



Strengthening those **voices** within a collaborative approach and **empowering** social change in **communities**.



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CIVIC VOICE



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PARTICIPATION

DRAINS, DRUGS, AND
DECENTRALIZATION: THE
BOLD BATTLE FOR THE SOUL
OF GWERU

CAPACITY

GWERU COUNCILLORS
GRADUATE FROM
TRANSFORMATIVE
CAPACITY-BUILDING
PROGRAMME

INCLUSION

A NEW ERA OF ACCESS:
HOW THE DISABILITY
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ENHANCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REMARKS

As we stand at this pivotal junction, I am filled with profound hope to share the strategic vision of the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association.

Our journey, once a passionate spark of initiative, has matured into a structured, unstoppable force for civic justice.

Our mission remains unwavering: to transform residents from passive spectators of their own struggle into empowered rights holders.

Reflecting on our 2019–2025 odyssey, we have witnessed the transformative power of unity.

From successfully lobbying for life-giving boreholes via Constituency Development Funds to standing as a shield against property seizures in the city, GRRRA has proven that no wall is too high when we stand together.

Our commitment to radical inclusion reached a historic milestone in 2024 with Gweru's first Disability Desk and a landmark council pledge for infrastructure. We demanded more than a ramp; we secured our seat at the table.

Our reach has ignited exponentially, growing from 430 brave souls in 2019 to

over 23,500 participants across physical and digital frontiers today. This connectivity allows us to hold duty bearers accountable in real-time, ensuring transparency is the heartbeat of our city.

Looking toward 2026, our vision sharpens with renewed passion.

Our next frontier, "**Enhancing Local Governance and Effective Decentralization**," aligns with Government of Zimbabwe "2030 agenda" to solidify our institutional legacy.

We are evolving, yet our soul remains anchored in evidence-based advocacy and self-sustainability.

By intensifying internal resource mobilization, we ensure GRRRA remains an eternal, independent watchdog for all 19 wards.

Our 2026 promise is simple: to breathe life into the rhetoric of decentralization. We invite our partners and the resilient people of Gweru to join this crusade.

Together, we are reclaiming the social contract for Gweru and Vungu Rural.

Our collective future starts now.

Forward ever!

Cornilia Selipiwe
Executive Director

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Chairman: Luckson Mugara, Deputy Chairman: Dr Arthur Chikerema, Secretary: Florence Mudzurandende
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Advocate Brian Dube, Tobias Zhou, Dr Angeline Sithole-Bosha

KNOW
YOUR
POWER

EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to this definitive edition of the **Civic Voice** magazine. Within these pages, you will find more than just reports; you will discover the pulse of a city in transformation.

We are deeply dedicated to informing and educating our residents because we believe that knowledge is the ultimate catalyst for civic dignity. In Gweru, education is the antidote to apathy, and an informed resident is a powerful advocate.

In this issue, expect to journey through our most historic triumphs. We detail the 2022 "Water Indaba" that led to the Tinshele borehole success and the relentless advocacy that shielded Woodlands families from property seizures. You will see our movement's growth, from a modest 430 people in 2019 to a massive network of over 23,500 participants today, bridged by a digital frontier that holds duty bearers accountable in real-time.

We also invite you to witness our "Gold Standard" of success: Inclusion. The launch of Gweru's first Disability Desk and the landmark council pledge for accessible infrastructure at the Town House prove that

our advocacy has moved from the margins to the mainstream.

This magazine serves as a toolkit, educating you on your rights as we transition toward our 2026 vision of effective decentralization and government compliance status.

As we align with the 2030 agenda, our dedication remains anchored in the belief that every resident deserves to understand the policies that shape their lives.

We provide the evidence; you provide the voice.

Expect to be inspired by stories of courage and the raw data of progress. Whether you are a resident in Gweru, stakeholder or a partner in the global donor community, this magazine is your roadmap to a transparent, accountable, and inclusive Gweru. We reclaim our social contract through information.

Our future is bright, guided by the light of truth and the passion of a united community.

Our mission is eternal. We hope this issue serves you well.

Truth is power and power is indeed the truth!

Clive Tatenda Makumbe
Editor

Across nineteen wards, we rise as one indomitable heartbeat, transforming passive spectators into active rights-holders to build a transparent, inclusive, and flourishing city where the people's voice finally reigns supreme.

ENGAGEMENT FOR PROGRESS MODEL



A visual representation of the Engagement For Progress (E4P) model's success, illustrating the exponential growth in resident outreach and digital participation, which soared from 430 people in 2019 to over 23,500 by 2025.

ENGAGEMENT FOR PROGRESS: BUILDING BRIDGES FOR RESIDENTS AND DUTY BEARERS

E4P empowers residents and duty bearers to co-create solutions: evidence-based forums, youth and women engagement, persistent advocacy transforming service delivery and accountability.

Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association's Engagement for Progress model (E4P) has strengthened citizen participation and accountability from 2019 to 2025, turning resident concerns into actionable local outcomes.

Focused on increased engagement between rights holders and duty bearers, the model aimed to deepen civic participation in decision making, influence council policies, and improve service delivery through structured, evidence-based interaction.

E4P implemented three core activities: residents duty bearer interface meetings, citizen accountability forums, and youth and women roundtables. These platforms created safe spaces where residents voiced needs and stakeholders designed solutions.

Data reveals a massive strategic shift in how these spaces operated; while offline methods remained vital for 22.4% of the demographic, the model successfully pivoted to digital platforms, which accounted for 77.6% of the total people reached.

Implementation has a deliberate three-stage process.

Stage one, Identification and Exploration: used ward dialogues to map root causes.

Stage two, Initiation: mobilised residents as agents of change, facilitating formal notices to the council.

Stage three, Persistence: emphasised remaining engaged over time. This persistence proved crucial; even when the number of specific

activities dipped from a peak of 50 in 2021 to 30 in 2023, the efficiency of engagement grew, with total reach climbing steadily.

The model produced measurable improvements across wards. By 2025, the program reached over 16,000 people annually, with online engagement alone surpassing 14,000. Councillors reported better-informed planning after these engagements, and formalised communication channels sped up emergency responses.

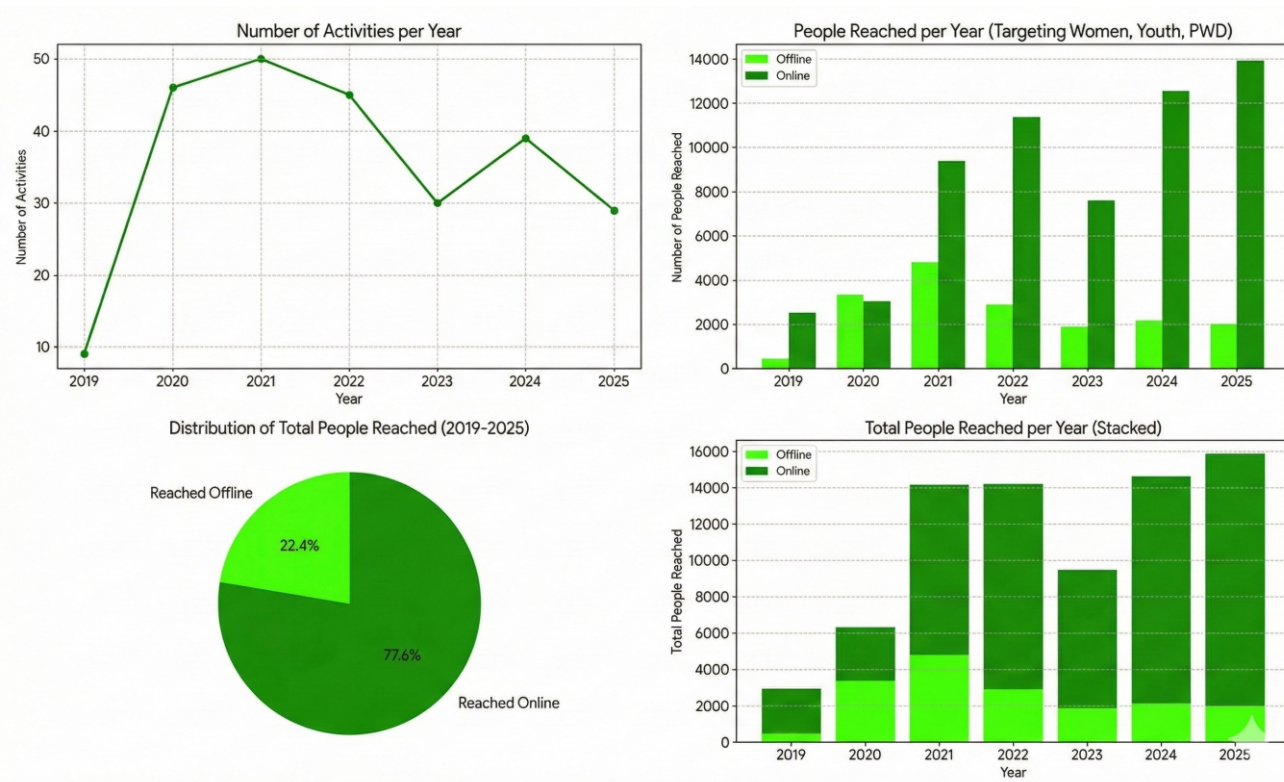
Community-led proposals were incorporated into council workplans, resulting in targeted interventions such as borehole repairs, improved waste collection scheduling, and the improvement of health and education services.

E4P's effectiveness rests on a simple logic: documented community evidence presented in public forums compels duty bearers to respond. By pairing local intelligence with respectful engagement, GRRRA strengthened accountability.

This hybrid approach, balancing physical presence with mass digital reach, replaced confrontation with constructive problem solving.

For municipalities and civil society seeking practical pathways to inclusive governance, GRRRA's E4P model offers a replicable blueprint: accurately diagnose, initiate inclusively, and persist patiently.

When rights holders and duty bearers meet on common ground, development becomes participatory and responsive. Communities gain lasting control and greater voice.



LOCAL SOLUTIONS, LASTING IMPACT: SHOWCASING E4P MODEL AT NANGO MIDLANDS EXPO

GRRRA's E4P model champions evidence-driven citizen engagement, uniting wards, youth and duty-bearers to localise development and strengthen accountability for improved service delivery.

Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA) once again demonstrated the strength of constructive civic engagement when it participated in the two-day NANGO Midlands Region NGO Expo & Winter School, held from 16–17 July 2025 at the Gweru Civic Centre.

Running under the theme “Localisation as a Game Changer: CSOs Advancing Local Solutions for Development Effectiveness,” the event gathered more than 60 civil-society organisations alongside government officials, private-sector partners and academia, all united by a commitment to building a just, inclusive and sustainable Zimbabwe by 2030.

At its exhibition stand, GRRRA presented its signature Engagement-for-Progress (E4P) model, a framework that systematically transforms community concerns into evidence-driven dialogue with duty bearers. The model emphasises structured engagement, rather than confrontation, as the driver of meaningful reforms in service delivery. Through regular citizen–council interface meetings, youth and women round-tables, and community accountability forums, GRRRA has strengthened transparency, trust and participatory governance across all 19 wards of Gweru.

As he toured the exhibition, Guest of Honour and Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution (Midlands), Hon. Owen Ncube, commended GRRRA's professional and solutions-oriented approach.

“Continue to be torch-bearers for residents. Let's avoid making noise and focus on engagement

for progress,” he remarked, reinforcing his long-held belief that devolution thrives when residents, councils and civil society align their efforts toward shared development outcomes.

GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe welcomed the Minister's endorsement, noting that the Expo offered an important opportunity to highlight the organisation's impact.

He explained that the platform “allowed us to present evidence-based narratives that validate and make our work visible,” demonstrating how local accountability processes are strengthened when communities are empowered to articulate their priorities.

The Expo's diversity, brought together organisations working in health, education, youth empowerment, disability inclusion, environmental protection and media freedom, affirming that, localisation is not a slogan but a practical approach grounded in community-owned solutions. GRRRA's presence underscored that devolved governance achieves its full potential only when residents participate actively in shaping local development and holding leaders to account.

By amplifying constructive citizen voices, GRRRA contributes directly to the aspirations of Vision 2030 and supports the Second Republic's devolution agenda.

Selipiwe stressed that “an enabling environment ensures that civil society can promote accountability and transparency in local governance,” calling for continued collaboration well beyond the Expo.



BREWING PROSPERITY: ADVOCACY FUELS GO BEER'S MARKET RISE

GRRRA's E4P model champions evidence-driven citizen engagement, uniting wards, youth and duty-bearers to localise development and strengthen accountability for improved service delivery.

GRRRA secretariat touring the modernized Go Beer Breweries production line



In a compelling showcase of how community advocacy and local industry can jointly accelerate development, Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA) secretariat, Gweru City Councillors and members of the Go Beer Breweries management recently toured the revitalised Go Beer Breweries plant.

The visit highlighted how strategic citizen engagement and municipal collaboration can strengthen economic resilience in line with Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), which prioritise industrialisation, job creation and local value-chain development with Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Hon.

Owen Mudha Ncube as a vocal proponent of the "Midlands is Open for Business" mantra.

At the centre of the tour was Go Beer Breweries' modernised production line, currently producing an impressive 15,000 litres of opaque beer per day.

This output positions Go Beer as a growing competitor to major market players such as Delta Beverages, while simultaneously symbolising Gweru's renewed confidence in homegrown enterprise.

Chief Executive Officer, Edward Rusike described this progress as both economic and symbolic.



GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe and Chief Executive Officer Edward Rusike engage in a strategic discussion at the Go Beer production line.

"Go Beer is more than a brewery; it is a statement of intent, meaning what local industry can achieve when communities champion their own development. Our goal is to build a national brand rooted in Gweru pride," he said.

GRRRA played a catalytic role in the brewery's revival. Recognising the economic potential of a fully functional municipal brewery, the organisation advocated for local investment, transparent governance and an enabling business environment.

Our support helped pave the way for Go Beer's rebirth, a move that has already stimulated employment, strengthened supply chains and restored public confidence in council-owned enterprises.

GRRRA Executive Director, Cornilia Selipiwe emphasised this connection:

"Our advocacy has always been about improving livelihoods. Supporting Go Beer meant supporting jobs, local revenue and the idea that residents can shape their own economic future."

During the tour, Councillors Mercy Mangwanya, Jackos Manyanga and Fortunate Mlambo praised Go Beer's role in advancing regional development goals. They highlighted how



the brewery aligns with Gweru City Council's mandate to promote local economic growth, broaden revenue streams and empower communities through inclusive development partnerships.

Go Beer's market reach has already expanded beyond Gweru to Kwekwe, Tongogara, Gokwe and Zvishavane, with plans underway for nationwide distribution. This bold trajectory is expected to intensify market competition while increasing regional employment opportunities.

The partnership between GRRRA, Go Beer and the Gweru City Council epitomises localisation in action a principle central to both the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Zimbabwe's national development priorities. By supporting local industries and championing citizen-led advocacy, stakeholders are building a more resilient municipal economy grounded in collaboration and accountability.

As Go Beer prepares for national rollout, its journey stands as a powerful testament to what happens when communities, councils and innovators unite: local ideas grow into national success stories, and shared prosperity becomes more than a vision, it becomes a reality.



TRADITIONAL LEADERS AS CATALYSTS FOR VUNGU'S RURAL IMPROVEMENT

Traditional leaders, GRRRA and local authorities unite in Vungu, restoring water, security and disaster response through training, coordination and community-led environmental action.

In Zimbabwe's rural heartlands traditional leaders that include Chiefs and Village Heads, are custodians of culture and front-line local governance. In Vungu Rural District, water shortages, violence, degradation and cattle theft once defined daily life.

Collaboration between traditional leaders, Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA) and local authorities have begun to reverse the decline and restore community

resilience. Before the intervention the situation was stark.

Interference delayed payment of local government workers, emergency communication lines were weak, and illegal miners entered sacred sites without consultation.

Women and children spent long hours fetching water; Lower Gweru experienced frequent livestock theft; and unsustainable land use increased erosion and forest loss. Low trust

between communities and authorities hampered timely disaster response and coordinated development.

The response combined capacity building, coordination and practical support. GRRRA became the bridge between the District Development Coordinator and traditional leaders, establishing clear communication protocols for disaster response and community alerts.

Building on earlier wins, including Chief Sogwala's 2023 borehole partnership with council and DDC's Office that improved water access, GRRRA organised governance workshops for Chiefs and Village Heads and linked them to relevant Ministries training on laws and sustainable practices. A community-led livestock protection plan and strengthened reporting mechanisms improved security coordination with police and council officers.

"As we work to strengthen rural development, collaboration between traditional leaders, local authorities, and community organizations is critical," said Tarisai Mudadigwa, Gweru District Development Coordinator.

"Traditional leaders are the bridge between the government and the people (the people always come first, not matter the cost), and equipping



Tarisai Mudadigwa, Gweru District Development Coordinator, facilitating the meeting

them with the necessary skills and resources will ensure sustainable progress."

Headman Chisvo reflected on local impact: "GRRRA serves as a vital bridge, linking the DDC with Chiefs to foster clear communication and ensure timely disaster response. Through environmental training leaders are empowered, and the community unites behind a strategy to combat livestock theft, enhancing security and collaboration."

Change on the ground is tangible. Agreed communication channels have sped emergency responses; trained chiefs lead tree-planting and enforcement drives; boreholes have reduced water collection times; and the livestock protection plan has lowered theft incidents in participating villages. Community forums now produce evidence-based asks presented to councils, increasing transparency in resource allocation.

GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe summarised the lesson: "When communities, traditional leaders, and authorities work together, we can create lasting solutions."

The Vungu experience underscores a practical blueprint for rural transformation: equip custodians of tradition with governance tools, strengthen coordination, and let community-led solutions guide development.



GRASSROOTS MOMENTUM: WARD COMMITTEES DRIVE MEMBERSHIP INCREASE

Ward committees galvanize residents across Gweru, boosting GRRRA membership through inclusive outreach, youth engagement, community-led advocacy for improved services and accountable governance.



Ward 11 Champion Florence Danha

A recent gathering at Mkoba 1 turned into a celebration of citizen action as Gweru’s ward structure committees were honoured for their energetic membership drive for Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA).

Leaders from across the city applauded volunteers whose doorstep mobilisation is strengthening collective voice and local accountability.

The meeting spotlighted Ward 11, led by Chairperson Florence Danha, who emerged as the standout performer. Danha credited the win

to teamwork and a shared vision for improved services.

“GRRRA has been instrumental in our efforts to recruit more residents into the Association. This collaboration allows us to speak with one voice, one mantra, when advocating for essential services such as clean water, waste management, and better roads,” she said, urging patriotic youth to join and play an active role.

Danha’s remarks captured the event’s core message: inclusion multiplies influence.

“I have not only won this award on my behalf,



Ward 11 champion Florence Danha and fellow committee members celebrating their award for historic membership growth, a testament to the power of relentless doorstep mobilization across Gweru.

but on behalf of every resident in Ward 11. Together, we have made it a priority to bring together women, men, and youth, ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table,” she added, framing mobilisation as a process of strengthening, empowerment and a practical route to influence council decisions.

Runners-up: Ward 12 Chairperson Joyce Njanike and Woodlands Chairperson Andrew Zihapa echoed the praise for the grassroots organisation.

They highlighted how well co-ordinated ward committees create pressure points that make it easier for residents to hold public officials to account and for councillors to channel community priorities into council agendas. Organisers described the awards as full recognition, part STRATEGY: by celebrating success.

GRRRA hopes to inspire neighbouring wards to replicate effective outreach methods, deepen civic education and participation in all 22 wards under Gweru and Vungu District.

Practical next steps included: regular inter-ward forums, targeted youth outreach, and training on local governance issues so members can advocate with evidence, confidence and resilience.

The meeting closed on a note of renewed commitment: stronger ties among wards, persistent membership drives, and expanded civic literacy.

As committee members return to their streets, the message is clear, when residents organise across gender and generations to come, they transform service delivery from a distant promise into a neighbourhood project everyone helps deliver.

GWERU COUNCILLORS GRADUATE FROM TRANSFORMATIVE CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME

Gweru's councillors gained transformative leadership, governance, and gender-responsive skills through a university, community partnership, boosting service delivery after a landmark MSU–GRRRA capacity-building programme.

A six-week intensive training programme co-hosted by the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA) and Midlands State University's Centre for Public Policy and Devolution (MSU-CPPD) has strengthened the governance toolkit of Gweru City, 19 councillors walked away with refreshed skills in leadership, service delivery and community engagement.

Co-funded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Zimbabwe Country Office and Embassy of Sweden, the course was built on a firm foundation: a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023 between MSU-CPPD and GRRRA for the capacitation of local government. That institutional agreement, which formalised a university-to-residents pathway for training, research and applied support, was a key factor in FES Zimbabwe and Embassy of Sweden's decision to sponsor the programme, organisers said.

Over six weeks the curriculum blended theory and practice across modules that included local government systems and administration, legislative frameworks, leadership and ethics, policy formulation and budgeting, community engagement, and gender mainstreaming. The applied approach aimed to bolster councillors' decision-making, budgetary oversight and capacity to work with residents on development priorities.



Gweru Councillors participating in an intensive six-week leadership program at Midlands State University, designed to enhance their expertise in policy formulation, budgeting, and gender mainstreaming for better service delivery.

“The course was an initiative to enhance leadership skills of our duty bearers on the issues to do with local governance processes, so that they will be able to deliver and engage with residents with much expertise,” said Fadzai Kanyai, GRRRA's Programmes and Gender Focal Officer.

City of Gweru Deputy Mayor Nyaradzo Madzimura reflected on one striking outcome, improved gender dynamics.

“Recently before this programme we faced gender stereotypes scenarios within some of our colleagues and during work coordination; however, with the academic lectures we were given, this issue was dealt with to everyone's advantage,” she said.

Dr Virginia Makanza of MSU framed the initiative within the university's broader mission:

“This programme aligns with Education 5.0, which goes beyond just teaching, as it requires research and innovation at the community level. Hence, this training showcased how universities are keen to improve livelihoods within the community and assist in development plans within the city.”

Gweru District Development Coordinator Tarisai Mudadigwa praised GRRRA's role in complementing government efforts to professionalise local governance.

As the newly-trained councillors return to their wards, the programme's legacy will be measured by improved service delivery,

DRAINS, DRUGS, AND DECENTRALIZATION: THE BOLD BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF GWERU

As Gweru faces floods, fires, and drug crises, residents and national policies must unite to transform vulnerable urban spaces into resilient strongholds.

In the heart of Gweru's Midlands Province, residents are rewriting the script on community safety. Long viewed as a "vulnerability hotspot," this vibrant community recently took center stage during a pivotal disaster preparedness workshop.

Facilitations done by Gweru Community Disaster Risk Management Committee and supported by World Vision Zimbabwe and the World Food Programme, transformed Gweru residents from being passive observers of risk into a proactive fortress of resilience.

For residents, disasters are not abstract concepts; they are daily realities. During open dialogues, the community identified a triad of primary threats: road traffic accidents, flash floods, and fire outbreaks.

Cornilia Selipiwe, Executive Director of the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA), didn't mince words about the urgency of the situation.

"If we are neglecting these disasters, we are on the wrong path," he warned. The message was clear, "preparedness is the only shield against the unexpected".

These workshops provide a master class in survival, featuring experts who debunked dangerous myths.

Gweru City Council, Chief Fire Officer Felix Muguti highlighted lightning and unsafe gas storage as major culprits. His most striking advice? Never use water on a house fire if it involves electricity or gas; instead, focus on

ventilation and safe exits like windows.

The Red Cross representative, Dumisani Ncube focused on life-saving interventions. For drowning victims, the priority is checking breath before administering aid.

For burns, he corrected a common mistake: rather than applying oils or pastes, one should cover the burn with a wet cloth to protect the skin for later medical dressing.

Beyond physical hazards, Gweru is battling a social epidemic. Deputy District Development Coordinator Madam Shamiso Chikomo addressed the escalating drug and substance abuse crisis, a "silent disaster" threatening the youth.

The government's response is anchored in the Zimbabwe Multi-Sectoral Drug and Substance Abuse Plan (2024-2030), which emphasizes monitoring and community vigilance. However, a significant hurdle remains: fear.

A resident named Tabeth Magigwana voiced the community's collective anxiety, noting that the "fear of intimidation" by dealers often prevents people from reporting cases.

This highlights a desperate need for a national Whistleblower Protection Act to empower citizens to speak out without fear of retribution.

To bridge the gap between grassroots efforts and national policy, Zimbabwe is navigating a complex legislative transition.

The aging Civil Protection Act of 1989 is increasingly seen as a relic of a reactive era. The 2025 push for the DRM Bill aligns with the internation-

al Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which advocates for "Building Back Better".

Gweru isn't waiting for legislation to catch up. The community has already established Disaster Risk Committees in Senga and Mkoba. These committees have turned to "frugal innovation" to save lives:

1. Early Warning Systems: Residents have created WhatsApp groups to alert one another of looming hazards like storms or fires in real-time.

2. Infrastructural Ownership: Collective action has seen residents regularly cleaning their own drainage systems to prevent the lash floods that previously submerged their homes.

3. Strategic Planning: The creation of localized Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans ensures that when a crisis hits, every neighbor knows their role. The workshops are more than training sessions; they are diagnostic of a community's soul.

This proves that while national policies like the Drug Master Plan and the DRM Bill provide the necessary skeleton, the "muscle" of resilience comes from the residents themselves.

As World Vision, Program Manager Regional Urban DRR Anticipatory Actions, Hamandishe Satande aptly noted, early warning systems are the "critical preventative measures" that stand between safety and catastrophe.

For Gweru, the future is no longer just about surviving the next flood, it's about building a suburb where hazards are managed, youth are protected, and every citizen is an active guardian of their community.

However, community resilience has a ceiling. It cannot fix a broken sewer treatment plant, it cannot legislate whistleblower protection, and it cannot build drainage systems.

Its story is one of vulnerability, yes, but also of profound resilience. It is a clarion call to policymakers: the people are ready; the laws and resources must now follow.



The Red Cross representative, Dumisani Ncube demonstrating on life-saving interventions



Chief Fire Officer Mr. Felix Muguti educating residents on lightning and unsafe gas storage.



World Vision Program Manager Regional Urban DRR Anticipatory Actions, Hamandishe Satande



HOW SPORT, SCHOOLS AND CIVIC ACTION ARE REWRITING YOUTH FUTURE IN GWERU

Gweru Youth Alive and GRRRA unite sport, school outreach and youth empowerment, tackling drug abuse, creating skills pathways and opening doors to future opportunities.

A whistle, a workshop and a call to account: in a single week Gweru's young people found their voices at the intersection of play, policy and practical opportunity. Gweru Youth Alive (GYA), in partnership with the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA), created the city's first formal dialogue platform for social soccer teams and simultaneously led a sweeping schools campaign under the newly launched National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2026–2030.

Together these initiatives translate Strategic Objective 2, to reduce alcohol, drug and substance abuse among young people, into energetic, community-rooted action.

More than 18 social soccer teams, representing at least 324 youth players from Mkoba North, Mkoba South and Gweru Urban constituencies, converged for the Social Soccer Workshop, a historic convening that brought the Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Sport, Sports and Recreation Commission (SRC), Gweru City Council and other stakeholders into the same arena as grassroots teams.

For years social soccer in Gweru operated informally, marginalised and under-resourced; the workshop turned that pattern on its head by giving players a seat at decision-making tables.

"Thanks to the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Hon. Owen Ncube, Government Departments and Agencies in Midlands Province now operate on an Open-Door Policy which we as youth must make full use of,"



said GYA Executive Director Isheanesu Marima. "We are prepared to act as a link between the youth community and responsible authorities in addressing pressing youth issues."

That link already bore fruit. Gweru City Council's Housing and Community Services Department pledged to assess the availability of council soccer fields for community use. CEO of Miners for Economic Development Coussie Anashe donated \$100 to seed a community income-generating project for the league and committed to sponsor one player from each team through a welding course at Gweru Urban Vocational Training Centre, promising three welding machines on graduation day.

GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe

set a clear condition for sustained support: organisation and accountability. “Support must be earned through transparency, organisation and accountability,” he said, challenging both youth groups and city leaders to convert goodwill into durable programmes.

Parallel to sport, GYA and GRRRA carried the anti-drug message into schools, Budiriro B College, Booms College and Mallon College, reaching thousands of learners from Form 1 to Form 6. The schools outreach reinforced the Strategy 2026–2030 framework by combining awareness, faith-based guidance, and concrete economic alternatives.

Representing the Ministry of Youth, Ward Development Coordinator Mr. Fanuel Dube pointed students to vocational training centres and Empower Bank loans as practical exits from substance-related risks: “Opportunities are available, skills, capital and mentorship. Start now, grow now.”

Evangelist Langton Nyashanu linked spiritual

resilience to prevention, urging students to report recruiters and build moral fortitude: “Your bodies are temples of Jesus Christ. Build a relationship with God, not just church attendance.”

The message of possible futures was echoed by Coussie Anashe, CEO of Miners for Economic Development: “If you avoid drugs and walk in God-like ways, you can achieve anything, even become CEOs.”

Voices from the ground affirmed impact. Form 1 pupil Decent Chanetsa said simply: “Drug abuse is not a decision we should make. Let’s seek God first and stay focused.”

The programming aligns tightly with Strategic Objective 2 and its seven strategic interventions:

- i) Disrupt illicit drug production, distribution and supply through law enforcement;
- ii) Prevent and delay drug use via education, awareness and community-level interventions;
- iii) Increase availability of harm-reduction, evidence-based treatment and rehabilitation;

iv) Support recovery and reintegration for those recovering from Drug and Substance Abuse (DSA);

v) Advocate for harmonised legal and policy frameworks to address DSA;

vi) Promote public awareness and behaviour change to reduce stigma and misinformation;

vii) Mobilise resources for DSA interventions and support economic strengthening for affected individuals.

GYA and GRRRA’s blended approach, sport as outreach, schools as prevention hubs, and skills training as alternative livelihoods, touches on all seven interventions. Sport sessions create safe spaces for behaviour change; workshops channel grievances into accountable municipal planning; vocational sponsorships and VTC linkages provide tangible livelihoods to reduce vulnerability.

A Deputy District Development Coordinator praised the initiative’s whole-of-government approach and its alignment with national

campaigns against drug and substance abuse. Minister Owen Ncube’s open-door policy has fast-tracked access to agencies and funding windows, blurring old lines between youth and authority.

The Social Soccer Workshop and the schools tour are not end points but launch pads. GYA and GRRRA have opened institutional doors; now the challenge is to convert pledges into schedules, equipment into leagues, and loans into enterprises. Sustained monitoring, transparent fund management and skills certification will determine whether the momentum becomes durable change.

This combined intervention demonstrates a simple development truth: when recreation, faith, policy and economic opportunity converge around clear prevention goals, young people move from risk to resilience. It is a model that other municipalities could replicate, sport to convene, schools to inform, and vocational pathways to transform vulnerability into viable futures.



A NEW ERA OF ACCESS: HOW THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY IS REWRITING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

By establishing Gweru's first dedicated Disability Desk, GRRRA and the City Council have moved beyond temporary aid to create a permanent, rights-based platform where every resident can claim their dignity.

For decades, the majestic Town House of Gweru stood not merely as a symbol of local democracy, but as a concrete fortress for many of its most vulnerable citizens.

To residents with physical disabilities, the lack of an elevator or a simple ramp meant that the rooms where the most vital decisions were made, and grievances debated and agreed, (People with Disabilities) were silenced by the very walls meant to serve them.

For years, the narrative surrounding disability in Gweru's local governance was one of occasional, fragmented charity rather than fundamental, protected rights. Residents with special needs were often relegated to being passive beneficiaries of pity rather than active rightsholders with a seat at the table.

However, through a sustained campaign led by Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA), that narrative was dismantled in March 2024 with the official launch of the Gweru Disability Desk.

The transformation reached its historic peak in 2024, but the seeds of this change were sown through years of observing how general advocacy often failed to account for specific vulnerabilities.

GRRRA recognized that while general community meetings addressed water and refuse, the specific barriers faced by People with Disabilities (PWDs) remained "hidden" in the statistics. In response, GRRRA launched a dedicated inclusion framework that culminated in a formal partnership with the Gweru City Council. The center of this strategy was the establishment of the Disability Desk, a physical and administrative anchor located within the municipal infrastructure itself. This was more than just a desk; it was

the creation of a centralized "grievance and information hub" where PWDs could finally engage with duty bearers in a specialized, dignified environment.

In the months leading up to the launch, GRRRA facilitated the Disability Rights and Service Delivery Dialogues. These were intensive, safe-space sessions designed to transform years of silent frustration into a structured, evidence-based policy demand. During 2024, these dialogues reached 120 participants—including 48 women, 52 men, and 26 youths—representing a diverse spectrum of physical and sensory disabilities. These residents articulated a vision of Gweru that went beyond simple infrastructure.

They spoke of the daily "invisible" exclusion: the vendors crowding narrow pavements that made wheelchair navigation a nightmare, the absence of sign language interpreters at council hearings, and the lack of Braille-compatible billing statements. They highlighted how, during the 2020 Nashville floods, the lack of a centralized disability database meant that the most vulnerable were the last to be evacuated.

The Disability Desk was designed to solve these systemic failures. By providing a dedicated space, the council and GRRRA ensured that inclusion was no longer an "afterthought" or a line item that could be easily ignored during budget cuts. The desk serves as a permanent reminder to every councillor and department head that PWDs are a vital constituency.

Evidence Matombo, a resident from Ward 7 and a vocal advocate throughout this process, captures the emotional weight of this institutional victory. "For too long, we were spectators in our own city's development, waiting for crumbs of

attention," Matombo reflects.

"But through the Disability Desk and our ongoing discussions with management, the council has finally prioritized our dignity. The plan to install an elevator at the Town House and wheelchair access routes at the Civic Centre is a victory for our feet and our voices. It highlights a real commitment to fostering a city where our presence is no longer an inconvenience, but a right."

The launch event in March 2024, as captured in the city's official records, was a moment of profound civic pride. GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe, standing alongside city officials, emphasized that this move was about shifting power. "We didn't just want a ramp; we wanted a permanent mechanism of accountability," Selipiwe asserts. "The Disability Desk is the realization of the 'Nothing for Us Without Us' mantra. It proves that when you give people the specialized tools to advocate for themselves, they don't just ask for assistance, they demand structural change. Our data shows that an accessible city for a wheelchair user is a better city for everyone, including the elderly and mothers with prams."

The Gweru Disability Desk represents the "Gold Standard" of policy impact. It is a sustainable, low-cost, high-impact model that institutionalizes the inclusion of marginalized groups. It moves the needle from "participation" to "influence."

The desk has already begun its work, facilitating the drafting of a comprehensive Disability Policy for Gweru the first of its kind in the southern region. This policy ensures that the US\$20,000 budget pledge for elevators and ramps in the 2026 budget is only the beginning of a long-term commitment to inclusive urban planning.

The story of the Gweru Disability Desk is ultimately a story of reclaiming the social contract. It shows that when a residents' association refuses to accept the status quo and a city council is willing to open its doors, the fortress of exclusion can be brought down.

As Gweru moves into 2026, the Disability Desk stands as a beacon of hope and a practical blueprint for other municipalities across Zimbabwe. It is a testament to the fact that when the most marginalized residents are empowered to claim their seat at the table, the entire city becomes a more just, accessible, and dignified home for every citizen.

The Town House is no longer just a building on a hill; with the Disability Desk at its heart, it is finally a house for all people.



The official launch of Gweru's first Disability Desk at Town House

THIRST FOR JUSTICE: HOW INCLUSIVE ADVOCACY QUENCHED GWERU'S DRY SUBURBS

After years of grueling treks and water scarcity, an inclusive committee of women and youth lobbied their MPs to unlock development funds, turning dry suburbs into hubs of sustainable access.



In the quiet streets of Tinshele, Northlea, and Clifton Park, the sound of a dry tap was once a daily melody of despair. For years, clean water was a luxury. Women and children trekked fifteen kilometers to reliable sources, journeys that were not just draining but perilous.

“We were walking until our feet were sore, and in the early hours, we weren’t safe,” recalls

Shamiso Mtisi, a local resident. For Mtisi and many others, water scarcity was a systemic failure that forced them to safe-guard their families against typhoid and cholera with every bucket fetched from contaminated wells.

The situation was compounded by social disharmony. In Clifton Park, water sources created by political parties often discriminated against residents based on affiliation. For people

with disabilities, the physical barriers were insurmountable. This suffering was the catalyst for the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA) to intervene in 2022. They facilitated a Water Committee composed of women, youth, and PWDs to transform residents from passive victims into active advocates.

GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe was instrumental in this shift. “We realized that residents were unaware of their rights,” says Selipiwe. “Our mission was to empower them to engage directly with duty bearers, ensuring that inclusion wasn’t just a buzzword but a practical tool for service delivery.”

The committee identified the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) as their primary target. They lobbied Gweru Urban MP Brian Dube, presenting evidence of the community’s plight. MP Brian Dube, moved by the organized nature of the petition, recognized the urgency.

“The CDF is designed to respond to the most pressing needs of the grassroots,” Dube noted during the engagement. “Seeing a committee that represented the elderly, the youth, and the disabled made it clear that water was the number one priority for Tinshele’s development.”

Through sustained pressure and structured dialogues, the committee successfully persuaded the legislators to allocate funds for borehole drilling. This marked a historic moment where community-led advocacy dictated government spending. The result was the sinking of boreholes that bypassed political gatekeepers. The day the rigs arrived, the community gathered in celebration.

Shamiso Mtisi, watching the first flow of clean water, expressed the relief felt by hundreds: “We thank GRRRA for advocating for a borehole in our community to ease water woes. The burden has been lifted from our shoulders.”

Today, the fifteen-kilometer treks are a memory. When MP Brian Dube and Cornilia Selipiwe officially commissioned the Tinshele borehole, it served as a testament to what is possible when rightsholders and duty bearers collaborate.

The project has not only brought water but has fostered social harmony across political divides. As Selipiwe concludes, “This victory belongs to the residents who refused to stay silent.”

The success in Tinshele stands as a beacon for Gweru, proving that when the marginalized are given a seat at the table, the whole community



GRRRA Executive Director Cornilia Selipiwe and Gweru Urban MP commissioning the Tinshele Borehole—a victory for the community-led