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Stronger Local Authorities for Inclusive and Sustainable Economies (SLAISE)

Context

Zimbabwe's inclusive and sustainable growth depends on stronger local authorities (LAs), which are the public institutions closest to citizens and are responsible for service delivery, local economic management and democratic participation. Despite constitutional recognition of devolution, LAs continue to operate in a context of centralised control, constrained fiscal space, fragmented mandates, limited institutional capacity to drive territorial development. Many councils face service delivery backlogs, ageing infrastructure, weak revenue collection, limited capital investment. The project document notes that LA revenue collection averaged 57%, with 46% of collections absorbed by labour costs and only 11% available for capital expenditure. These constraints reduce the capacity of councils to maintain services, invest in infrastructure, promote local economic development (LED) and build public trust.

The project responds to these structural challenges by strengthening the policy, fiscal, digital and participatory systems through which LAs function. It builds on previous EU-supported CLGF work and aligns with the EU TAG-ZIM programme, EU's Global Gateway priorities, Zimbabwe's Devolution and Decentralisation Policy, the Local Economic Development Policy, the ICT Policy, the Gender Policy, the Call to Action for Service Delivery, Minimum Service Delivery Standards and the Nhimbe concept.

Regions: Zimbabwe with targeted 25 local authorities across Manicaland, Masvingo, Matabeleland South, Harare Metropolitan, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Matabeleland North and Midlands

Budget: EUR 2,555,556

EUR 2,300,000 financed by the European Union and EUR 255,556 co-financed by CLGF Zimbabwe and partners

Duration: 40 months from June 2026

SLAISE also addresses a critical gap in agricultural value-chain development: EU and private-sector investments often operate without sufficient anchoring in LAs planning, land-use coordination, infrastructure systems, environmental management and accountability structures.

Objectives

The expected impact is a local government sector in which financially sustainable, accountable and capable LAs can drive inclusive territorial economic development and translate development investments into better services, jobs, livelihoods and community resilience.

- Improved LA policy, institutional and fiscal capacity for effective devolution, accountability and service delivery
- Strengthened citizen participation, traditional leadership integration and downward accountability in local governance
- Enhanced LED through LA-led coordination of agricultural value chains, biodiversity-based livelihoods and trade facilitation.

Strategic pillars and key results

SLAISE uses a politically informed, systems-strengthening and implementation-oriented approach. It does not assume full local autonomy in the context of partial devolution. Instead, it strengthens the functions that LAs can realistically exercise, while building evidence, legitimacy and coordination mechanisms that improve their role within the wider intergovernmental system. The project moves beyond governance compliance towards economic empowerment by linking service delivery, digitalisation, ward participation, fiscal capacity and local economic development.

1 Policy, institutional and fiscal capacity

SLAISE supports policy dialogue, evidence-based advocacy, leadership development, fiscal analysis, revenue optimisation, programme-based budgeting and financial accountability.

- ▶ *Expanding fiscal space, improving budgeting and reducing audit backlogs to achieve up to a **30%** increase in revenue performance.*
- ▶ *Equipping at least **100** senior officials with essential skills in leadership, public financial management and value-chain facilitation.*

2 Digital transformation and operational systems

Establishing and expanded the Local Authorities Digital System (LADS) as a practical platform for financial management, records management, ward profiling, planning, budgeting, service delivery monitoring and reporting across **25** targeted councils.

3 Ward-based participation and traditional leadership

Ward profiling and development planning will be institutionalised as the bridge between communities, councils and budgets.

SLAISE strengthens the role of traditional leaders, WADCOs, VIDCOs, councillors, women, youth and persons with disabilities in local planning, natural resource governance, accountability and LED.

- ▶ *Conducting and digitising **250** comprehensive ward profiles.*

4 LED and value-chain coordination

Councils are supported to coordinate agriculture value chains, land-use planning, aggregation points, markets infrastructure priorities, biodiversity-sensitive livelihoods, trade facilitation, while building partnerships with private-sector actors, financial institutions and EU-supported programmes.

- ▶ *Supporting at least **10** LAs to develop integrated LED strategies, facilitate concrete market linkages, financing arrangements or agricultural productive facilities.*

5 Knowledge, learning and sustainability

Through the Local Government Research and Development Centre (LOGRDC), SLAISE consolidates municipal data, ward profiles, spatial information, service-delivery indicators, value-chain intelligence, research and learning products, to support evidence-based decision-making, policy influence and sector-wide learning.

- ▶ *Supporting policy dialogue and learning across all **92** LAs through LOGRDC.*

SLAISE's sustainability strategy is anchored in institutional embedding. LADS generates ground-level council data while LOGRDC compiles these outputs for sector-wide learning. By working through MLGPW, UCAZ, ARDCZ, ZILGA, councils and technical partners, the project will strengthen existing systems rather than create parallel structures

LA co-financing, in-kind contributions, digital capacity building, peer learning and integration of outputs into statutory plans and budgets will help sustain results.

Contracting authority

European Union (Delegation to Zimbabwe)

Lead executing agency

Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Zimbabwe

Key implementing partners

- GIZ/TAG-ZIM, UNDP, UNICEF, SDC/U-RISE and EU-supported agriculture value-chain programmes.
- Ministry of Local Government and Public Works (MLGPW); Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ); Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDCZ); Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA); Harare Institute of Technology (HIT).

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