discussion said, *"The verbal abuse has stopped, but my husband has forced me to move out of the bedroom and now I sleep in the living room"*. This woman has since filed for divorce. What is encouraging is that women in this situation are more aware of their rights after having taken up the first case and will find subsequent matters easier to deal with. This narration of a woman helps to explain this point,

When the beatings went on, I went to ZWLA to ask for help. They told me I could apply for a protection order. I was successful. My husband had been a policeman so

he knew that if he continued to harass me, he would be arrested. So the beatings stopped. But he decided to evict me and the children from the house. He gave me a few pieces of furniture as my share of the household goods. I went to ZWLA again and ask for help with my divorce. I wanted to get my life back and sorting my relationship and marriage was the next thing to do. ZWLA helped me with the divorce and to get child support from my husband. He has to pay US\$50 a month for each of the 3 children.

As a result of the feedback we get from the clients, we are aware that many women may seek our services or go to Court on their own a number of times before they actually live free from violence.

Women engaging in economic activities

We received reports from women which demonstrate that they are experiencing changes in other areas of life as a result of the support we have provided and the outcomes of their cases. From the interviews we conducted with the 44 women and focus group discussions with 40 women, the majority (80%) of them reported that they have identified changes in other areas of life as a result of our support. We also collected qualitative information through case studies and women's voices which supports that we are achieving this change. We observed that as a result of the services we offer women, they are empowered and able to engage in economic activities. One woman said,

My husband wanted to take my money - my favorable judgment meant I am now self-sustaining - I got an industrial stand and I get money from renting this. Now when I meet my husband I am no longer emotional.

Women Participating in the Community

As a result of the services we offer women, they are empowered and able to share information with others and participate in community activities. A number of women reported that they are now able to socialize and attend/participate in social events. For instance, one woman said, "Now I can go to church with other women. Before, my husband would not allow me to meet with any other people and socialise". Others also said they were sharing experiences with other women in their communities, "After I was assisted I told others - now the whole community knows that there are free lawyers for women who can't afford support."

Women pursuing education

As a result of the services we offer, women are empowered and able to go back to school and pursue education. One woman said

After my divorce, I was able to go back to school and I have graduated with a degree. Before, my husband made it difficult for me to pursue a degree. He barred me from going to school in the evenings or weekends.

This woman has since been promoted to a police sergeant and is now better able to provide for her two children.

Therefore the qualitative information we have gathered from women is very encouraging as it shows that they are using the knowledge and awareness they have acquired, and the confidence and skills to assert their rights. They are also making connections with other women going through similar experiences. They are also experiencing positive changes in other areas of their lives beyond just their legal claims.

Cases Finalised

Our client records show that 35% of the cases that we supported through the Court system in 2013 had been finalised by December. The time it takes to resolve cases will depend on

whether or not the case is contested, the nature of the case (e.g. cases under the Domestic Violence Act are treated as urgent matters and the Court will hear them within 48 hours whereas complex divorce matters will take at least a year), the Court's backlogs and sometimes the sufficiency of evidence on the part of the client. Even in the face of these challenges, this figure is lower than our expected target of 50%. To help women's cases to be resolved quickly, our advocacy and court engagement initiatives focus on having ongoing discussions with court officials to find ways of expediting women's cases. We encourage women to undergo mediation which we facilitate where the contesting parties engage in talks to resolve the issues and present their consent papers to the court for approval.

Our observations are that the most quickly resolved complex cases were through mediation than the full Court process. Of the 1,082 cases completed, our client records show that 90% were resolved favourably whether or not a case has been resolved favorably is based on the woman's perception and the legal officer's objective assessment of what would have been the best outcome given the circumstances of the case.

In order to understand the extent to which women's cases were favourably resolved at the Courts, we undertook Court monitoring of maintenance cases at four Magistrates Courts in Bulawayo and Harare. At least 45% of the women and children we support take their cases to the Maintenance Courts. Between January and November, 837 applications for protection orders under the Domestic Violence Act were presented to the Courts. Of these:

- 354 had their orders granted favorably
- 267 were still pending due to need for further investigations and evidence
- 75 had their cases dismissed on the basis that they had not followed the proper court procedures or there was insufficient evidence
- 98 had their matters struck off because the applicants did not turn up at court
- 23 women withdrew their cases and
- 20 were referred for counselling.

We also assessed women's reaction to the outcome of their cases and at least 80% of the 50 women we interviewed at the Courts were satisfied with the outcome of their cases.

Attitudes of Court Officials towards women

Another key factor that has enabled women to receive favourable judgments highlighted through the monitoring data we collected was the positive attitude of Court officials when adjudicating over women's cases. For instance, in at least 3 divorce cases we recorded women reported that the judges had spoken strongly about women's indirect contribution to acquiring matrimonial property as a serious consideration in giving them a fair share of the family property at divorce. The Courts also provide ZWLA with judgements in important current cases on women and children's rights which ZWLA uses to inform the advice it provides to its clients.

Outcome Two

Outcome 2: A more supportive environment for all women and children in Zimbabwe as a result of improved legislation, practices and policies and their implementation at the local, regional and international levels by 2017

The Transformative Justice Department is mainly responsible for realising this outcome through their lobby and advocacy initiatives as well as legal education drives.

Increased knowledge and awareness of leaders

In 2013, we increased knowledge and awareness of women's Constitutional and legal rights amongst 303 local leaders, 300 policy makers and 503 civil society organisations' leaders and staff members through interventions that included awareness sensitisation and advocacy meetings, as well as through networking activities. We were able to reach more civil society organisations and policy makers than we had planned mainly due to the activities we undertook on influencing related to the constitutional reform process. We were also able to reach 100

officials in international organisations through our attendance and participation in international events such as CSW, African Commission and the SADC Lawyers Association's AGM.

Media Monitoring

We conducted some media monitoring to track the responses of these key actors to women's rights and needs. There is some indication that as a result of increased awareness, a number of key actors have undertaken actions that demonstrate positive attitudes towards women's rights as demonstrated by the following monitoring data we gathered. For instance, our campaign for stiffer penalties against rape perpetrators resulted in various government departments (MPs and Ministry of Women Affairs' officials) and CSOs (Musasa Project and Padare) officials making public statements against rape and the low sentences. We recorded 10 media articles between January and November. In particular, in Harare a woman MP (who is also a ZWLA member) moved a motion in Parliament calling for stiffer penalties in rape cases. The motion is still to be debated in Parliament.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We documented a number of interesting actions by key officials to support women's rights, achieved as a result of our engagement with them. Some of the significant information we gathered was:

- There is some evidence that judicial officers (traditional leaders and the courts) are taking action to support women to escape violence: For instance, a Chief we trained in Mberengwa community is providing survivors with shelter at his homestead while they pursue their cases under the Domestic Violence Act. He said, *"Physical and mental abuse takes away women's dignity. The government should work with chiefs to change attitudes in the community and discourage violence against women"*.

Another Chief in Tsholotsho is supporting women to report their cases to the police. He said, *"I now refer many women to the police for help. I wish I had extended power to deal with these cases, so I could help these women at my court. They don't have to travel such long distances [to the police and magistrates courts] for help"*.

- There is some evidence that the Courts are giving stiff sentences to rape perpetrators. In 2013, Zimbabwe experienced high incidences of child rape especially in religious organisations. The media reported that child rape cases increased by 5% from 2,326 in 2012 to 2,440 in 2013. Our campaign against rape and sexual violence contributed to an increase in publicity on rape cases in the media and stiffer sentences passed by the court. The most outstanding case was where a serial rapist was sentenced to 230 years in prison.
- There is some evidence that community members are taking positive actions to support survivors: The reports we received from community legal educators from the Methodist Church in Khami community indicated that they accompany women who have reported cases to the police or Court, providing them with information and counseling support. Between them the community educators had supported 200 women in their community. They concluded that this has enabled more women to report their cases and seek help.

Through our interventions we contributed to the passing of a new Constitution in May 2013 that provides for women's rights and equality. A result of years of advocacy and influencing, it was a significant achievement in ensuring that women's rights are protected at the highest legal level. As a result of our contribution to lobbying and advocacy efforts with other women's organisations and CSOs, the new Constitution provides for women's

equality, participation in politics and decision making, recognition of their socio-economic rights and provides that women's rights supercede customary laws and practices. Although not a perfect document, these provisions are a progressive step forward from the 1979 Constitution which did not provide for women's equality and made women's rights subject to customary laws and practices.

The New Constitution

The reality of the new Constitution means that existing laws have to be amended to conform to the new Constitution. ZWLA made some progress towards this as it was commissioned by the Ministry of Women's Affairs Gender and Community Development to come up with a position paper that reflects the necessary amendments which will be forwarded to the Ministry of Justice for the necessary amendments to be made. This process is still ongoing and will be an important part of our advocacy initiatives in 2014.

Although the Constitution making process resulted in mostly positive statements and strategies to incorporate women's rights into the new Constitution, the Head of State uttered statements to the effect that he could not appoint many women in Cabinet because there were no educated women in Zimbabwe fit for the posts. This statement was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution which clearly provides for women's rights to participate in politics and public office. This reinforces our strategy/approach to work on changing not only the content of laws but also the attitudes of key actors who are responsible for implementation of the laws.

Poor services from State Officials

Whilst we have been able to support women to get positive/favourable judgments through the Court system, a significant number have reported that they are not happy with the quality of services offered by law enforcement officers in particular the police and some court officials. At the start of their cases, our observations are that women are usually

unsure of the services they will receive – their initial perception is that they will not receive a good services based on what they have heard other women have experienced or reports from family and friends.

Whilst the perception changed after their Court cases, there was still a significant percentage of women unhappy with services they received. For instance, 45% of women in focus group discussions believed that if they went to Court without legal representation, the Court officials did not give them the respect they deserved. They reported experiences of waiting too long before they were attended to, having their cases postponed many times or not being given sufficient information to help them decide how to proceed with their cases. Some Court officials were also rude. One woman said *“The Magistrate asked me how I could claim all this money from my husband. “Do you think he is as rich as David Beckham?” he asked”*. She said she will not go back for maintenance variation unless she is represented by one of our lawyers. Others explained that it depended on the Magistrate who will be presiding that day and that some are not respectful or tolerant of their needs.

As ZWLA we strive to work with Court officials to change their attitudes and sensitise them on

the lived realities of women who pass through the courts. Over the years this has been done through training and workshops but in 2013 this was restricted by the Judicial Service Commission. We will continue to lobby government through our interaction with the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and the judiciary for more positive responses from the court officials.

Change Stories

“I am going to be a lawyer” - Chenai’s Story

From the time her husband chased her away from their matrimonial home like a dog with 3 minor children, the youngest being 7 months old, Chenai (Not her real name) was devastated and did not have any idea on how she was going to take care of her children as she was not working. This was in 2005.

She went back to the village as she could not afford to rent a house in town. Her mother gladly took her in with her children although she herself was not working. Applying for maintenance seemed to be the only way to get food on the table for her children but it was a waste of time as her husband was always



Community skit on domestic violence



dodging the police. There seemed to be someone who was always warning him that he was about to be served with Court process.

Chenai finally made a decision to go back to the city to look for a job and fend for her family. Seven years passed and never a day did her husband call to ask to see the children or let alone to ask how they were. The youngest one was now 8 years old and none of the children knew their father except on photographs that she had carried with her when she was chased out. She worked very hard and she managed to send all her children to school with the help of her mother and step father.

She was caught unaware when she was served with an application for custody from her husband on the grounds that the children were not going to school and her mother was too old to take care of the children. After 8 years of suffering with the children alone, he just decided to pop up from nowhere and claim custody, Chenai was not going to give up without a fight.

Chenai approached ZWLA where she received legal counsel. Her lawyer drafted and filed the necessary papers and as evidence she had school receipts, letter from the school headmaster confirming that the children were attending that school and registers from their class teachers showing that they never missed a day at school. Her evidence was enough to prove that he was lying and that he was an irresponsible man.

Chenai won the case. "I am so elated", she said. "I was afraid I would lose my babies because I did not have the confidence in Court, but thanks to your assurances I just said the truth and won!" she gushed with a smile. She was so scared that she was going to lose her babies. She was also afraid to stand in Court on her own but I assured her that everything was going to be okay as long as she was going to tell the court the truth. This case was a blessing in disguise to her because she just then made a decision to go back to

school (she got married when she had just finished her "A" Levels but her husband did not want her to go back to school) "I want to be a lawyer, standing in that Court made me realise I can do so much for myself and help other women too. I am going to be a lawyer." She said that with such finality I know in my heart she definitely is going to be a lawyer.

Free at last

By Patricia Gwetsayi- A volunteer with ZWLA

She entered the reception, the weariness in her eyes visible from where I was sitting in my office. Within minutes the phone in my office rang. "You have a client at the reception." I ushered her into my office. "*Garai henyu pasi.*" She sat down and smiled a weak, weary smile. "*Ini ndinonzi Patricia, ndingakubatsirai sei nhasi.*" I didn't want to waste a second of her time.

She told me her name was Makanaka (not her real name) and went on to explain how she has been living in unbearable emotional torture due to her husband's abusive nature. He would bring women in their matrimonial bed in her presence. He would call her barren and loose because they had failed to have a child even though he had not had a child elsewhere. He compared himself to other men at his workplace who got married after him but were already fathers. "These words make me feel worthless and useless" she softly says

"I was referred by a friend to a legal aid society which turned out to be bogus. After years of suffering, I finally decided enough was enough and moved out of my matrimonial home, walking without a claim because I just wanted to be free." The legal aid society she was referred to promised her that her divorce was not going to take long as there were no issues in her declaration. "I was happy to hear this but they kept telling me to come back day after day but nothing came out of it." One day she heard about ZWLA whilst she was in a taxi going home. She only

managed to get the telephone numbers and on a Monday morning she phoned asking for advice. She was put through to me and I told her to come to our offices for assistance.

During the first year of separation her now estranged husband would seek her and just abuse her verbally, physically and emotionally. At one time they bumped into each other in town and they exchanged words and fought. She was constantly humiliated to the point where she was forced to relocate to another town to save her sanity and safety. At her instruction, ZWLA drafted the necessary papers and filed them and after two weeks her matter was set down on the unopposed roll. The divorce was granted. After 2 years of waiting it was finally over.

When Makanaka received the news she was over the moon. She actually broke down over the phone. "I cannot believe I'm free" she kept saying. Had she known about ZWLA, she would have been assisted a long time ago and saved her hard earned money as she was only a cross boarder trader. She had also applied for a protection order which was also

granted. She can now move freely without fear of getting harassed and she is planning to move back to Harare. When she came to show me her divorce order, she was so happy and that made me happy too, as that is the spirit of ZWLA, putting a smile on another woman's face.

Publications and learning resources

We were able to increase the volume of information we documented and disseminated to different stakeholders as a result of the different publications and learning materials we produced.

In 2013 we produced the following learning resources:

- Training manuals on gender based violence religious leaders – We have been using this manual in trainings with religious leaders.
- Gender audit on draft Constitution – Together with other women's



ZWLA Legal Officer attending to client

organisations we used the audit as a reference and advocacy tool to point out gaps in the draft Constitution. It is still relevant today as a way of sharing information on the new Constitution as there were no fundamental changes from the draft Constitution and the final Constitution.

- Policy briefs on women, peace and security - 200 copies distributed to 120 women MPs highlighting the current issues relating to women, peace and security. This will help prepare MPs in the discussion on aligning all laws to the new Constitution. Some of the key issues were on the need to protect women and women human rights defenders from arbitrary arrests and for the establishment of the Gender Commission as provided under the new Constitution.
- Toolkit for Women Human rights defenders on peace and security - 200 copies distributed to women human rights defenders during training as well as to government structures namely JOMIC and the Organ on National Healing and Reconciliation.
- Sister in Law newsletter - 100 copies circulated to ZWLA members honouring human rights defenders and the increase of females being appointed to the courts.
- We produced our first learning session publication entitled *"Crossing the chameleon to the other side...our experience in defending, dialoging and promoting women's rights"* which highlights our key learning from our programme work. The key areas we discuss relate to our legal aid provision, our community education interventions including work with community legal educators and our lobbying advocacy work. The publication was distributed to stakeholders so that they get the view of ZWLA's experiences and not just the voices of the target groups.

Challenges

The major challenge ZWLA faced in 2013 was the change in leadership, particularly in the post of Director. In January 2013, our Board appointed the Programmes Coordinator as Acting Director after the resignation of ZWLA's long standing Director who had led the implementation of our previous investment grant and overseen the development of both our new strategic plan and the investment grant. In June 2013, a substantive Director was appointed but she resigned within 3 months and eventually another substantive Director was appointed in September 2013. The Programmes Coordinator who had been intensively involved in the development of the investment grant and has been Acting Director also resigned in November 2013. This process affected the smooth implementation of organisational change processes. Fortunately, some key staff members in programmes and administration were still in post and helped in retaining institutional memory. For instance, the Finance Officer and Programme Coordinator have been at ZWLA for several years and played a key role in sharing their organisational knowledge and experience of organisational systems and processes with the new Directors.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a grey blazer, is speaking at a podium. She is looking down at a document on the podium. A microphone is positioned in front of her. The background features a large image of a waterfall and a white curtain. To the left, a portion of another person wearing a green headwrap is visible.

ZWLA Volunteer
During donor Conference

International Women's Day

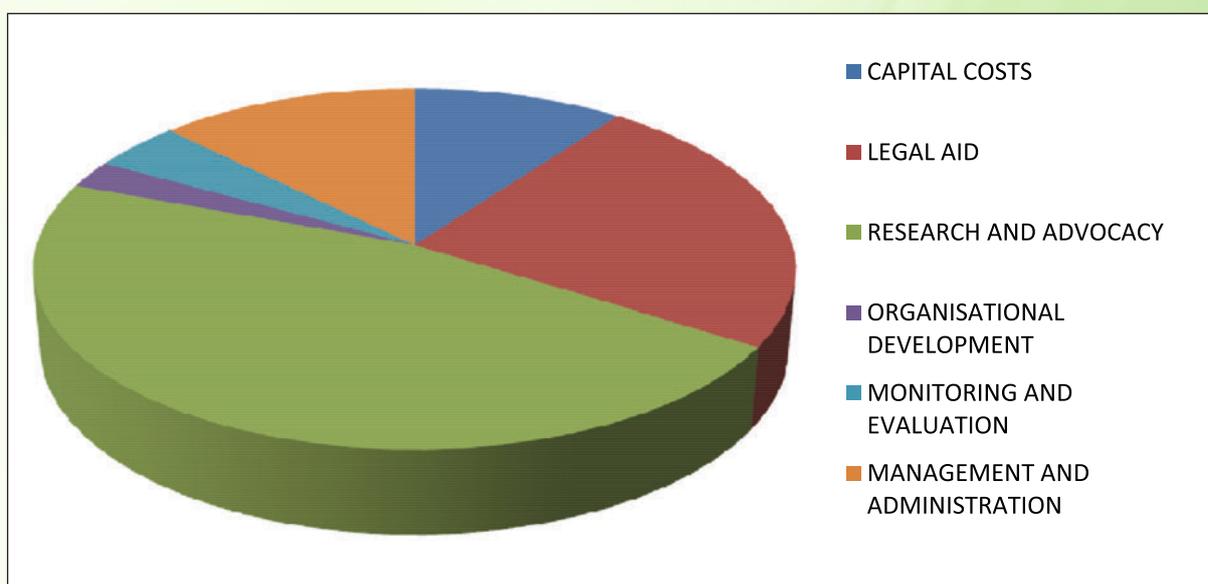
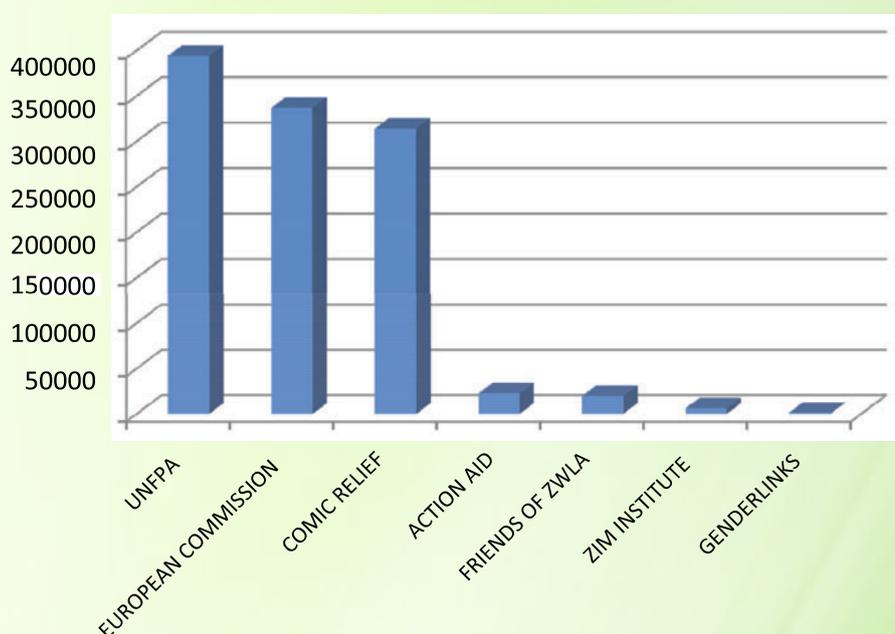


World Day Against the Death Penalty



USD SUMMARY OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2013

GRANTS	1093723
CAPITAL COSTS	107882
LEGAL AID	254310
RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY	497992
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	26251
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	46144
MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION	133504
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1066084
SURPLUS FOR THE PERIOD	27639



Closing Remarks



Chiedza Simbo - Director

Although 2013 was a challenging year, ZWLA managed to pursue its mission of developing, defending and dialoguing on women and children's rights. Through effective planning, a dedicated board, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, energetic and dedicated staff members, teamwork and support from various funders, the state, other organisations and the community, ZWLA managed to successfully implement its Strategic Plan and to see its vision of a just and equitable society.

As always, ZWLA celebrated a clean audit and its work was recognised and celebrated by various organisations world wide.

Defending women, defending rights.

Chiedza Simbo



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