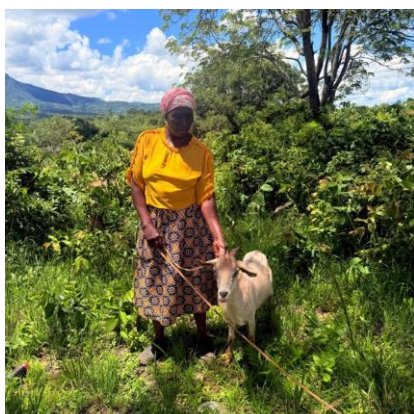




EMTHONJENI WOMEN'S FORUM & TRÓCAIRE ZIMBABWE | ICSP LEARNING BRIEF

STRENGTHENING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS' PREVENTION THROUGH INTEGRATING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INTO THE SASA! FAITH APPROACH IN ZIMBABWE

Emerging practice-based learning



Goat pass-on • Layers & broilers • Savings & lending • Agroecology • Bead making • Power Posters

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1. Background

Gender-based violence remains a significant concern in Zimbabwe, particularly within rural and faith-based communities where gender norms, unequal power relations and economic dependence shape women's experiences and options. SASA! Faith provides a structured approach for engaging faith communities in examining power, gender relations and violence and supporting shifts in attitudes, beliefs and social norms. Through implementation in Zimbabwe, the approach has created spaces for women, men, religious leaders and Community Activists to reflect on how power operates within relationships and communities. However, emerging programme learning suggests that changes in attitudes and social norms do not always translate into sustained changes in women's lived realities when women continue to experience economic dependence and limited control over resources.

During implementation of the Ireland Civil Society Partnership Programme, economic empowerment received limited emphasis within the earlier stages of SASA! Faith programming. The ICSP Midterm Review (2025), alongside programme reflection with communities and partners, highlighted economic violence as an important concern. This prompted a deeper examination of the relationship between women's economic position and GBV prevention. The emerging question was not simply how women could increase their income, but how SASA! Faith could address the norms and power relations surrounding women's access to, ownership and control of productive assets, income and household financial decisions.

This reflection has led to an emerging practice of integrating Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) into SASA! Faith. The approach combines practical economic strengthening activities with conversations on economic power, gender norms and household decision-making. Activities have included goat pass-on initiatives, layers and broiler projects, Internal Savings and Lending, agroecological practices

and bead making for survivors supported through the shelter. These activities are complemented by SASA! Faith Power Posters and dialogue processes that encourage communities to examine who carries household and productive work, who earns and controls money, who owns productive assets and who makes decisions about household resources.



Community member practicing Agroecology in Bikita District Kufakunesu Village, Ward 13

2. From Social Norm Change to Economic Agency

SASA! Faith is grounded in the understanding that violence is linked to unequal power and harmful gender norms. The emerging WEE learning builds on this foundation by recognising economic power as one dimension of the broader power relations addressed through SASA! Faith. Women's economic empowerment is therefore not being positioned as a separate livelihoods programme. Rather, economic strengthening provides practical opportunities to examine how gender norms influence women's access to resources, ownership, control and decision-making.

A WEE workshop with ICSP partners in June 2026 strengthened this analysis. Participants examined WEE as part of quality GBV programming rather than as a standalone livelihoods' intervention. The workshop emphasised that WEE involves women's access to and control over productive resources, increased decision-making opportunities, reduced economic dependence, agency and safety. The ecological approach discussed during the workshop also reinforced the need to address individual

agency, household relationships, community norms and wider institutional conditions together.

This is particularly relevant to GBV prevention because economic dependence can influence women's choices within relationships. A woman might recognise violence as unacceptable but still face significant barriers to acting on this knowledge when she lacks independent income, productive assets, savings or influence over household resources. The emerging learning therefore suggests that SASA! Faith needs to consider not only whether norms are changing, but whether women have the economic agency and resources required to exercise those changes in their everyday lives.

3. Making Economic Power Visible Through SASA! Faith

The use of SASA! Faith Power Posters has provided a practical way of introducing economic power into community dialogue. The "Who Carries the Load?" poster presents a woman and man engaged in agricultural work and asks whether both contributions are valued. This creates space to discuss unpaid work, agricultural labour, household responsibilities and the recognition of women's economic contribution. The "Who Decides?" poster focuses on who decides how money is earned, used and shared within households, including decisions about expenditure, savings and investment.

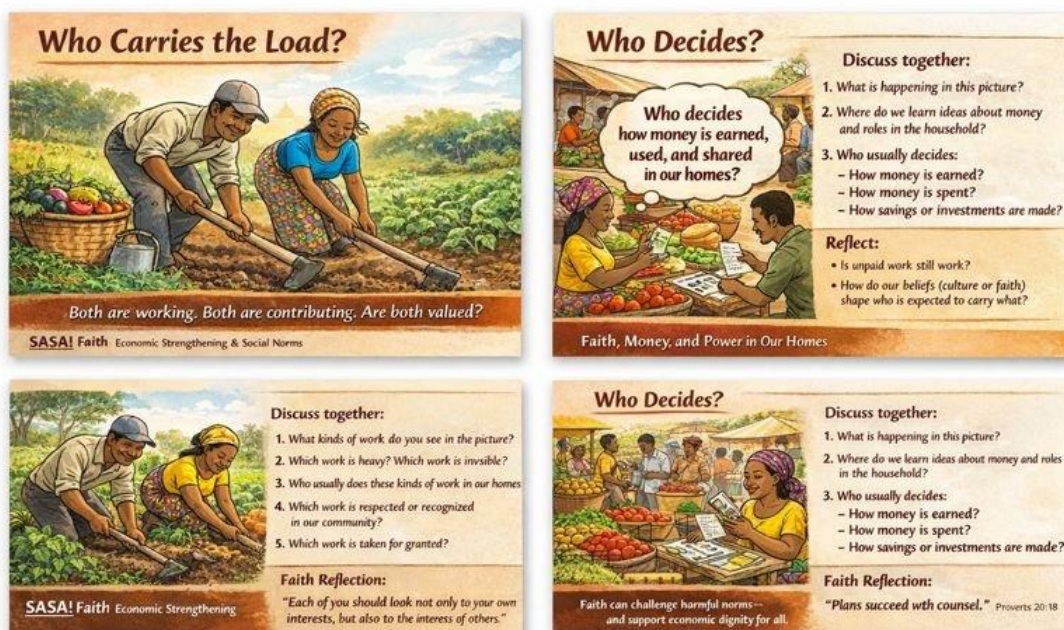
These discussions shift the focus from asking whether women participate in economic activities to examining the power surrounding those

activities. Participants are encouraged to consider who owns productive assets, who controls income generated from those assets, who decides when assets are sold, who determines how money is spent and whether women have meaningful influence over financial decisions. The approach also brings attention to the relationship between unpaid work and economic participation. Women who carry significant responsibility for childcare, household work and agricultural labour have less time and opportunity to participate in income-generating activities, savings groups, training and leadership.

The posters therefore provide a bridge between familiar SASA! Faith discussions on power and the practical economic realities experienced within households. They help communities examine economic norms without treating economic empowerment as a technical discussion about income or enterprise development alone.



SASA! Faith community conversation poster on household budgeting: "If you knew... what would you think?"



SASA! Faith Adaptation - Power Posters: "Who Carries the Load?" and "Who Decides?"

4. Practical Economic Strengthening as an Entry Point

The programme has begun testing different economic strengthening activities with Community Activists and other participants. Some Community Activists received goats through a goat pass-on initiative. Others established layers or broiler projects, while others participated in Internal Savings and Lending. The activities differed, but each created an opportunity to examine the relationship between economic participation, productive assets and power.



Susan Kativhu with her goat from ward 6 Mutasa District



Community Activist posing with her 2 she goats and a kid, one from pass-on project and the other through ISALs, Bikita District Ward 13



Layers project, Ward 1, Mutasa District

Food processing and value addition provided another entry point for strengthening economic participation and reducing post-harvest losses. A training by Zimbabwe Project Trust in Insiza provided practical skills in processing locally available produce into products such as baobab sweets, baobab coffee, baobab juice, tomato sauce and jam. The training enabled participants to explore ways of preserving surplus produce and adding value to locally available resources, creating opportunities for consumption, storage and potential income generation.

Internal Savings and Lending provides another entry point for strengthening economic participation and collective resilience. Savings groups offer opportunities for women to save, borrow, plan and support one another financially. The WEE workshop identified VSLs and ISALs as useful platforms for financial inclusion, peer support and collective resilience, while emphasising the need for confidentiality, safeguarding and trauma-informed facilitation when such approaches are linked to GBV programming.



Community Activist purchased building material using ISALs savings in Bikita District Ward 21



Community Activist owning a heifer through ISAL savings in Bikita District, Ward 19

The emerging learning is therefore not that one economic activity is preferable to another. Rather, different economic activities provide different opportunities for women to strengthen agency while giving SASA! Faith facilitators practical situations through which to explore gender norms, power and decision-making.

5. Agroecology and Survivor Economic Strengthening

Agroecology has provided an important entry point for strengthening women's economic resilience, household food security and, in some contexts, contributing to changes in gender relations. In 2024, Musasa, Emthonjeni Women's Forum and Zimbabwe Project Trust trained survivors and Community Activists (CAs) in practical agroecological practices, including soil fertility and soil health management, water harvesting, water pits and small ridges, natural pest and disease management, and food processing and value addition. CAs were also capacitated to produce natural bacterial sprays, manage fungal diseases and control soft-bodied pests such as *imihogoyi*. The training contributed to improved soil and water management, reduced reliance on costly chemical inputs, and increased garden productivity. Participants also learned to process surplus produce into products such as jam, tomato sauce, juice and baobab products, helping to reduce post-harvest losses, extend shelf life and create opportunities for income generation. Overall, these practices strengthened household food security and resilience by enabling women to make better use

of locally available crops and natural resources.



Thabile Senda, Woman in leadership practising agroecology in Insiza District Ward 15

The experience also demonstrates how livelihood strengthening can be connected to work on social norms and household power relations. In Bikita, UDACIZA, working with Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre, Caritas Masvingo and Musasa, introduced agroecology training in March 2026, covering soil testing, composting, water harvesting and natural pest management using locally available resources. Community Activists subsequently cascaded the learning through practical demonstrations with other women. Learning from the intervention indicates improved food security, reduced farming costs and increased income from surplus produce. Women also reported greater confidence and increased participation in household decision-making, while men began consulting their wives on household matters. This suggests that when livelihood strengthening is combined with ongoing work on power and gender norms, changes in women's economic position can also contribute to more equitable household relationships.



Eveline Mapeve, a Community Activist practising agroecology in Bikita District Ward 13



Community Activists, Religious Leaders, Peer Educators and Shelter Matrons during Agroecology training, Bikita District, Ward 13

For survivors supported through the shelter, economic strengthening has included exposure to agroecological practices and bead making, providing opportunities to develop practical skills and explore economic options while maintaining a survivor-centred approach. However, livelihood interventions for survivors require particular attention to safety, confidentiality and safeguarding, including the risk of economic control or increased exposure to violence. Economic strengthening should therefore be introduced in ways that do not create additional risks or assume that survivors can or should become immediately economically independent.

In 2025, in Mutasa District, YAZIM, with support from Trócaire, trained 24 Community Activists from Wards 1 and 6 on agroecology and sustainable farming practices. The training covered sustainable production, soil health,

biodiversity, climate resilience and environmentally friendly pest management, while also recognising the value of Indigenous Knowledge and locally available resources. Follow-up sessions in 2026 enabled Community Activists to deepen their knowledge, share experiences and apply the practices in their own communities. Through continued learning, peer exchange and practical application, Community Activists strengthened their capacity to promote resilient farming practices and support livelihood benefits within their communities. The experience demonstrates that sustained follow-up is important in moving agroecology beyond one-off training towards practical application and longer-term livelihood resilience.

6. What Are We Learning About Economic Norms?

The emerging practice points to several social norms that require greater attention within GBV prevention programming. One concerns the belief that men should control household financial resources and make major economic decisions. Another concerns the association between productive asset ownership and masculinity, where livestock, land, poultry or other productive resources are perceived as belonging primarily to men even when women provide significant labour. A further norm concerns the undervaluing of women's unpaid agricultural and care work, despite its contribution to household survival and economic production.

The programme is also examining expectations around women's use of income. Women may be expected to prioritise household consumption and caregiving over savings, investment or personal economic development. At the same time, women's increased income or asset ownership can challenge established expectations about household authority. This makes economic empowerment inseparable from discussions about relationships, masculinity and power.

The WEE workshop reinforced these concerns by highlighting risks such as male control over women's earnings, diversion of loans to

household consumption and limited effectiveness where severe food insecurity persists. Participants also recognised that increased income alone does not transform unequal power relations and that economic interventions need to address positive masculinity, shared caregiving, equitable decision-making and respectful relationships.

7. Emerging Practice-Based Learning

The first key learning is that **economic empowerment provides a practical entry point for discussing power**. Productive assets, savings and livelihood activities make discussions about ownership and control concrete. Participants do not have to discuss power as an abstract concept. They can examine who owns a goat, who controls poultry income, who decides how savings are used and whose labour is recognised.

The second learning is that **income alone is not an adequate measure of economic empowerment**. A woman might earn money but have limited control over how the money is used. She might participate in farming but have no ownership of the productive assets used. She might join a savings group but still lack influence over major household financial decisions. Future programming therefore needs to examine access, ownership, control and decision-making together.

The third learning is that **social norm change and economic strengthening need to reinforce each other**. The programme's earlier experience with SASA! Faith demonstrates the value of engaging communities around power and gender norms. The emerging WEE experience suggests that these conversations need to extend into economic life. The WEE workshop similarly recommended addressing harmful gender norms and unequal decision-making before or alongside economic support.

The fourth learning is that **male engagement needs to remain part of the approach**. Women's economic empowerment can alter existing household power relations. Men therefore need opportunities to examine expectations around ownership, household leadership, fi-

financial decision-making and shared responsibilities. The intention is not to transfer control to men or make women's empowerment dependent on male approval. Rather, men are engaged as allies while women's agency remains central.

The fifth learning **is that economic interventions require contextual assessment.** The WEE workshop identified Economic Opportunities Assessments as an important tool for understanding viable livelihood options, market demand, risks, women's priorities and local economic realities.

8. Implications for SASA! Faith Programming

The emerging experience points to a need for a more intentional integration of WEE into SASA! Faith. This does not mean turning SASA! Faith into a livelihoods programme. Rather, economic power should become part of the existing analysis of power and relationships. Programme activities should create opportunities to discuss productive asset ownership, income control, unpaid work, financial decision-making and women's economic agency.

Future monitoring also needs to move beyond counting women participating in economic activities or measuring income generated. Indicators should examine whether women own productive assets, control income, participate in household financial decisions and experience changes in their confidence and negotiation capacity. Qualitative learning should also document changes in household relationships and community perceptions.

The programme should continue to use existing SASA! Faith structures as platforms for this work. Faith leaders, Community Activists, Women Advocacy Teams and Faith Action Groups provide established spaces for discussions on relationships, power and violence. The WEE workshop identified these structures as practical entry points for integrating economic empowerment rather than creating parallel programming.

9. Recommendations

- Integrate economic power into SASA! Faith power analysis by including ownership, income, productive assets, unpaid work and household financial decision-making in community discussions.
- Strengthen the focus on productive asset ownership by monitoring who owns, controls and makes decisions about livestock, poultry, agricultural resources and other income-generating assets.
- Use SASA! Faith Power Posters systematically to facilitate discussions on women's work, economic contribution, household finances and decision-making.
- Conduct social norms research on women's economic empowerment to understand beliefs surrounding women's ownership of productive assets, income, savings and financial decisions.
- Conduct Economic Opportunities Assessments before introducing new livelihood activities, considering market opportunities, climate risks, safety, women's priorities and available resources.
- Strengthen male engagement around equitable economic relationships, shared household responsibilities and women's right to participate in financial decisions and own productive assets.
- Apply survivor-centred safeguards to all economic strengthening initiatives involving survivors, including safety assessment, confidentiality, informed consent and appropriate referral pathways.
- Monitor economic agency alongside economic outcomes, including ownership, control, decision-making, confidence, negotiation and changes in gender norms.

10. Conclusion

The integration of Women's Economic Empowerment into SASA! Faith is an emerging area of practice within Trócaire Zimbabwe and partners' GBV prevention programming. The learning responds to an important implementation gap identified through programme re-

flection: while SASA! Faith has created opportunities for communities to question harmful gender norms and unequal power, women's ability to act on changing norms remains constrained where economic dependence and limited control over resources persist.

The emerging experience suggests that economic strengthening provides an important practical entry point for deepening the SASA! Faith analysis of power. Goats, poultry, savings, agroecology and bead making provide opportunities to strengthen economic agency, while Power Posters and facilitated dialogue create spaces to examine the norms surrounding ownership, income, labour and decision-making.

The key shift is from asking whether women have access to an economic activity towards asking whether women have meaningful control over productive resources and economic decisions. This distinction is important for GBV prevention because economic participation does not automatically change unequal power relations.

The next phase of implementation should generate stronger evidence on how changes in women's access to and control over productive assets interact with household decision-making, gender norms and experiences of violence. This will strengthen practice-based evidence on how WEE can be intentionally integrated into faith-based GBV prevention and contribute to the continued adaptation of SASA! Faith in Zimbabwe.

11. Acknowledgements

This Practice-Based Learning Report was made possible through the contributions, experiences and reflections of staff and consortium partners implementing the Ireland Civil Society Partnership (ICSP) project across Insiza, Bikita and Mutasa districts.

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We also acknowledge the wider programme teams, community activists, religious leaders, women leaders, survivors, community members and other stakeholders whose participation and experiences have shaped the learning presented in this report.

Picture Gallery: Insiza District

Agroecology and poultry inputs, Ward 15



Small rockery used for water harvesting, herb garden and home decoration, Ward 15 Insiza



Agroecology training with survivors and Community Activists, Ward 15 Insiza



Community Activists receiving their chicken feed and inputs, Ward 15 Insiza



Community Activists preparing their chicks, Ward 15 Insiza

Picture Gallery: Insiza District

Broiler project and goat pass-on scheme



Broiler project, Ward 15 Insiza



Women posing with their goats for the goat pass-on scheme, Ward 2 Marubamba, Insiza



Goats for the goat pass-on scheme, Ward 19 Montrose B, Insiza



Goat pen for the goat pass-on scheme, Ward 19 Montrose B, Insiza