



*Together for Sustainable Transformation*

Lutheran Development Services Zimbabwe

Country Strategy 2025 - 2030

# Contents

List of Acronyms .....	3
A. Message from LDS Board Chairperson .....	4
B. Together for Sustainable Transformation.....	6
1. Who we are .....	8
About The Lutheran Development Services in Zimbabwe (LDS) .....	9
Our Operating Space – Challenges and Opportunities .....	11
Risks and Mitigation .....	12
2. Vision, Mission and Values .....	13
VALUES .....	14
3. Theory of Change .....	15
4. What we do .....	18
Strategic Framework (2025 – 2030).....	18
4.1. Sustainable Livelihoods.....	20
4.2. Climate Resilience .....	23
4.3. Justice & Peace .....	25
4.4. Humanitarian Action .....	30
5. How we work .....	33
<b>Strategic Drivers</b> .....	33
<b>Our Strategic Approaches</b> .....	33

## List of Acronyms

<b>ACT ALLIANCE</b>	Action by Churches Together Alliance
<b>CBPS</b>	Community Based Psychosocial Support
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease
<b>ELCZ</b>	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
<b>LDS</b>	Lutheran Development Services Zimbabwe
<b>LGBTQI</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex
<b>LWF DWS</b>	Lutheran World Federation Department for World Service
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual reproductive health and rights

## A. Message from LDS Board Chairperson

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of purpose that I present the Lutheran Development Services (LDS) Strategy 2025–2030 ‘Together for Sustainable Transformation’. LDS is a development arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ). This document marks a significant milestone in our journey of service, encapsulating our renewed commitment to fostering resilience, promoting justice, and driving innovation for Zimbabwe's most vulnerable communities.



The past strategic cycle has been both challenging and enlightening. We faced a myriad of obstacles, from the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to the growing impact of climate change and socio-economic instability. Yet, through it all, LDS has remained steadfast in its mission. In all that we do, we are reminded and guided by *Proverbs 31 vs 8 - 9*: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing. Speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy.” This is the foundation of our work anchored in our faith that inspires us to welcome the stranger and serve our neighbours.

Key to this Strategy is our commitment to inclusivity and human dignity. As a faith-based organization, our work transcends boundaries of faith, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. We remain committed to serving all, guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, and equity.

This strategy 2025 – 2030 is a call to action for our stakeholders, partners, and

communities. It reflects our shared vision for a world where every individual can live a just, peaceful, and dignified life. I invite all our partners, both current and prospective, to join hands with LDS as we embark on this transformative journey.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, ELCZ leadership, Government stakeholders, community leaders, and Development Partners who have contributed to shaping this strategy. Together, we will continue to make a lasting impact, ensuring that no one is left behind.

May our collective efforts be a testament to the power of unity, resilience, and faith in creating a brighter future for all.

L. Sijiye (Mr)

**Board Chairperson**

## B. Together for Sustainable Transformation

Sustainable transformation is a sincere and passionate ambition for the Lutheran Development Services. We believe that our work will impact both in a qualitative and profound way the lives of individuals, communities, and societies achieve the change they want as well as transform us as an organization. This is only achievable if we all pull together as one, not just the LDS and not just the communities but all of us.



The Strategy embodies our vision of **transformed, vibrant and resilient communities** living just, peaceful and dignified lives manifesting God's love. To achieve this ambition, we count on the collective, mutual participation, contribution and commitment of all stakeholders, starting with the marginalized and vulnerable communities themselves, funding partners, government stakeholders at local, district and national level, traditional leaders and other gatekeepers as well as the ELCZ community at large.

We exist in an era where climate change, and inequalities both economic and political are ravaging the efforts of the poor pushing livelihood opportunities under strain and therefore, exacerbating vulnerabilities and fragility to the extreme. Hence only through concerted efforts by all, acknowledging our interconnectedness and taking advantage of existing and future networks can we make meaningful contribution towards achieving the future or change we want to see.

In this six-year period, we commit to focus on; a) **sustainable livelihoods** b) **strengthening climate resilience** c) **promoting justice and peace** and d) **providing timely and quality humanitarian**. Being aware of the complex global contexts that affect our working and have an impact on the results, the LDS will actively work to strengthen its capacity by, building a sustainable funding base, increasing its organizational sustainability and fostering key strategic partnerships.

Crucial strategic approaches that will augment execution of this Strategy are community-led approaches, integrated approaches, rights-based approaches, and an inclusive approach that considers special needs and pays attention to factors that increase a person's vulnerability such as disability, gender, age and other discriminated against social dimensions.

We invite you to join us in this exciting journey of sustainable transformation.

Simangaliso Hove

**LDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



# 1. Who we are



WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE  
PEOPLE PERISH. BUT THOSE WHO  
KEEPS THE LAW WILL BE HAPPY -  
Proverbs 29: 18 KJV

## LDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022 – 2025

Aims to ensure the effective and efficient fulfilment of its mandate, while fostering respectful and professional engagement with LDS management and staff to achieve excellence.



## About The Lutheran Development Services in Zimbabwe (LDS)



The Lutheran Development Services is a development and humanitarian arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) born out of the localization of the Lutheran World Federation, Department for World Service (LWF DWS) Zimbabwe Program in 1987 that was consequently

registered as a Private Voluntary Organization (local Non-Governmental Organization) in 2003.

Grounded in the principles of Christian faith, LDS seeks to bring hope, empowerment, and transformation to marginalized and vulnerable communities across Zimbabwe. As a member of the ACT Alliance, we associate with like-minded partners to advance sustainable development, disaster response, and advocacy for justice and peace.

LDS envisions a society where all people experience dignity, justice, and fullness of life. We work across several critical areas, including food security, climate resilience, disaster risk reduction, gender equity, health, livelihood empowerment and humanitarian. Our programs strive to integrate justice, peace, and humility in all aspects of development work. This work additionally promotes social justice, climate justice, migration and displacement, gender justice as well as sexual and reproductive health rights as a human rights issue.

LDS' work is influenced by the UN's agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and is also aligned to the Zimbabwe Government's National Development Strategy (NDS1) which is the country's ambition to achieve vision 2030 of a 'prosperous and empowered upper middle-income society by 2030'.

## **Our Operating Space — Challenges and Opportunities**

Lutheran Development Services (LDS) operates in a challenging and dynamic context, shaped by political, economic, social, and environmental factors. This complex environment influences the strategic directions and interventions necessary to achieve LDS's goals.

Although in 2015 world leaders committed to “leave no one behind”, the world we live and work in still experiences dramatically increasing vulnerabilities and inequalities, with the poor remaining behind and the rich getting more wealth. The country is facing multiple crises, including food insecurity because of effects of climate change, recurring cholera outbreaks and a fragile economy characterized by high inflation, fluctuating currency values, and rising public debt. These factors strain households and reduce opportunities to reach their potential unlike those in developed countries. The political environment remains polarized, which impacts governance and complicates development efforts.

High rates of unemployment among the youth results in rising levels of substance, alcohol and drug abuse placing an additional burdens on overstretched healthcare services and exacerbate social issues. Generally, the failure for some people with these challenges results in ballooning of various mental health issues, especially among men and young people.

Internally, LDS enjoys and takes advantage of its being an integral part of the ELCZ, a church with historical ties with the Lutheran churches world-wide, a member of the LWF and its legacy of mission service among the poor and sharing of the Good News with the oppressed and marginalized. Being recognized as an FBO has its unique benefits as communities and traditional leaders, particularly in a mostly religious context, have trust and confidence in the LDS. The same relationship creates tensions between the church and LDS in how LDS addresses issues around SRHR and LGBTQI+. However, the LDS' work touches people from all walks in life is non-discriminatory.

As we develop this strategy, Zimbabwe is facing yet another El Nino induced

drought which is currently affecting about 50% of population mostly in rural areas. The impact of such shocks and stressors are a threat to the sustainability of livelihoods options built over the years and increases humanitarian needs as development actions must refocus on disaster response and recovery. As a result of increased humanitarian needs, LDS has strengthened its strategic partnerships, especially within the ACT Alliance as members form consortiums to access funding for emergence response.

### **Risks and Mitigation**

LDS has identified the following issues, among others, as key potential risks that may negatively impact on the achievement of this strategy.

- Government policies and regulations that may operations such as the issuance of MoUs with districts and local authorities and restrictions on access to target communities.
- Financial instability due to shrinking funding sources and changes in political priorities and policies of those providing development aid
- Organizational capacity issues that may affect operations such as heavy workloads on staff.

## 2. Vision, Mission and Values

### VISION

*“Transformed, vibrant, and resilient communities living just, peaceful, and dignified lives manifesting God’s love”.*

### MISSION/PURPOSE

*“To alleviate vulnerability and suffering through rights-based, community-driven, and sustainable development initiatives”.*

### GOAL

To contribute to the empowerment of communities in Zimbabwe to achieve sustainable livelihoods, climate resilience, social justice, gender justice and sexual and reproductive health rights, and access to timely humanitarian aid, enhancing their transformation into vibrant, resilient, and peaceful societies.





# VALUES

## 1. Impartiality & Integrity

Upholding truth, justice, and fairness.

## 2. Excellence

Commitment to high standards and continuous learning.

## 3. Respect and Fairness

Treating all with dignity and equity.

## 4. Transparency and Accountability

Stewardship of resources and adherence to global standards (such as Sphere, CHS).

## 5. Inclusivity

Promoting diversity and participation across all demographics.

# 3. Theory of Change

## Goal

To contribute to the empowerment of communities in Zimbabwe to achieve sustainable livelihoods, climate resilience, social justice, gender justice and sexual and reproductive health rights, and access to timely humanitarian aid, enhancing their transformation into vibrant, resilient, and peaceful societies.

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**If...,**

### 1. Empowered and Resilient Communities

- **If** communities are equipped with justice and peace, vocational and entrepreneurial skills, mentorship, microgrants, access to market linkages and are assisted to utilize local available natural resources and implement sustainable agricultural practices,
- **Then** they will diversify their livelihoods, increase household income, and achieve sustainable economic independence, food security, gender justice and social justice.

### 2. Climate Adaptation and Risk Reduction

- **If** communities adopt climate-smart technologies, improve water infrastructure, restore ecosystems, and apply climate-smart agricultural practices,
- **Then** they will adapt to climate change, reduce vulnerability to disasters, and improve resource sustainability.

### 3. Social Justice and Peacebuilding

- **If** communities receive counselling, advocacy, psychosocial support, knowledge, tools and access to safe spaces for addressing gender and other inequalities, gender-based violence, substance abuse, and conflicts through positive traditional culture and community values and increased knowledge on human rights.
- **Then** social cohesion will improve, inequalities will reduce, and access to justice will be enhanced.

#### **4. Humanitarian Action**

- **If** communities facing acute crises are empowered and their resilience built while also receiving timely humanitarian assistance including food, water, health services, and protection,
  - **Then** their immediate needs will be met, reducing suffering and laying the foundation for recovery and resilience to withstand stresses and adversities.
- 

**If...,**

#### **Key Enablers**

1. Community ownership and active participation in development process.
2. Strong partnerships with government, private sector, and civil society.
3. Robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems.
4. Sustainable funding models for the LDS.
5. Organizational systems that can respond strategically and



effectively to its environment.

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Then...,

### Long-Term Impact

- **If** the above pathways are successfully implemented,
- **Then** communities will transform into self-reliant, inclusive, and resilient societies, ensuring dignity, justice, and peace for all members.



## 4. What we do

### Strategic Framework (2025 – 2030)

To achieve its mission, LDS has adopted the following four thematic pillars that will organize its work.

1. Sustainable Livelihoods
2. Climate Resilience
3. Justice & Peace
4. Humanitarian Action

Supplementary to the four core goals are broad activities of a more tactical nature which are regarded as drivers. These three drivers are also critical as only through them is LDS able to pursue its mission and core business:



BEFORE



AFTER



- **Driver 1:** Build sustainable funding.
- **Driver 2:** Shape organizational capability.
- **Driver 3:** Foster key strategic partnerships.

These two different streams of core goals and tactical drivers stimulate and depend on each other and should not be viewed in isolation. This intertwined relationship also entails parallel thoughts, concepts in different goals and drivers that should be complementary rather than redundant.

The strategies and drivers behind each goal are presented as ‘strategic priorities’ which reflect the particular focus and areas of activity during the span of this plan.

## 4.1. Sustainable Livelihoods

### Key Objective (s)

To enhance the economic well-being and food security of communities by promoting diverse, sustainable, and inclusive livelihood opportunities.



Four dimensions of food security are availability, access, utilisation and stability, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously.

## Context

Most rural population in the country face widespread poverty and economic vulnerability, with agriculture as the main livelihood. Reliance on rain-fed systems has resulted in low productivity and crop failures due to recurrent droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall as well as limited grazing land, and insufficient water for livestock. Unemployment, especially among youth and women, drives precarious informal trading and migration, while small-scale mining activities, though economically significant, harm the environment and disrupt farming. Structural barriers, including poor infrastructure, limited market access, and inadequate financial services, further hinder progress, with women and marginalized groups facing compounded challenges.

## Strategic priority initiatives

1. **Diversify Livelihoods by** promoting non-agricultural income-generating activities.
2. **Enhance Agricultural Value Chains such as** developing storage, processing, and marketing infrastructure and increase market access.
3. **Access to Financial Services:** Expand microgrants initiatives and digital financial platforms through ISALS and or SACCOSS/VSLAs to empower underserved communities.
4. **Support for Youth and Women Entrepreneurs:** Provide tailored entrepreneurship programs and support with micro-grants.
5. **Vocational skills training for youth:** Support training of youths in vocational and technical skills.

## Expected Outcomes:



- Increased household income and economic diversification.
- Improved food security and market participation.
- Empowered youth and women contributing to local economic growth.
- Increased community self-reliance.



## 4.2. Climate Resilience

### Key Objective (s)

To build absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities and reduce vulnerability to climate risks through sustainable resource management and disaster preparedness.

### Context

LDS works in districts that are at the forefront of climate change impacts in Zimbabwe. Frequent droughts and heatwaves have led to water scarcity, reduced agricultural yields, and loss of livelihoods. Most of the productive age-group is then tempted by these harsh realities to migrate to neighbouring South Africa and Botswana in search of economic opportunities. Water resources are critically strained, with communities often relying on seasonal rivers and boreholes that frequently dry up. In areas that are primarily dependent on livestock issues of overgrazing and soil erosion further undermining resilience. Extreme weather events, such as flash floods, also damage infrastructure, leaving communities cut off from essential services. Limited access to climate-smart technologies and inadequate disaster preparedness exacerbates the vulnerability of these communities.

### Strategic priority initiatives

1. Awareness raising and training communities in water harvesting, irrigation, and sustainable water management systems use.
2. Promote and implement community-based climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans.
3. Promote sustainable afforestation, rangeland management,



wetland protection and soil conservation practices.

4. Promote indigenous fruit trees.
5. Promote recycling of waste and advocate for a ban on single-use plastics.
6. Introduce solar-powered irrigations, sensitize and train communities on energy-efficient cooking stoves to reduce deforestation.
7. Strengthen Climate-Sensitive Infrastructure
8. Promote research and evidence-based locally led advocacy on climate policies and management of the environment together with members of the Act Alliance

### **Expected Outcomes:**

- Improved water availability and agricultural productivity.
- Enhanced community capacity to prepare for and recover from climate shocks.
- Increased adoption of renewable energy technologies, reducing environmental degradation.

## 4.3. Justice & Peace

### Key Objective (s)

To promote social cohesion, access to human rights, and foster equitable access to justice and public resources



*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*

*International Declaration of Human Rights*

## Context

Social inequalities and resource-based conflicts are persistent issues world-wide. Political polarization often fuels tensions, with marginalized communities bearing the brunt of exclusion and discrimination.

Zimbabwean society is traditionally patriarchal with cultural norms that often define inferior roles and responsibilities for women in church and society. Customs such as ‘lobola’, the dowry paid by a man for woman, as well as religious beliefs continue to reinforce gender inequalities. Women, youth, and people with disabilities frequently face barriers in accessing education, economic resources, justice and participating in decision-making processes at all levels including household, community and in society.

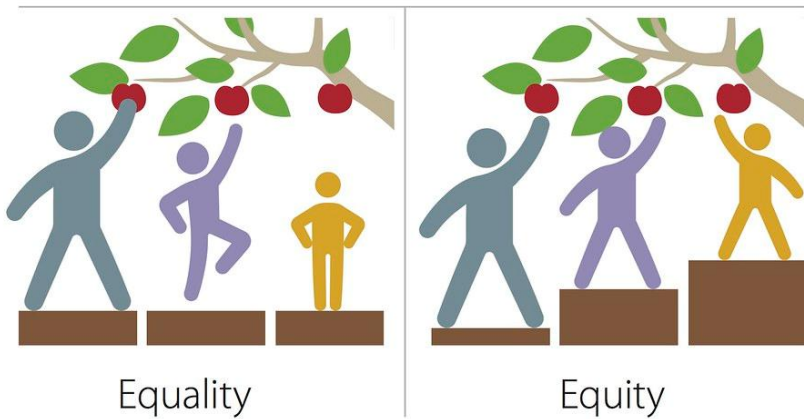
Gender-based violence (GBV) is a critical concern, with many cases going unreported. According to the UNFPA, in Zimbabwe about one in three women aged between 15 and 49 have experienced physical violence from an intimate partner and about 1 in 4 women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15<sup>1</sup>.

Youth exclusion from governance and limited opportunities for constructive engagement have led to frustration and, in some cases, increased involvement in criminal activities. In addition, young people continuously face cyber bullying and grooming and are not aware of the legal steps they can take to limit these. Substance abuse among young people, exacerbated by socio-economic pressures, is on the rise, posing additional risks to social stability. There is an increasing

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<sup>1</sup> [https://zimbabwe.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa\\_zimbabwe\\_annual\\_report\\_2023.pdf](https://zimbabwe.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa_zimbabwe_annual_report_2023.pdf)

skill disconnect for young people resulting in many young people feeling frustrated and some resorting to street vending and criminal activity.



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## Strategic priority initiatives

1. Establish safe spaces and provide psychosocial support and referral pathways for survivors.
2. Gender Training, on equality, positive masculinity, for champions, traditional and faith-leaders
3. Strengthening youth participation in decision-making and local governance structures.
4. Facilitate dialogues among conflicting parties to promote peaceful coexistence including human-wildlife conflict.
5. Work with stakeholders to promote laws and policies that protect marginalized groups, including women, youth, and people with



disabilities.

6. Substance Abuse Rehabilitation and Awareness Campaigns
7. Strengthen the capacity of communities to address issues of irregular migration and human trafficking
8. Comprehensive sexuality education, access to youth-friendly SRHR services, and advocacy for policies promoting adolescent and young adult health and rights.
9. Integrate CBPS into all programming to support communities and staff to identify signs of stress and to utilise the referral pathways to assist those failing to cope with situations.



Nomathemba Sibanda, a returnee from South Africa, displays her masonry skills at the public works site in Filabusi town. Photo: LWF/Monmo Dahiru Moodi

### **Expected Outcomes:**

- Increased social cohesion and reduction in conflicts at community level.
- Enhanced protection and empowerment of women, youth, and other marginalized groups.
- Improved access to mental health, justice and legal services.
- Reduced incidence of substance abuse and related social issues.
- Improved access to SRH services and knowledge on SRHR.

## 4.4. Humanitarian Action

### Key Objective(s):

1. Strengthen Preparedness, Response, and Resilience: Establish early warning systems, pre-position resources, and build local capacities to mitigate and manage emergencies effectively, prioritizing equity and inclusion for affected groups.
2. Enhance Accountability, Innovation, and Impact: Promote transparency and rigorous monitoring while leveraging emerging technologies to optimize resource allocation, beneficiary tracking, and humanitarian effectiveness.



## Context

Zimbabwe faces recurring humanitarian challenges, including droughts, floods, food insecurity, and economic vulnerabilities, exacerbated by climate change and limited social safety nets. These challenges are particularly acute in rural districts where populations experience a combination of poverty, resource scarcity, and environmental fragility.

LDS believes that supporting local communities take charge of their own situation in community-led response and recovery instead of imposing initiatives on them will make communities stronger and prepared for the next disaster.

## Strategic Priorities

1. Enhancing community emergency preparedness and response planning at different community levels.
2. Ensure LDS humanitarian action is provided timely and efficiently through collaboration with other humanitarian actors, the ELCZ, the Act Alliance Zimbabwe forum and local traditional structures.
3. Establish an internal roster of well-trained humanitarian experts in collaboration with the ACT ALLIANCE forum.
4. Utilize a multiple nexus approach thus integrate long-term development goals with immediate humanitarian aid efforts as well as peace initiatives to ensure lasting impact.
5. Leverage technology and analytics to monitor, evaluate, and enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions in partnership with research institutions and other experts.



## 6. Foster Partnerships for Collective Impact

### **Strategic Outcomes**

1. Communities are better equipped to withstand and recover from emergencies through strengthened capacities, long-term recovery efforts, and minimal dependence on external support.
2. Humanitarian aid is delivered swiftly and effectively, leveraging innovative, scalable solutions to minimize suffering and maximize impact.
3. Transparent practices and strong partnerships foster confidence among stakeholders, driving collective efforts for sustainable humanitarian impact.

# 5. How we work

## Strategic Drivers

To achieve our goals, LDS will focus on the following strategic drivers during the six years.

1. Building sustainable funding models will include revenue growth from the LDS brand and improved quality of programming. LDS will also optimize operating costs by fostering value for money awareness for increased effectiveness and efficiency.
1. Shaping organizational sustainability will entail development of a high performing organisation that aligns current capability to LDS' future needs as well as nurturing an effective, healthy working environment and empowered leadership.
2. Fostering key strategic partnerships will result in continued mutually partnership with the existing partners as well as the ACT Forum, increased social credibility and creating new partnerships for both implementation and funding.

## Our Strategic Approaches

- **Rights-based approach:** The LDS actively works to ensure that human rights, dignity, and well-being of all are protected and promoted. The LDS identifies rights-holders as communities it works with, the vulnerable and marginalized communities that include women, youths, children, and people with disabilities. Its

programmes and projects are also intended to complement the services and build the capacity of the duty-bearers.

- **Community-Led Needs based Empowerment:** Communities take the lead in identifying their challenges and finding solutions, with LDS providing support and resources.
- **Disability Inclusion:** LDS ensures people with disabilities are included in all programs, considering how gender, age, and faith affect them.
- **Integrated Approach (Nexus):** All projects are linked to ensure they work together for the overall growth of communities.
- **Partnerships and Networking:** LDS works with other organizations and builds community networks to make its projects more impactful and sustainable.
- **Building Resilience:** LDS strengthens communities by layering interventions to ensure lasting results.



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Mr Enoch Mavambe with harvested honey at Masivamele Community Learning and Demonstration Centre established by the Lutheran Development Services.

Photo: LDS

*Give a man fish, and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime*