



## Youth-led social accountability in ASRHR



A case study of  
Alliance for Accountability  
Advocates Zambia



# Introduction

Adolescence is a period of varied developmental changes, which bring with it a need for access to information and services to enable informed decision making particularly on health related issues. As the population of adolescents continues to grow, the need and demand for sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services also increases. Governments, therefore, need to ensure provision of SRHR information and services to enable them make informed choices.<sup>1</sup>

In Zambia, 13% of women and 16% of men aged 15 to 19 years had sexual intercourse by age 15. This contributed to 29% of them beginning childbearing.<sup>2</sup> The incidences of adolescent pregnant often result into school drop-out and incidences of unsafe abortion.

In responding to adolescent's health needs, the Ministry of Health is implementing the Adolescent Health strategy (2017 -2021) aimed at strengthening the delivery of adolescent responsive health services to increase adolescents' access and utilization of quality health-care services resulting in improved adolescent SRH and promotion of better health outcomes.<sup>3</sup>



*Stakeholders during the launch of the project*

1. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). State of the world population 2014. The power of 1.8 billion: adolescent, youth and the transformation of the future. New York: UNFPA; 2014. Available from: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report\\_FINAL-web.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf)

2. Zambia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health (MOH) Zambia, and ICF. 2019. Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2018. Lusaka, Zambia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Zambia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health, and ICF

3. Ministry of Health. 2017. Adolescent Health Strategy 2017-2021. Government Printers; 2017. Lusaka, Zambia



## Promoting youth-led accountability

Founded in 2018, Alliance for Accountability Advocates Zambia (AAAZ) is a membership based and youth-led non-governmental organization that embarked on a journey to promote citizen-led accountability and participation in monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Development Plans (NDPs) through advocacy and capacity building. AAAZ's strategy is to work with its members across all ten provinces of Zambia. This is carried out through the belief that membership enhances the AAAZ's advocacy voice and provides a sustainable mechanism for information determination and networking across the country.



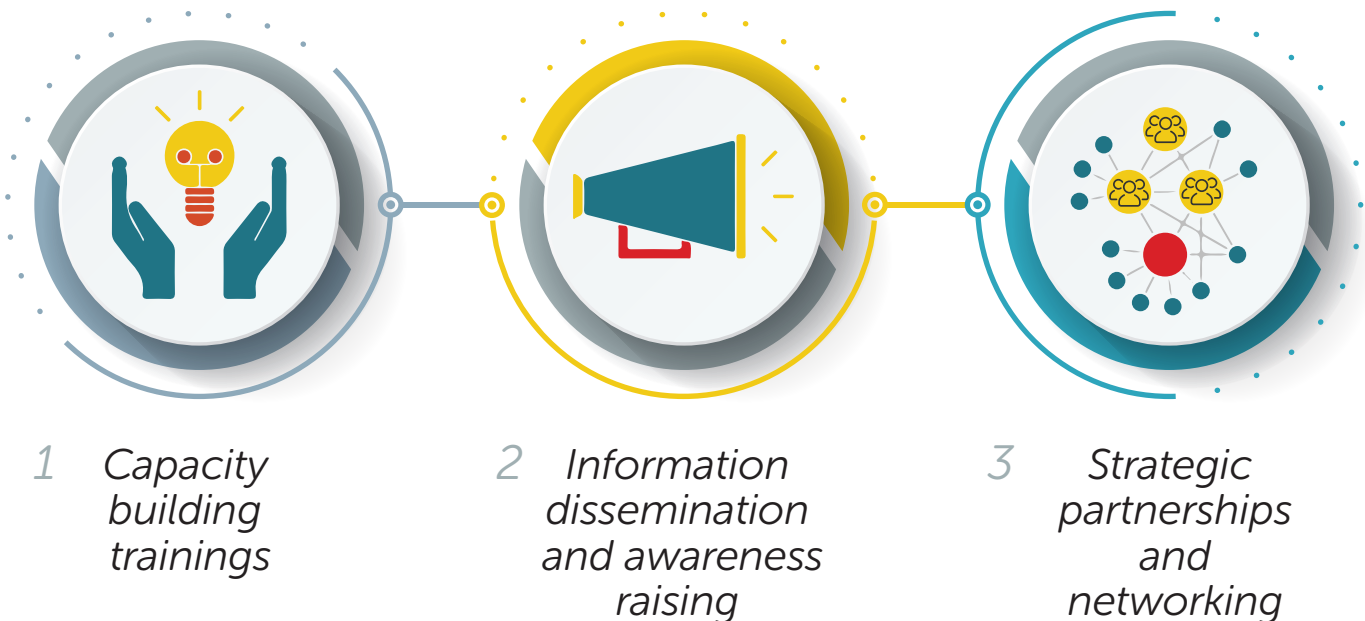
In this regard, AAAZ is implementing the “Enhancing Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Zambia”, a project aimed at building the capacity of youth-led organizations in social accountability, policy monitoring and budget tracking in Muchinga, Copperbelt and Eastern Provinces. The project also aims to facilitate adolescent participation in monitoring of the Adolescent Health Strategy (2017-2021), the ESA commitments and SDGs. In ensuring adolescent participation in advocacy and decision making, the project is advocating for 30% inclusion of youth in local structures such as the

Neighborhood Health Committees, District AIDS Coordinating Committees and District Technical Working Groups on Health in the three provinces.

AAAZ believes that, if young people are empowered with knowledge and skills, youth participation in social accountability initiatives can play a critical role in improving development results and promoting better health outcomes by making public officials and service providers directly accountable to the communities they serve.

## Building a youth-led social accountability movement

In order to promote youth-led social accountability, AAAZ implemented a three-pronged approach which included capacity building trainings; information dissemination and awareness raising; and strategic networking and partnerships;



### 1. Capacity building trainings

AAAZ conducted trainings in social accountability, policy monitoring and budget tracking. The trainings targeted youth activists, youth-led organizations, peer educators from youth-friendly spaces and media personnel. youth service delivery spaces such as youth friendly. This approach is critical to ensuring that the skills and knowledge gained can be used to link policy advocacy processes to service delivery points to ensure access and utilization of services by adolescents.

Furthermore, by targeting the members from youth led-organizations, AAAZ envisions wider coverage of the youth population and sustainability of the skills and knowledge as those trained will cascade trainings to other young people.

*“Young people are the most vulnerable and lack information on SRHR. Many times young people have also shied away from accessing SRHR services at health centres because they do not have adequate information on their rights to freely do so. The training empowered me to demand quality services and to also question and make suggestions to decisions that the authorities in my community make.”*

Livious Mwanaumo (20), Chamboli Health Centre Peer Educator





## 2. Information dissemination and awareness raising

Youth-led social accountability requires young people have adequate and simplified information on ASRHR and services, National Health Budgets and how they can ensure prudent use of resources allocated to adolescent health, as well as information on how to hold leaders accountable.

To this effect, AAAZ developed simplified National Health Budget and Adolescent Health Strategy brochures. To ensure effective development of the simplified brochures, AAAZ collaborated with other youth-friendly and youth-focused organizations such as Youth Alive Zambia and Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR). This partnership was essential in leveraging youth expertise and participation.

”Summarizing the National Health Budget and the Adolescent Health Strategy into brochures was key. This ensured that young people have documents that resonate with their ability to assimilate issues. We understand that access to information is cardinal and difficulty to access for young people in our communities.

Therefore, we wanted to provide the youth with simplified documents that they could relate to when offering social accountability, policy monitoring, and budget tracking”.

AAAZ Executive Director, Chilufya Luchembe.



The simplified brochures were pretested at various stakeholder forums and validated by relevant line ministries before printing and dissemination

### 3. Strategic partnership and awareness raising

AAAZ created strategic partnerships with government line ministries particularly; the Ministries of Health; Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development; and Ministry of General Education at both national and sub-national levels. Partnerships and networked were also created and strengthening with other youth-led organizations, local civic and traditional leaders and the media. The partnerships and network were critical to ensuring stakeholder buy-in for the project and support collaboration for sustained results and impact..



*Participants in a brainstorm session during capacity building trainings*

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The project has enabled young people to be aware of what resources are allocated to health and ASRHR in particular. They have been empowered to monitor whether these resources reach their communities and how these funds are used at the community level to enhance ASRHR. The youth organizations are using some of the information to inform their budget tracking processes at the district and provincial level. The project has also enhanced young people's understanding of SRHR and has helped them promote positive health seeking behaviours among their peers as well demand quality service provision at the various health centers and youth-friendly spaces.

The young people who have participated in the project have cascaded some of the trainings to their peers as part of the knowledge transfer processes at youth-friendly spaces as well as community awareness sessions where they also distributed simplified health national budget and the adolescent health Strategy brochures.

Janet Namute, AAAZ Monitoring and Evaluation Officer attests that the monitoring and evaluation report indicates that knowledge levels have increased in social accountability, budget tracking, human rights and ASRHR.

According to Janet, “knowledge transfer, and the fact that benefactors are already implementing what they learnt is an indication that they were able to understand the concepts during the training and this” she added “can be seen in the quality of the plan of actions they have presented”



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## Sustaining change

The project embraced a youth participation model which will sustain youth-led social accountability processes within organizations and communities. Once sustained, the results will lead to improved service delivery and ultimately better health outcomes for adolescents.

The simplification of the health budget and adolescent health strategy provides an approach that can be replicated for other policy and legal documents to create community awareness and inform social accountability processes.

Strategic partnerships and networking are key and not only creating buy in but also sustaining project results and impact. AAAZ will continue to leverage its networks and existing community structures to sustain best practices and approaches long after the life of this project.

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