



# For Youth By Youth

NEWSLETTER

# Zimbabwe Adolescents Health & Wellbeing Symposium 2024

3-4 July 2024 | Harare, Zimbabwe

**Solidarity, Spaces & Sustainability.**

**DON'T MISS OUT!**

Zimbabwe is facing significant challenges in addressing the health and well-being needs of its large adolescent and youth population, who make up 33% of the total population. Adolescents aged 10-19 constitute 22% of the country's residents, highlighting the urgency of prioritizing their needs.

Adolescents and young people in Zimbabwe face a myriad of issues, including structural poverty, lack of access to services and information, social discrimination, early childbearing, and child marriage. Adolescent boys and young men also face pressures to conform to harmful gender norms, leading to risky behaviors such as unsafe sex, substance abuse, and violence.

These challenges have profound consequences for the health and well-being of Zimbabwean youth, with long-term impacts on their future prospects. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

In response to these pressing needs, the Zimbabwe Adolescents Health & Wellbeing Symposium 2024, will be held from July 3-4 in Harare. Co-created and co-convened by young people, the Ministry of Health and Child Care, and My Age Zimbabwe, the symposium will bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, including government representatives, the private sector, development partners, and youth-led organizations.

This year, the Symposium will be also supported by SRHR Africa Trust, National AIDS Council, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, Population Services Zimbabwe, REPSSI, GALZ, Health Fonds Zimbabwe Trust, SAYWHAT among other partners. Its going to be bigger and better! The symposium aims to engage decision-makers, influencers, and champions to advocate for improved policies and programs, as well as increased financial and political commitments to advance the health and well-being of young people in Zimbabwe. It will also create safe spaces for inclusive decision-making and co-creation of policies and programs between young people and gatekeepers.

By sharing evidence, communications, and advocacy messages, the symposium will advise and influence governments, multilateral, and private sector decision-makers on best practices in engaging young people on health and well-being issues. The event will build on the success of the first-ever symposium held in November 2023, which was a landmark event in the country.

Through this collaborative and inclusive platform, the Zimbabwe Adolescents Health & Wellbeing Symposium 2024 aims to drive tangible solutions, bolster accountability, and catalyze meaningful change for the health and well-being of adolescents and young people in Zimbabwe.

For more information and partnership on ZAHWS2024, please email:

[wadzanai@myagezimbabwe.org](mailto:wadzanai@myagezimbabwe.org)

#ZAHWS2024 #ForYouthByYouth #SRHRNow #MyHeathMyRights



# MAYA FESTIVAL 2ND Edition

*A Fusion of Talent , Innovation, and Sounds.....*



My Age Zimbabwe successfully organized the Masvingo Youth Arts (MAYA )Festival 2nd Edition 2024 in Masvingo, which was completed with great success, as part of the rethinking arts in pandemics project.

The 2nd edition of the MAYA Festival in 2024 was an undeniable success, captivating audiences with its electrifying blend of poetry slams, mesmerizing performances, and unparalleled networking opportunities.

Some of the highlights of the MAYA Festival were the headlining performances by Ras Caleb, Mr Candy, WekwaMaramba, and Alchemy the big dawg; these captivated the audience and created an electrifying atmosphere.

The festival featured a diverse lineup of national and local artists, showcasing a wide range of musical genres that kept the audience entertained throughout the event, making it a truly immersive experience for all,the festival gave the locals a place to gather and commemorate their heritage.

The festival, which has become a beacon of artistic expression and youth empowerment in Masvingo , once again proved its ability to showcase the boundless talent and creativity of the region.

From thought-provoking poetry to captivating musical renditions, each performance left an indelible mark on the attendees, inspiring and empowering young people to embrace their artistic passions.

Beyond the stage, the festival also provided invaluable networking opportunities, allowing artists, industry professionals, and enthusiasts to connect, collaborate, and explore new avenues for growth.

This dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences has solidified MAYA's reputation as a hub for the advancement of the Rethinking arts in pandemics project and the empowerment of the youth.

Special thanks to the CreativeACTIONS2 project that is under the Culture Fund supported by the EU Delegation to Zimbabwe.

# SAFE CHOICES EMPOWER WOMEN

Invest in access to essential abortion information and services to save women's lives".

My Age Zimbabwe together with MAMA Network and other partners hosted a twitter space under the theme "Safe choices empower women. Invest in access to essential abortion information and services to save women's lives," in recognition of the The International Day of Action for Women's Health which is observed annually on May 28th.

This major aim was to raise awareness about women's health issues globally and advocate for the improvement of healthcare services for women.

The Twitter space platform attracted a number of people and served as a perfect platform to address challenges such as access to reproductive health services and abortion services , maternal mortality, gender-based violence, and other health disparities that affect women .

Fruitful conversations were discussed at the space ,highlighting the need for many investment approaches to women's health and a reminder that gender equality is essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring the health and rights of all women.

The space also recognized the progress made in advancing women's health rights while acknowledging the work that still needs to be done.,and the successes of MAMA organizations working on SMA to empower women and girls in rural communities during these difficult times.

The space called on governments, policy makers, pharmacists and health providers, community leaders, partners, women, and girls to invest in access to safe choices to save women's lives.

**SAFE CHOICES EMPOWER WOMEN: INVESTING IN SELF MANAGED ABORTION TO SAVE WOMENS LIVES**

**XSPACES**  
<https://bit.ly/May28XSpaces>

**Date:** Monday, 27th May 2024  
**Time:** 3pm EAT, 1pm WAT

**Host:** Victorine Baloli

**Speakers:** Roseline Rodongo, Veeslee Ruva

Logos: 28 May, My Age, Vision Action Cameroon, MAMA



# ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO END UNSAFE ABORTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

Values clarification is a process in which individuals engage in honest, open-minded and critical reflection and evaluation of new or re-framed information and situations, challenge deeply-held assumptions and myths and discover or potentially transform their values.

My Age Zimbabwe recently organized a Value Clarification Attitude Transformation (VCAT) session with 15 religious leaders from different denominations, to foster dialogue and understanding between different religious groups in the community in terms of SRHR since Religious leaders play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes towards sensitive topics.

Zimbabwe is largely a Christian community and sensitive topics such as abortion are stigmatized yet the Government estimates indicate that more than 80,000 illegal abortions happen every year.

Engaging Religious leaders in an open and thoughtful dialogue is essential to address misconceptions and promote access to safe reproductive healthcare.

Through this process, religious leaders are empowered to become allies in ensuring access to SRHR services and safe abortion access, rooted in compassion and respect for women's reproductive autonomy.

The Termination of pregnancy restricts abortion to three circumstances; health of the child, physical health of mother and unlawful intercourse (rape and incest).

There are also a number of administrative gaps for women in the three circumstances to access the services.



During the VCAT session, religious leaders shared their perspectives on how they viewed sexual and reproductive health and among followers of different beliefs, and emphasized the importance of mutual respect and acceptance of different values people have to build a more inclusive society.

By exploring values, beliefs and current laws around abortion, the session helped to transform the negative perceptions that often prevent women from accessing these vital services. It was a platform to have honest, evidence-based conversations that prioritize the health and wellbeing of all.

The session provided a platform for open communication and collaboration among religious communities to address common challenges and work towards sexual and reproductive health including abortion issues.

Overall, the VCAT session organized by My Age Zimbabwe was successful in bringing together religious leaders to engage in meaningful conversations and for them to use their influential voices to help destigmatize reducing SRHR related stigma including abortion stigma and advocate for policies that protect this fundamental human right.

# 25 PAMOJA CSO PARTNERS GEARED FOR SAFE ABORTION ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN



My Age Zimbabwe through the Pamoja Project engaged Civil Society Organisations to collectively work towards transforming societal perceptions and ensuring that all individuals have the right to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in advocating for safe and accessible abortion services.

My Age Zimbabwe conducted Value Clarification Attitude Transformation (VCAT) sessions to reach out to CSOs, through open dialogues, questions our values and beliefs around abortion were explored ultimately affirming the fundamental human rights that underpin access to safe reproductive healthcare.

The VCAT session was essential as it gave a platform to clarify the current legal and policy landscape, empowering CSOs with the knowledge to navigate the complexities and advocate for progressive change.

Moreover, the session investigated the existing knowledge and experiences of CSOs regarding abortion and sexual and reproductive health services which provided invaluable insights, understanding and strategies to address the stigma and misconceptions that often hinder women from accessing the care they need.

The Pamoja project main objective to make sure that people have of all groups have the right information and have the access to comprehensive abortion care, by fostering meaningful engagement of the community through public support.

The Pamoja project aims to transform the narrative and create an environment where safe abortion is recognized as a vital component of comprehensive healthcare, ensuring that all individuals can exercise their right to make informed choices about their own bodies and futures.



# Youth-Led COMMUNITY-LED MONITORING



My Age Zimbabwe through the CLM project has been working towards improvement of SRHR service provision and managed to train 24 Community Health Advocates, and has been conducting community dialogues across the Gutu District, specifically at the Gutu Rural Hospital and the Chitando, Dewure, Matizha, Cheshuro, and Chimombe clinics, from May 8th to 10th, 2024 in order to sensitize the community on community-led monitoring and the services they can acquire from the local service providers, to present findings from the 2nd quarter collected data, to identify challenges affecting HIV service delivery in their community and map the way forward.



## Our commitment to increase SRH Service Delivery

this initiative is dedicated to the consistent and systematic collection of feedback from HIV service beneficiaries, to foster actionable insights and transformative outcomes. The communities expressed their enthusiasm for CLM and its potential to contribute to health improvements.

The dialogues highlighted that in the Gutu District, healthcare facilities are encountering a spectrum of challenges as , challenges encompass a perceived negative attitude among healthcare workers, a deficit of confidentiality, particularly within the Opportunistic Infections (OI) department, recurrent stock shortages, infrastructural limitations, and a scarcity of health personnel at the facility.

These dialogues successfully identified existing barriers, facilitated community-centric discussions, and outlined prospective strategies for improvement.

The dialogue provided a platform to share the indicators tracked by CLM and underscored the project's primary aim of improving service delivery and health outcomes at the local and national levels.

The Community Health Advocates presented their findings, and the community engaged in discussions, sharing potential solutions to the challenges identified. Representatives from the Matizha community and Dewure community councilors expressed their desire to receive feedback, enabling them to take appropriate actions to enhance HIV service delivery.

# SRHR & CLIMATE CHANGE THE INTERSECTION THE INTERSECTION THE INTERSECTION

My Age Zimbabwe in collaboration with Steps for the Future continues to use film screening as a tool for advocacy and recently hosted the stakeholders meeting that served as a platform to initiate discussions, share experiences, mobilize and explore strategies to mitigate the negative effects of climate change within the community.

Transitioning into a new phase of collaboration, My Age and STEPS are embarking on addressing climate change issues affecting young people in Zimbabwe, this shift reflects the growing recognition of the urgent need to address climate change, SRHR and its disproportionate impact on youth.

Through dialogue and collaboration, the meeting raised awareness, gathered insights, and explored actionable solutions to safeguard the well-being of young people and communities in Zimbabwe.

Moreover, the collaboration aims to integrate climate education into school curricula, ensuring that the younger generation is well-equipped to tackle environmental challenges.

By fostering a culture of environmental stewardship, the initiative hopes to inspire a new wave of eco-conscious citizens dedicated to preserving Zimbabwe's natural heritage.

As the meeting concluded, participants expressed a renewed commitment to ongoing cooperation, recognizing that collective efforts and shared responsibility are vital in creating a resilient future.

The partnership between My Age Zimbabwe and STEPS for the Future stands as a beacon of hope, illustrating the power of unity and proactive engagement in addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time.





# CSE - COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

*Empowering young people to make informed decisions.*



My Age Zimbabwe through Youth Education on Sexuality (YES) project coordinated youth-led CSOs focusing on CSE towards a collective movement of CSE, co-creating with young people CSE information packages that are innovative, user-friendly and accessible by different groups of young people and engaging policy maker aims to contribute to increased access to CSE by young people (10-24) in and out of school as a means for them to fully enjoy their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

The YES project is supported by Amplify Change and it is designed to have young people be part of a movement with the common goal of improving young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information and services including CSE.

The project acknowledges young people's innovativeness in creating CSE information packages that are compatible with different sub-populations of young people. The manuals used in and out of school will be trained and an overview of CSE in Zimbabwe will be given to Civil Society Organizations implementing the program so they can understand what is being done and what needs to be done.

To increase collaboration, the project will be working with various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE), the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MOHTEISTD), the National AIDS Council (NAC), the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC), UNESCO, UNFPA, and UNICEF, who have all contributed significantly to the implementation of CSE in Zimbabwe and have worked together to develop the CSE manuals used in and out of schools and in tertiary institutions.

Zimbabwe faces a significant issue with limited access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for young people aged 10-24. Despite government efforts, CSE learning objectives have not been fully met, leading to an average of 10,000 girls dropping out of school due to preventable infirmities. Only 41% of boys and girls aged 15-19 have sufficient knowledge on reproductive health, and HIV prevalence for adolescent girls is twice that of boys. Policy ambiguity and lack of coordination hinder the reach of youth-led organizations.

# UNDERSTANDING REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS - KEY FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

In order to enhance the skills and capacity of young women to lead and participate in SRHR initiatives and movements My Age Zimbabwe has conducted a training on regional and international instruments that govern Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), to adolescent girls and young women in Masvingo.

The Training served as the backbone of My Age's HIV programming and community engagements by addressing the underlying factors that contribute to HIV vulnerability among adolescents and young people.

By empowering participants to advocate for their SRHR needs, the training helped to reduce risky sexual behaviors, furthermore, the training fosters a supportive environment where young people feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics related to HIV prevention, treatment, and care.

Training on regional and international instruments that govern Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is crucial for ensuring compliance and implementation of these frameworks, understanding the provisions outlined in these instruments is essential for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and advocates working in the field of SRHR in order for individuals to effectively advocate for the protection and promotion of SRHR at both national and international levels.



Regional and International SRH Instruments Training

The training included regional instruments such as the Maputo Protocol in Africa and the Istanbul Convention in Europe that provide specific guidelines and standards for addressing SRHR issues within their respective regions.

These instruments outline obligations related to reproductive health services, gender equality, and combating gender-based violence, also the training included instruments like the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are essential for fostering a comprehensive understanding of global SRHR standards.

These instruments establish norms related to reproductive rights, access to healthcare services, and gender equality on a worldwide scale, training initiatives that delve into these international frameworks empower individuals to advocate for inclusive and rights-based SRHR policies across borders.





# 'Education Fit for the 21st Century'



Under the theme 'Education Fit for the 21st Century', My Age Zimbabwe joined the rest of the continent to commemorate Africa Day by highlighting our work with African partners to support quality education across the continent, including in the critical area of sexual and reproductive health.

Quality education is the foundation for a prosperous future, and we must invest in equipping young Africans with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive.

This includes comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, which empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their bodies and their futures.

By collaborating with our counterparts throughout Africa, we are driving initiatives that bring this essential education to communities in need.

Through teacher training, curriculum development, and direct student outreach, we are working to ensure that all young Africans have access to the information and resources that will allow them to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

My Age Zimbabwe urges governments, policymakers, and stakeholders across the continent to prioritize investments in education, with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health.

By equipping the next generation with the knowledge and tools they need, we can build a brighter, more prosperous future for all of Africa.





# Echoes From

# Unsafe Abortions A Survivor

I as a young woman in Zimbabwe, the constant infringement on my right to make decisions about my own body is both enraging and heartbreaking. Despite Zimbabwe's constitution guaranteeing the right to bodily integrity, the harsh reality is that young women like myself continue to face egregious violations of our reproductive autonomy.

The most glaring example is Zimbabwe's severely restrictive abortion laws. Currently, abortion is only legally permitted in cases of rape, incest, or to protect the woman's health. This means that for the vast majority of youngwomen who find themselves with an unintended pregnancy, the options are brutally limited.

Many are forced to seek out unsafe, illegal abortions, risking their health and even their lives in the process. Others are coerced or forced to carry pregnancies to term against their will.

This is an appalling infringement on our basic human rights. Each person, regardless of gender, marital status, or circumstance, must have the freedom to make autonomous decisions about our own bodies and futures.

It's time for the government and all gatekeepers to get their nose out of our uteruses and decriminalize abortion. Removing these draconian restrictions would go a long way towards upholding the bodily autonomy of young women. But legal reform is just one piece of the puzzle.

We also urgently need improved access to comprehensive sexuality education and quality reproductive healthcare services, especially in rural communities.

Too many young women, particularly those in marginalized areas, are denied the knowledge and resources to make informed choices about their bodies and fertility.

Empowering young women with education and services is crucial, but it's not enough. We also need to confront the pervasive societal stigma and gender norms that discourage us from exercising our reproductive rights. Community attitudes that shame young, unmarried women for seeking contraception or abortion services must be dismantled.

Ultimately, the fight for bodily autonomy is about so much more than just the right to safe and legal termination. It's about having full sovereignty over our own bodies, free from external control or coercion. Our uteruses, our choice - that's the fundamental principle we must uphold.

From a girl who got pregnant without knowing because he lied to me that he also had infertile days, from a girl who knew nothing and found herself pregnant of a guy who could not take responsibility, a girl who then knew that dreams were going to be shuttered, a girl who survived being poked in her uterus by a stick and 5 liters of concoctions, a girl who but only thinks what others are going through, a girl whose country registers 80 000 unsafe abortions in a country with the highest maternal mortality.

The new Mantra is **"mind your own uterus"** and respect the inviolable human rights of women and girls. **Our bodies, our lives, our futures - this is what's at stake.**



# PERIOD POVERTY AND CLIMATE CHANGE



On any given day there are a number of worries that may cross a female's mind and one of the worries most of the time is money to buy sanitary wear. In today's world, climate change has become a serious global issue with women being affected mostly by period poverty.

Climate Change refers to the long-term warming of the planet, which is primarily caused by the increased levels of greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide and methane in the Earth's atmosphere leading to altered weather patterns and a rise in temperatures.

Period poverty, on the other hand, refers to the inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products, safe sanitation facilities and proper menstrual health management.

This affects millions of women worldwide particularly in low-income communities, marginalized groups and disaster affected areas.

Climate change relates with period poverty in so many ways in that increased flooding and natural disasters disrupt access to menstrual products, water scarcity due to frequent rises in temperatures makes it difficult for women to maintain proper menstrual health and climate change also has its economic impacts in that it affects economies of affected areas which resultantly leads to poverty and reduced access to menstrual hygiene products.

For instance, the drying of Lake Turkana in Kenya has adversely affected women in that area in terms of maintaining menstrual hygiene during such times of water scarcity.

This shows us that there is a need to reduce gas emissions into the atmosphere to reduce climate change and its devastating repercussions.

However, there is a need to address period poverty in the affected areas.

This requires a comprehensive approach which includes:

- Support for marginalized communities and disaster affected areas.
- Integration of menstrual health into climate change policies.
- Education and awareness about menstrual health and climate change.
- Access to affordable, sustainable menstrual products like reusable sanitary napkins for marginalized communities.
- Climate resilient infrastructure for sanitation and hygiene facilities.

# NO BLOOD IS IMPURE. PERIOD!!

## What is Menstrual health?

Menstruation is a natural and essential part of every girl and women's life, yet it remains a topic often shrouded in stigma and silence.

**Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.**

It is also a critical aspect of overall well-being, affecting not only physical health but also emotional and social resilience. Despite its significance, many individuals face numerous challenges related to their menstrual cycles, including painful periods, heavy bleeding, and lack of access to hygienic products and health care.

By promoting awareness, education and support in achieving menstrual health which implies that women, girls, and all other people who experience a menstrual cycle, throughout their life-course, are able to: access accurate, timely, age-appropriate information about the menstrual cycle, menstruation, and changes experienced throughout the life-course, as well as related self-care and hygiene practices.

Care for their bodies during menstruation such that their preferences, hygiene, comfort, privacy, and safety are supported.

This includes accessing and using effective and affordable menstrual materials and having supportive facilities and services, including water, sanitation and hygiene services, for washing the body and hands, changing menstrual materials, and cleaning and/or disposing of used materials.

Access to timely diagnosis, treatment and care for menstrual cycle-related discomforts and disorders, including access to appropriate health services and resources, pain relief, and strategies for self-care for all individuals to manage their menstrual health with confidence, comfort and empowerment.

**MENSTRUATION IS A SIGN OF HEALTH THAT THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM IS HEALTHY AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING.**

Menstrual health affects overall health and period poverty is real. Many individuals lack access to hygienic products such as clean water and safe sanitization leading to health risks and stigma.

Hygiene when it comes to menstruation is very crucial which includes use of sanitary products and washing hands to prevent odors and menstrual health is not only just about periods but it encompasses the entire menstrual cycle, include ovulation and premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and menstrual cramps.

Overall, 78% of adolescent girls use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual cycle (2019-2021), a substantial increase from 58.3% about five years back.

Always seek medical care where it is needed and when are experiencing the signs and symptoms that are unusual and not common and also PMSs, irregular periods and even menstrual cramps and heavy bleeding too, and most importantly have enough education and educate yourself about menstruation.

In a nutshell, menstrual health is a vital aspect of overall health and well-being, affecting millions of individuals world wide and it is essential to prioritize menstrual health through breaking down stigmas and taboos surrounding menstruation, through ensuring access to hygienic products, clean water and safe sanitization and promoting education and awareness about menstrual health and hygiene and supporting individuals with menstrual related health issues and encouraging open conversations and inclusive environments.



# LET'S TALK IT OUT

FOLLOW US NOW



263 YOUTH TV



Bringing  
**ONSITE &**  
ONLINE  
EDUTAINMENT

## OUR PROGRAMS

- 1 POETRY
- 2 MUSIC
- 3 DANCE
- 4 SHORT FILMS
- 5 HOT SEAT INTERVIEWS

→ Catch this on  
**263 Youth TV**

**LIVE**   
**STREAM**

ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

FOLLOW US 



Q My Age Zimbabwe 