



For Youth By Youth

NEWSLETTER

Editors Note

Welcome to
our
September
newsletter!



As we celebrate International Safe Abortion Day on September 28, we take this opportunity to reflect on both the advancements achieved and the challenges that lie ahead in the realm of reproductive rights and safe abortion access for all individuals. This month, our newsletter focuses on our initiatives to raise awareness, enhance education, and advocate for these critical issues through our innovative Strategies

Our mission remains steadfast to empower young people, to make informed decisions regarding their reproductive health. We are dedicated to fostering a society where safe abortion services are accessible, stigma is diminished, and reproductive rights are upheld.

**Thank you for joining us on this vital journey.
Stay connected:
Together, let us forge a brighter future for all.**

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ADDRESSING GAPS IN SRHR AND HIV SERVICES FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN CHINGWIZI



AGYW at Chingwizi Community Dialogue

My Age Zimbabwe, in collaboration with DAWA through the ViiV project, recently facilitated a community dialogue in Chingwizi aimed at enhancing access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and HIV services for adolescent girls and young women.

This initiative is part of a broader commitment to ensure that young individuals are empowered to take charge of their health and well-being.

During the dialogue, participants, predominantly young people, articulated the pressing challenges they face in accessing essential health services.

A significant concern highlighted was the inadequate availability of healthcare facilities, forcing young women to travel long distances to obtain necessary services.

This geographical barrier not only hampers access but also discourages many from seeking help.

Furthermore, the dialogue highlighted the scarcity of service providers in the region.

This shortage exacerbates delays and reduces the quality of care offered to those in need. Young participants also noted the persistent stigma surrounding HIV and sexual health, which deters them from openly seeking assistance and discussing their concerns.

Additionally, distressing accounts of unreported rape cases emerged, reflecting a critical gap in both support systems and trust in the authorities. The reluctance to report such incidents highlights the urgent need for community-based interventions and education that fosters a supportive environment for victims.

Stakeholders must prioritize addressing these systemic issues to fortify the health and rights of adolescent girls and young women in Chingwizi. Enhancing accessibility to quality healthcare, increasing the number of trained service providers, and alleviating stigma are essential steps toward nurturing a community where every individual can thrive without fear or barriers to essential health services.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES: MY AGE ZIMBABWE'S RETREAT IN ZAMBIA



My Age Zimbabwe embarked on an enriching work retreat in Zambia, aimed at enhancing the capacities of our team members. This initiative was not only a valuable opportunity for professional development but also facilitated significant connections with partner organisations such as PPAZ (Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia) and Bakashana.

The retreat provided an idyllic setting for team members to engage in deep discussions, share insights, and foster collaboration. The serene environment of Zambia offered the perfect backdrop for reflection and innovation, allowing our team to step away from the daily hustle and immerse themselves in focused learning and development activities.

One of the highlights of our retreat was the linking and learning sessions with PPAZ. These workshops were centered around best practices in program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

PPAZ shared invaluable experiences from their extensive work in sexual and reproductive health, shedding light on how they effectively engage communities and advocate for health rights in Zambia.

This exchange of ideas was instrumental in understanding the nuances of health programming, particularly in contexts that resonate with our work in Zimbabwe.

Additionally, our collaboration with Bakashana, an organisation dedicated to promoting sexual and reproductive health among young people, proved to be pivotal.

Through interactive sessions, we explored innovative approaches to outreach and education, emphasising the importance of youth involvement in health programs.

The insights gained from Bakashana highlighted the significance of adapting our strategies to meet the dynamic needs of the youth demographic, a critical aspect of our mission at My Age Zimbabwe. Moving on, the trip to Lusaka was also utilized to build the capacity of the My Age staff on the following critical themes for CSE: Communication and Advocacy; and Safety and Security.

These sessions covered effective communication techniques, advocacy strategy development, and creating safe spaces for discussions. The aim was to ensure that staff can meet the diverse needs of the communities they serve while effectively advocating for policy changes.

In addition, we had 'close-off strategy' brainstorming and planning session, which was a critical session as we are nearly entering the last year of our 2021-2025 Strategic Action Plan.

We took the time to build consensus around our direction, the key wins we want to harness as we close off this phase of growth; and also ensure that the team is energized and ready for the work ahead.

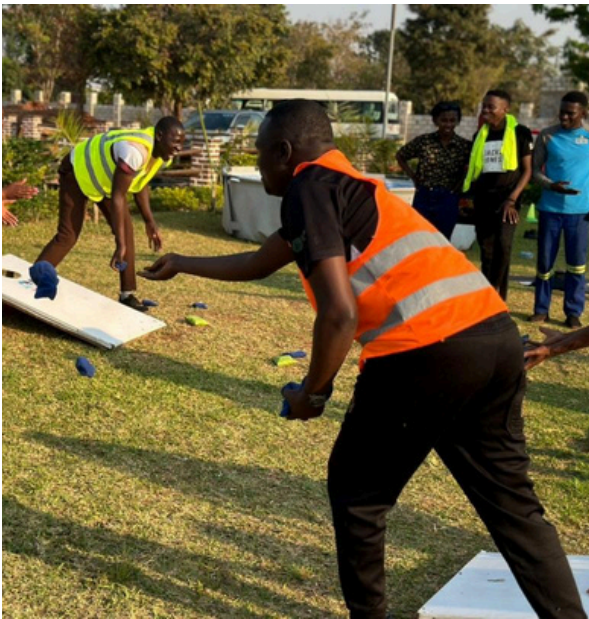
Finally, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy! In true My Age fashion, we carried out some bonding and team-building exercises. Through these exercises and informal discussions, team members reflected on their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a culture of openness and mutual support.

This sense of camaraderie is essential for driving our collective goals forward, ensuring that we are united in our mission to enhance the well-being of our communities.

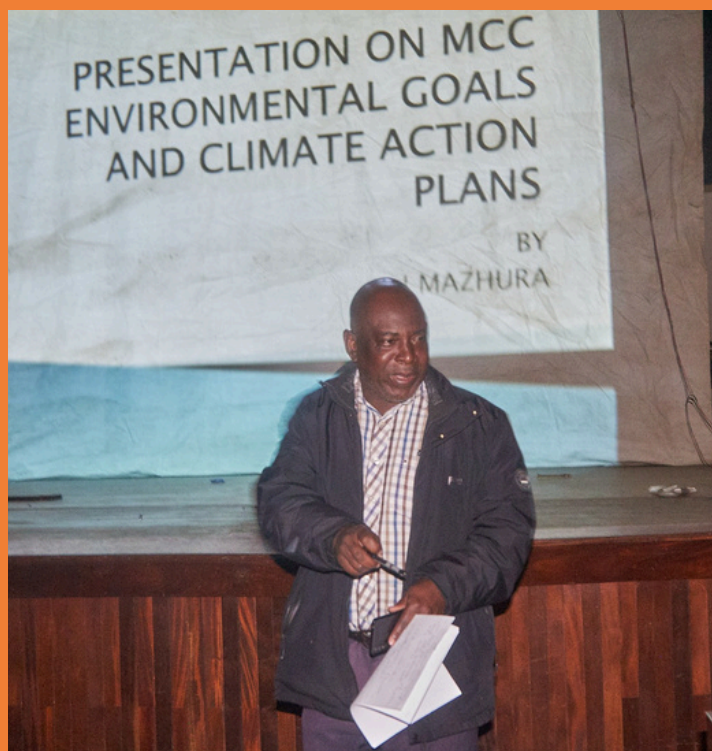
ZAMBIA RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS



My Age Zimbabwe Staff in Zambia



EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH RECYCLING



On September 3rd, 2024, My Age Zimbabwe under the STEPS for the Future project conducted a film screening session to empower young individuals in the fight against climate change through recycling.

This initiative emerged in response to findings from the "Climate Change Community Voices" interviews, which highlighted significant gaps in knowledge among youth engaged in recycling.

While many young people actively participated in recycling efforts, it became apparent that they lacked comprehensive understanding of best practices. The session aimed to bridge these gaps by educating attendees on safe recycling techniques and promoting sustainable environmental practices.

A key feature of the event was the screening of *The Honest Story*, an insightful interview filmed by the My Age team using cellphones. This film illuminated the benefits and challenges of recycling, offering practical recommendations for enhancing both environmental sustainability and personal safety.

Expert presentations enriched the program, featuring insights from representatives of the Masvingo City Council, including Mrs. Vimbai Huruva and Mr. Jotham Mazhura, as well as Mr. Munyaradzi Mtisi from the Environmental Management Agency (EMA).

Additional contributions from environmental advocates such as Mrs. F. Chiwera and Mrs. R. Munyamani underscored critical issues such as waste segregation, the environmental ramifications of recycling aluminum cans, and the necessity for protective gear when handling recyclables.

A total of 27 participants, including members of the Masvingo Urban Recycling team, actively engaged in these fruitful discussions.

The event catalyzed valuable knowledge exchange and fostered new partnerships between the youth and environmental authorities, bringing to light several pertinent issues such as misconceptions about recycling professions, environmental concerns related to aluminum recycling, and the importance of proper waste separation.

Concluding the session, participants issued a call to action for enhanced support and training for young recyclers. They advocated for the creation of "waste champions" within their communities, tasked with promoting effective waste disposal and recycling practices.

In a collaborative spirit, it was agreed that the My Age Zimbabwe team would work alongside the Masvingo City Council to facilitate specialized training for these waste champions.

To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, a WhatsApp group will be established to provide a platform for ongoing discussions and updates on best practices and innovations in recycling.

A Collaborative Effort Toward Accessible Reproductive Healthcare: ISAD 2024

My Age Zimbabwe in collaboration with partners ahead of the International Safe Abortion Day, recently hosted an Open House as part of the International Safe Abortion Commemorations, which brought together parliamentarians, stakeholders, young women, and girls, creating a platform for critical discussions on the milestones achieved and ongoing challenges regarding access to safe abortion services in Zimbabwe.

International Safe Abortion Day (ISAD) is an annual day of action in support of the right to safe abortion.

This significant event also marked the launch of "The Silent Treatment," a theatrical performance that illustrated the diverse stories and challenges faced by women and girls in accessing safe abortion services. The discussions highlighted the urgent need to advocate for a revision of the Termination of Pregnancy Act, a legislative framework that currently limits women's autonomy over their reproductive choices.

Participants shared their experiences and insights, shedding light on the various obstacles that hinder women's ability to obtain safe and legal abortion services. The event highlighted the detrimental effects of restrictive legislation on women's health and overall well-being.

The Honourable Josiah Makumbe, representing the Committee of Health Portfolio, emphasised that the Open House serves as an essential platform for acquiring knowledge from experts and engaging in meaningful discussions on critical issues surrounding safe abortion.

"This Open house is a vital platform to learn from experts and map the way forward on how to better access to safe abortion and dissemination of information for young people to make informed decisions," He said.

Tendaishe Changamire representing young women, said that its high time for change and the review of the TOP Act since the restrictive law drives woman into the shadows of unsafe abortion

She affirmed that "We must address the restrictive nature of this law, which forces women into unsafe circumstances. Change is essential to ensure their health and rights are protected.

The current restrictions not only undermine women's rights but also jeopardise their health by pushing them towards unsafe abortion practices. We should prioritise the well-being of women and advocate for legislative changes that promote safety and empowerment."

A key outcome of the Open House was a collective commitment among attendees to engage with policymakers to promote an environment that emphasises women's rights and health. The collaboration among diverse stakeholders reaffirmed the notion that access to safe abortion is not only a medical imperative but also a fundamental human right.

ISAD 2024 HIGHLIGHTS!



My Age Zimbabwe Commemorates International Contraception Day: Empowering Youth Through Informed Decision



In a world where access to information shapes individual choices, My Age Zimbabwe joins the global community in commemorating International Contraception Day.

This annual observance, held on September 26, serves as a clarification call to raise awareness about the importance of contraception and to advocate for the right of individuals—especially the youth—to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

At My Age Zimbabwe, we recognise that empowering young people with knowledge about contraception is essential for promoting healthy relationships, preventing unplanned pregnancies, and combating the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Contraceptive methods provide essential means for individuals to take control of their reproductive lives, and it is imperative that young people are educated about their options.

The significance of contraception extends beyond personal health; it has a profound impact on social and economic outcomes.

When young individuals can make informed choices regarding their reproductive health, they are better positioned to pursue educational and employment opportunities.

This not only enhances their individual potential but contributes to the overall advancement of society.

By reducing the rate of unplanned pregnancies, contraception plays a vital role in promoting gender equality, as empowered women can make choices about their futures and invest in their personal and professional development.

Community-Led Solutions for Better HIV Services



Community-led monitoring (CLM) represents a pivotal strategy for enhancing HIV service delivery.

By engaging trained community health advocates who utilise the Comcare application for data collection, CLM addresses local advocacy issues, ensuring that the services are responsive to the needs of the community.

In September, My Age Zimbabwe initiated community accountability meetings across 12 health facilities in the Gutu and Masvingo Rural Districts

These meetings serve as essential forums for community health advocates to identify barriers to accessing HIV services and to hold local leaders accountable for improvements

Notable venues for these discussions included Dewure, Chimombe, Chitando, Cheshuro, and Gutu Rural Hospital in Gutu District, as well as Mushandike, Chisase, Morgenster Mission Hospital, Mapanzure, and Bondolfi clinics in Masvingo District.

During these engagements, advocates reported significant advancements in service delivery, although challenges remain. Four facilities—Mapanzure, Dewure, Mushandike, and Chisase clinics—benefitted from the addition of staff as a direct result of CLM advocacy efforts, alleviating previous shortages.

This improvement has contributed to reduced waiting times, facilitating quicker access to care for patients.

Furthermore, Chisase Clinic has made commendable progress in promoting disability inclusion by constructing a ramp, addressing a barrier identified earlier in the year.

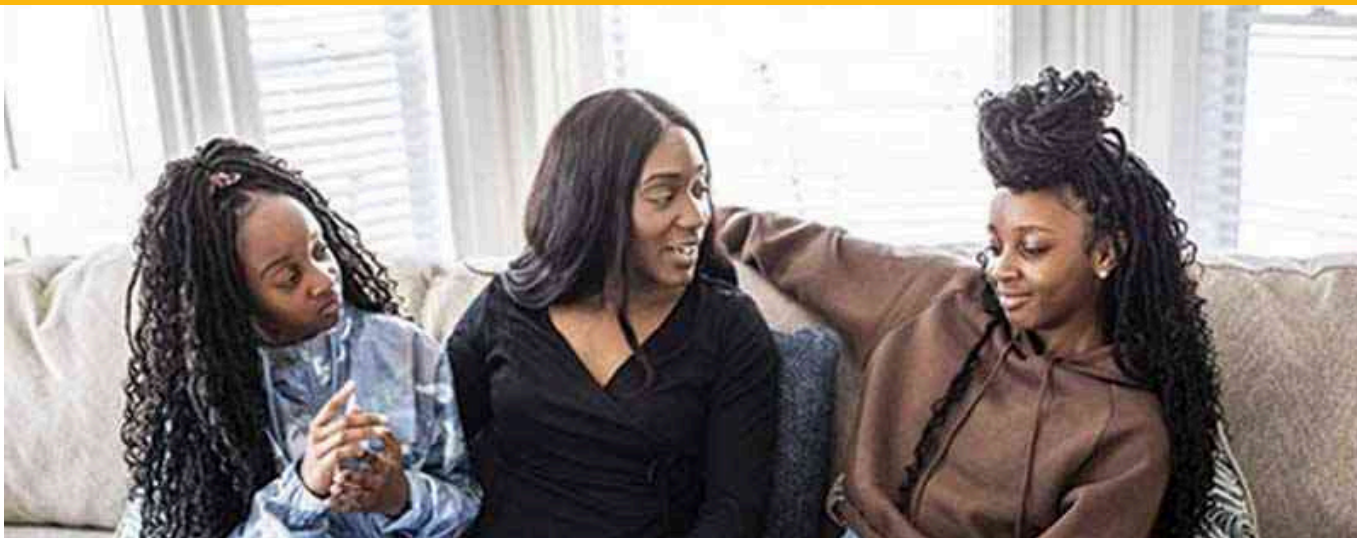
Additionally, 16 young individuals from marginalised communities are now actively involved in Health Centre Committees, which are vital for advocating for their health facilities and ensuring accountability among local leaders.

Despite these positive developments, significant challenges persist. Infrastructure remains a pressing concern; many facilities lack private spaces for HIV testing and counselling, which deters young people from seeking necessary services.

The need for youth-friendly spaces is still unmet, and data indicates a considerable gap in treatment literacy among users in both districts.

Community-led monitoring is effecting positive change in the realm of HIV services, yet ongoing barriers must be systematically addressed.

Let's Talk About Sex: Parent-Child Communication on SRHR Issues



Blessing Mutambara

In many cultures, discussions surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) with children are often regarded as taboo.

This silence can lead to misinformation, unhealthy relationships, and poor decision-making. As parents, it is crucial to cultivate a safe and open environment where children feel comfortable approaching us with their questions and concerns.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I vividly recall the confusion I faced upon reaching puberty and starting menstruation. Lacking the knowledge and confidence to approach my mother, I resorted to taking continuous showers to conceal the blood. This highlights the importance of parents being attuned to their children's developmental milestones and creating a conducive environment for open communication.

However, several factors hinder effective parent-child communication about SRHR. Cultural and societal norms, generational gaps, stigma, and a lack of knowledge and resources can complicate these discussions. Furthermore, the fear of judgment or rejection often prevents children from seeking guidance.

Recent alarming incidents, such as the case of a predator boasting about abusing minors on social media, underscore the urgent need for parents to prioritize building strong relationships and fostering environments that encourage dialogue.

initiate conversations about sex, parents can use simple conversation starters such as, **What do you know about...?**, **How do you feel about...?**, **Have you heard about...?**, **What are your thoughts on...?**, or **I want to talk to you about...** These prompts can help parents gauge their children's understanding and address any misinformation.

It is essential to tailor discussions to the child's age and maturity level.

By breaking the silence and promoting open communication, parents empower their children to make informed decisions regarding their SRHR. This, in turn, fosters healthy relationships, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

To support these vital conversations, parents can utilize various resources, including:

- UNICEF's Parent-Child Communication Guide
- WHO's Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Guidelines
- Planned Parenthood's Parent-Child Conversation Tools
- Local healthcare providers and youth organizations

Engaging in discussions about sexual and reproductive health is not just beneficial; it is imperative for the well-being of our children.

Let us embrace the responsibility of guiding them through these critical aspects of their lives.

Cheat Codes of Leadership That Every Young Person Should Know in This Digital Era



Veeslee Mhepo

In an age marked by rapid technological advancements and the omnipresence of digital communication, the landscape of leadership has undergone significant transformation. Young leaders today must navigate a complex array of challenges while harnessing the opportunities presented by innovative technologies.

Below are essential "cheat codes" that can enhance leadership capabilities in this digital era.

Embrace Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence is the cornerstone of effective leadership. As interactions increasingly occur through screens, understanding and managing one's emotions, as well as empathising with others, fosters strong relationships. Young leaders should prioritise EI to better connect with their teams, recognising that technology cannot replace the human element in leadership.

Leverage Technology Wisely

In today's world, technology is an enabler, but it can also be a distraction. Young leaders should choose tools that enhance productivity and communication, such as project management software and collaboration platforms. Mastering these tools can streamline processes and improve team efficiency.

Cultivate Continuous Learning:

The digital landscape is ever evolving, and leaders must adapt accordingly. Committing to lifelong learning—whether through online courses, webinars, or networking with industry peers—ensures that young leaders stay ahead of trends and possess the knowledge necessary for informed decision-making.

Priorities Inclusivity and Diversity

The digital era has brought diverse voices to the forefront. Effective leaders must cultivate inclusive environments that value different perspectives. Doing so not only enhances creativity and innovation but also reflects the values of a connected global community.

Communicate transparently

In a time where misinformation can spread rapidly, transparency in communication is essential. Young leaders should strive for clarity and honesty, fostering trust and integrity within their teams. Clear communication reduces misunderstandings and promotes a culture of collaboration.

Develop a Vision

A compelling vision inspires and motivates. Young leaders should articulate their goals clearly, ensuring that their teams understand the broader mission. This vision, when communicated effectively, aligns team efforts and drives collective success.

Network virtually and authentically

Digital tools offer remarkable opportunities for networking. Young leaders should engage authentically with others in their field through social media, professional forums, and virtual conferences. Building a robust network can lead to valuable collaborations and insights.

Equipping oneself with these cheat codes can significantly enhance a young person's leadership journey in the digital era.

Self-Care: Essential Tips for a Healthier You



Takudzwa Ktukawarima

In the pursuit of well-being, self-care remains a fundamental aspect of maintaining a balanced and fulfilling life.

Having previously discussed the importance of exercise, healthy eating, and solitude for reflection, this article seeks to expand on additional self-care strategies: the practice of gratitude, the significance of good sleep, and the cultivation of mindfulness.

These practices not only enhance mental and emotional health but also foster a deeper connection with oneself and the world around us.

Practice Gratitude

Regular physical activity is essential for long-term health.

Numerous studies indicate that individuals who exercise consistently tend to live longer, healthier lives. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.

This can include a brisk walk, yoga, or simple home workouts such as sit-ups and squats. The key is to incorporate movement into your daily routine.

Good Sleep

The significance of adequate sleep cannot be overstated. Sleep is essential for physical health and cognitive function, impacting everything from mood to disease resistance.

Insufficient sleep has been linked to serious health issues, including heart disease and dementia.

To ensure quality rest, it is crucial to establish a consistent sleep schedule, creating an environment conducive to relaxation.

Simple practices, such as maintaining a regular bedtime, avoiding heavy meals before sleep, and creating a dark, quiet space, can significantly enhance sleep quality. By prioritizing rest, we invest in our overall health and well-being.

Mindfulness

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, it is easy to overlook personal downtime. Engaging in self-reflection and spiritual growth is vital.

Set aside time in your schedule for activities that foster personal development and emotional wellness. Additionally, taking vacations or short trips can be revitalizing, providing necessary rest for both the body and mind. Explore scenic destinations or tranquil retreats to rejuvenate your spirit.

Self-care is an ongoing journey that requires intentionality and commitment.

By embracing gratitude, prioritizing sleep, and practicing mindfulness, we can foster a healthier and more fulfilling life. Remember, you are the most important person in your life; nurturing yourself is not merely a luxury but a necessity.

COLLABORATIVE HIGHLIGHTS



Staff Spotlight!

We now have a column dedicated to spotlighting our staff and their valuable contributions to our organization! Behind all the great work you see, is a team of competent individuals who contribute to our goals in different ways. Look out for monthly feature articles where you can get to know our team members better!



Collaborative Highlights!

We will now feature a column spotlighting the work of our partner organizations, including collaborative partners, funders, mentees, and sub-grantees, among others. We believe in contribution vs attribution, and therefore have fostered partnerships at various levels. In that regard, we aim to use our platform to showcase the incredible work our partners are doing to support young people!

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