



**SHE
LEADS**

Her Stories

SHE LEADS 2021 NEWSLETTER





Insights into the Lived Realities of Young Women in Zimbabwe During the Covid-19 Pandemic

On Tuesday the 22nd of June 2021, the She Leads Project hosted an insightful conversation titled 'Covid Realities: Reflection on the Journey of Young Women in Leadership'.

Panellists included representatives of the She Leads Project partners: Vongai Esther Zimudzi (Women Democracy Network), Farirai Gumbonzvanda (Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Young Women Forum), Constance Mushayi (Institute for Young Women Development Area) and Permanent Ngoma (Women's Institute for Leadership Development), moderated by Memory Kachambwa with support from the Embassy of Ireland in Pretoria.

The one-and-a-half-hour conversation focused on the lived realities of young women and their coping systems during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over 50 women joined the call and the key points were shared over social media for further discussions.

During the conversation, these were some of the key issues raised.

Access to healthcare

Constance from the Institute for Young Women Development Area (IYWDA) had a life-changing experience over the first lockdown period in her home area of Bindura, unearthing an unexpected problem.

While battling Covid-19, she, just as the rest of her community, could not access clinics as they were either unmanned or under-staffed.

Permanent, from Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD), shared horror stories of women who were giving birth at hospital gates with no midwives, nurses or doctors available during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in Umzingwane.

It was highlighted that the lack of access to good healthcare was a glaring attribute towards rising mortality rates.



Insights into the Lived Realities of Young Women of Zimbabwe During the Covid-19 Pandemic cont.

Mental Health & Well-being

Social Justice Activist Vongai from Women Democracy Network (WDN) shared that she was greatly affected by the publicized injustices of women during the lockdown.

This took a toll on her Mental Health.

"I responded to what I was reading by lashing out on Social Media, I felt helpless," she said.

The women in the meeting opened up and shared that their mental well-being took a toll due to the pressures of family and economic pressures. Most agreed that societally, women are often under immense pressure, especially mothers who had to take care of the family and balance remote work.

"It's okay for women to get help or to talk to someone," contributed one participant.

Gender-Based Violence, Remote Work & Gender Roles

One participant explained, "not many of us had jobs to do from home, in the hospitality industry, that was the end of it."

The new normal was a difficult adjustment in light of traditionalized existence of unpaid care work. This saw many women struggle the tight rope of balancing work, family, self-care. Assistance from male partners in some cases was fairly successful. However, one shared that in some cases, gender-based violence was a result of attempting to adjust these patriarchal gender roles.

New Age Activism

Social distancing and lockdown offered some activists an opportunity to engage directly with holders of public office and Government officials.

Using hashtags such as #ZimbabweanLivesMatter and #ClotsForClout ensured that messages of social justice reached larger audiences and decision-makers for the purpose of lobbying.

"I would tag the ministers until Kirsty Coventry, Mthuli Ncube and Nick Mangwana finally replied to my policy questions."

Vongai (ACTIVIST)

Activists like Vongai used social media to flag concerns with holders of power.

This provided a virtual outlet for frustrated activists who were accustomed to doing a lot of footwork to get their causes seen and heard.

Sexual Reproductive Health Rights & the Vulnerabilities of Girls and Women

Due to the closure of schools and inconducive living arrangements that saw pubescent male and female siblings sleeping in shared spaces, the Covid-19 pandemic saw an increment in underage pregnancy, child prostitution, incest and rape.

It was indicated that the economic strain had a domino effect on mental health and the overall well-being, adding to the vulnerabilities of children.

Suicide statistics also saw a spike in statistics.



Insights into the Lived Realities of Young Women of Zimbabwe During the Covid-19 Pandemic cont.

Access to Information & the Internet

Farirai from Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCOZ) highlighted the catch-22 effect of virtual engagements in advocacy, policy-building and development. She highlighted that the sometimes exclusionary nature of remote engagements on policy development during the Covid-19 pandemic was in danger of leaving out many.

Although Zimbabwe's Internet penetration rate is fairly high, it depicts the Internet gap of those in rural and urban areas, who are neither infrastructurally nor economically able to support the digital needs of the new normal.

This widens the Internet gap. This is often worse for women, limiting their ability to access information and to engage actively in dialogues and engagements pertaining to policy.

Accessibility & Access for Women & Girls with Disabilities

It was widely acknowledged that women with disabilities were greatly disadvantaged during the Covid-19 pandemic, more so regarding access to information such as these conversations.

Rukudzo, a participant, challenged the floor and asked what the different leaders and leaders in training were going to do for women with disabilities in light of the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some of the contributions included conscientious efforts such as closed captions, learning, and incorporating sign language in various engagements.

WOMEN CLAIMING SPACE

40 women

The membership of IYWD's recently established Young Women's Caucus.
The 40 members include aspiring women leaders.

The caucus aids in collective thinking and strategizing for women across the political, generational and protocol divide and helps young women reclaim their power and influence through transformative leadership skills training.

in 1982

The last time a female Chairperson was elected in the School Development Committee of Trojan Mine Primary School in Bindura, Mashonaland Central Province until She Leads alumni Vimbai Muaku was elected.

Vimbai attributes her success to the Transformative Leadership Training by the Institute for Young Women's Development as part of the She Leads Project.

SHE LEADS **RECLAIMING DEMOCRATIC SPACES FOR YOUNG WOMEN PARTICIPATION WITH THE INSTITUTE FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT (IYWD).**

100+

The women trained by 10 young women of the caucus.
The 10 participants used the acquired knowledge to actively self-mobilise and train more than 100 young women and women on feminist principles and transformative leadership.

2023

Seven women of the caucus have launched their 2023 campaigns, one as a Member of Parliament and six in councillor posts while 30 have used the knowledge acquired in their leadership positions at community, local government and national levels to take up space.

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TAKING UP SPACE WITH WILD

Through the She Leads Project, the Women's Institution for Leadership Development (WILD) continues its legacy of developing excellent Women Leaders



4 young women in Lupane have registered their interests to contest in the by-elections as well as to participate in the 2023 elections. This was as a result of the capacity strengthening provided by the mentorship sessions



Challenging the Status Quo

A mentee was identified by the residents to represent the community in a meeting with the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Honorable July Moyo. Defiantly, the mentee publicly challenged the Minister to process the transference of water administration from ZINWA to Gwanda Municipality.



Rising to the Occasion

A WILD Alumni from Bulawayo was identified and elected to represent People with Disabilities (PWD) in the European Union (EU) youth sounding board initiative in Zimbabwe.



Making Women's Contributions Count

As a result of the project, the women were fully aware of their rights and how to present their issues effectively to national and local authorities. Institutions are now eager to absorb young women with varying opinions in their structures and policy design processes.

10
MENTEE
SESSIONS



Adjusting Media Bias

The interventions of the She Leads Project saw a positive attitude from journalists in reporting issues about women in leadership because it had been normalized that women leaders were negatively reported in the media despite the given circumstances.



Influencing Policy Implementation

Local and National authorities are now receptive to engagements with women and have acquired skills to train other local authority departments on the fundamentals of gender mainstreaming at the organizational level.



Lobbying for Change

Women have taken the lead to lobby and demand their rights to all relevant stakeholders. This was evidenced when women from Bulawayo's Ward 17 and Ward 19 took a leading role in facilitating dialogue platforms with their Ward Councilor and Member of Parliament and demanding the Local Authority to fix and conceal water pipes

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ASPIRING
WOMEN
LEADERS

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The Story of Adelaide Mupona, a Teacher Turned Activist



Adelaide Mupona is a 26-year-old ECD teacher turned workers' rights activist and is part of the She Leads Project.

While working at Luxaflor Farm in Concession, Adelaide joined the General Agricultural and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) in 2017 and became the Women's Committee Chairperson that same year.

Since then, trade unionism has become part of her life.

Adelaide has dedicated herself to the task of educating fellow farmworkers.

Adelaide says training under the She Leads project greatly enhanced her capacity in understanding issues as well as teaching others.

"Female farmworkers often fail to represent themselves when they are abused. I motivated them to stand for their rights. I acted as a role model so that the women could learn from my own experience.

On recruitment and mobilisation, I exercised patience, insisting on democracy, punctuality and etiquette among members," she said.

The She Leads program, implemented in partnership with Hivos and other women's rights organizations, enabled the strengthening of women farm workers' leadership skills through mentorship programmes, exchange programmes and educational programmes in trade unions.

Women workers were trained in policy, governance and raising awareness on gender-based violence (GBV).

GBV often times silences the voice of women and hinders their participation in social, economic and political arenas.

GAPWUZ is a trade union for farmworkers that was formed in 1982, registered in 1985 and certified in 1986 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services.

It is an affiliate of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), International Union of Food (IUF) and Building and Wood Workers International (BWI).

GAPWUZ strives to achieve a vibrant agricultural industry in Zimbabwe where all workers are free from exploitative labour practices by empowering, protecting and advancing farm workers' interests.

The background of the entire page is a light gray, repeating pattern of stylized leaves and stems. The leaves are simple, elongated shapes with some internal vein-like lines. The stems are thin and curved. The pattern is scattered across the page, creating a subtle, naturalistic texture.

“

My leadership qualities were enhanced by training I received from the She Leads program through GAPWUZ...I gained confidence, knowledge and leadership skills. Furthermore, I was encouraged to do more research on human rights, enhancing my desire to be a voice for the voiceless.

ADELAIDE MUPONA

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CHALLENGING THE STATUS-QUO WITH THE WOMEN'S COALITION OF ZIMBABWE



Despite having laws and policies in place that seek to enhance gender equality and ensure that a holistic approach paves way for socio-economic and political progress, women's representation remains relatively low.

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WCoZ through the She Leads Project managed to empower the young women with knowledge and skills to enhance their abilities to engage and hold duty bearers accountable.



WIDENING YOUNG WOMEN'S HORIZONS



The young women through the SHE-LEADS project were inspired and motivated to be Ministers, Sabhuku's, Drivers of Change, Councilors, Board members, Members of Parliament, Transformational leaders for Feminism, Diplomats, Life coaches as immediate, intermediate and long-term goals.

MILESTONES



CONFIDENCE BUILDING
SELF-ACTUALIZATION
AND AWAKENING OF
FUTURE LEADERS



EXPRESSION FOR THE
VOICELESS THROUGH
MEDIUMS SUCH AS
VISUAL ART



MORE YOUNG WOMEN
WITH LEADERSHIP
ASPIRATIONS IN
GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL
AND CIVIC ROLES

629

Implemented in all the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe, the intervention rallied together young women to develop a critical mass and agency for the progressive realisation and enjoyment of gender equality in Zimbabwe.

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Amplifying Women's Voices Through the Media

People use and consume more and more Social media every day. It has, fast overtaken traditional media such as radio, television and newspapers. Despite that digital technology is still in its nascent stages in Zimbabwe; the new technology has liberalised the media and simultaneously placed traditional media on the periphery. Although traditional media is still in existence; it cannot compete with social media's spread of breaking news. A few people still follow the traditional media only for certain news aspects and advertising. It is still common for people to believe the news they hear at 8 pm on ZTV or something written in The Herald rather than via social media.

Social media has disrupted the media industry, with news being published or broadcast on the go. Many news articles are published in real-time and often in their raw state than intermediated news from established media.

Having attended two workshops organised by Gender Media Connect for the She Leads consortium's communication officers, journalists and content creators in April this year, it was made evident that Social media has the ability to shock, persuade and make the audience believe certain news but at the same time, it has been proven that it can be an outlet for stories for change. Abigail Gamanya, National Director of GMC said there is a need for a strategic way of working with traditional and emerging media. Gender Media Connect is a strategic stakeholder in the She Leads consortium alongside Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCOZ), General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ), Institute of Young Women Development (IYWD), Women in Leadership Development (WILD) and Patsime Edutainment.

**GMC sustainably amplifies
women's voices at every turn
in an environment that is
broadly dominated by men.**

The organisation works broadly in promoting women's rights within the media, ensuring the fourth estate evolves beyond being a tool at women's disposal to articulate their issues. Speaking at the side-lines of one of the Gender and Media Connect (GMC) workshops, Doc Vikela of Simuka Comedy said business was high in the Content Creation and Management sector as people have an insatiable need for fresh and often controversial news. The Zimbabwean Comedian said his outfit like many others produce news that creates traction online less the bother of questioning whether it is gender-sensitive.

Doc Vikela said there is a need for a Gender Policy to ensure that women are reported on in a sensitive manner. However, he said in all his work, there are some stories that do not run, such as those depicting nudity. GMC expressed their intention to accelerate its engagement with the consortium and the media to ensure that a comprehensive communication of the programme is achieved. Gamanya said the She Leads partners are at different stages on knowledge management and information sharing.

"There is a need to promote intra-partner networking so that there is sharing of knowledge and platforms on the campaign themes. Others have close to 500 000 followers while others are still finding their way hence the need for knowledge and skills transfer within," she said. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups remain powerful tools of communication. Gamanya recommended the establishment of a She Leads WhatsApp group to constantly engage on the evolving needs pertaining to the project and how the organisation can attend to the challenges. For example, the media is limited to fully access stories from the She Leads consortium.

"We look at whether people would view it, like it and subscribe to our pages. We regard traffic more than the quality of content. Chances of a controversial story going viral are higher than a gender-sensitive story" – **DOC VIKELA**

Zimbabwe's media structures, including mainstream media, provincial media, and electronic, print and emerging start-ups are wide and far and that these can be used in different forms by each and every member of the consortium. The consortium led by GMC proposed to do the following to ensure that they strengthen their communication with stakeholders and amplify women's issues on mainstream media traditionally or otherwise:

- to engage a senior female editor for post-training mentorship to strengthen the partner communications department,
- to develop a media handbook/database for female journalists that it shares with the partners or review its current database so that it suits the needs of the She Leads partners,
- to develop knowledge of the spectrum of traditional media and develop contacts for the partners so that they leapfrog from the current limit of a very small spectrum of the traditional media,
- to document partners' media exposure so as to feed into their success stories,
- to establish a visibility gauging mechanism as partners do not have a yardstick of media engagement or publicity,
- to review and update the media database for its partner's fragmentation between strategy and practice.
- to develop institutional relationships with the media
- to create networking platforms with editors and senior journalists,
- to mainstream communication among the partners.

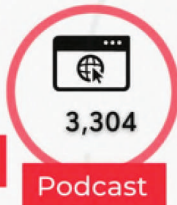


USING RADIO TO PROMOTE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH PATSIME TRUST

ABOUT PATSIME

Patsimeredu Edutainment Trust is a communication for development organisation whose work entails the use of Theatre through various forms such as live theatre, radio drama and television to engage communities, create platforms for debate and information dissemination on issues affecting individuals, groups and communities across the whole spectrum of society

SHELEA Reach



SHELEA RADIO

- Shelea Radio drama used theatre to unpack and depict real-life scenarios such as the leadership role of women politically, at work, in communities, in religious institutions, business and in the family set up through relatable characters.
- The first season of the 13 episodes of Shelea radio drama was broadcasted on Star FM on Thursday mornings for 20 minutes. The first 15 minutes of the programme consisted of compelling and exciting radio drama which was then supported by a 5 minutes interactive discussion summary.

OBJECTIVES



TO SHOWCASE GENDER EQUALITY LAWS THAT SUPPORT WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TO ZIMBABWEAN CITIZENS.



TO BRING THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF WOMEN TO THE FORE



TO INSPIRE WOMEN TO TAKE ON LEADERSHIP ROLES DESPITE RELATABLE CHALLENGES

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**Women Coalition of
Zimbabwe, Seke Peri-
Urban Chapter Focal
Person Believes She was
Born a Leader**

Regina Rumbidzai Chanakira, 35 is a single mom of a seven-year-old daughter. She is a fifth born in a family of six, four boys and two girls.

She grew up in Seke peri-urban suburb, where she did my primary education. One of the best students at her primary school, she then went to Chemhanza High School in Wedza where she did my Ordinary and Advanced Level studies. From there, she went to Women's University in Africa where she did her bachelor's degree in Psychology.

She was also into modeling and competed in pageants such as Miss Rural Seke, Miss Tourism Mutare, Miss Harare, Miss Zim-Zam, and Miss Winter.

"I did well in modeling. I advertised stuff like hair products and worked for different product distributing companies. I also worked for the Government as a relief teacher," she says.

"I became a member of the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe four years ago. Currently, I am a Focal person for young women in Seke and a committee member for the Young Women's Forum.

"Furthermore, I am also into buying and selling cosmetics, children's wear 0-12 years, weaves, and braids to generate an income."

On Leadership Qualities

Leadership is something that she believes is innate in her.

"I believe I was born a leader. At Chemhanza High School, I was a senior prefect from Form 3 to Form 6, which was a great responsibility. I was a leader for the Youth and Education committee and the chairperson for the drama club," she says.

"Recently, I was the administrator for my church for two years, which was a big leadership position. I handled it very well looking at the developments I made during my term of office.

"I have a plethora of leadership qualities. First and foremost, I fear nothing and I have too much confidence in myself. I have discovered that if you are a leader, you have to believe in yourself first so that people will have confidence in you.

"I am someone who is time-conscious. I believe time is money and hence the need to use it wisely. I am usually the first person to arrive at any function.

"Patience, intelligence, presentation and above all being God-fearing are my other leadership qualities that makes me a good leader."



Amplifying Women's Voices Through the Media with Gender & Media Connect

Gender Media Connect sustainably amplifies women's voices at every turn in an environment that is broadly dominated by men. The organisation works broadly in promoting women's rights within the media.

Storytelling

A baseline assessment was made to review the status of media used by the She Leads consortium partners for visibility of the She Leads projects. Key findings catalyzed a media coaching skills training session for the She Leads partners.

The aim of the training workshop was to equip the She Leads consortium partners with media digital and legacy skills that will enable them to engage with the media and improve the visibility of their work on online platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

Since the training, some have gone on to feature in different traditional media

#womenunlimitedzw



Newspapers, TV and Facebook live series

Through She Leads, GMC developed a Baseline survey that indicated the use or lack of gender-sensitive language and content by Radio Presenters (DJs) and online personalities.

The study reviewed content such as skits to determine the depiction of women, the use of stereotypes and the use of sexist and gender insensitive language.

The study informed a media-sensitivity training on the importance of gender-sensitive voices, how to portray characters without bias and was targeted towards radio and online personalities. A total of 10 (7 female and 3 males) participants attended from ZIFM Stereo, National FM, Hevoi Izwi Rokwedu, Diamond FM, YA FM and Capitalk 100.4 FM and 4 online personalities namely Mai Advisor, Magirazi from Bustop TV, Doc Vikela from Simuka Comedy and a representative from Comic Pastor and associates.

Sensitivity

68%
Skits, Shows & Articles
were on women's issues

32%
Of those Skits
challenged discriminatory norms and values

Access

In response to the She Leads consortium's challenge of media visibility and access to media coverage; GMC developed an online media portal directory hosted on their website with names and contact details of media houses and media resource persons from the mainstream, community, and online media from all provinces in the country.



<https://bit.ly/gmcmediaportal>

Benefiting from She Leads

The She Leads training, for me, was a great motivator as a now aspiring Village Head.

I learned that as a woman, there is nothing that can stop me from holding any leadership position.

During She Leads programs, I met women who are currently Village Heads and other women in high leadership positions. Increased confidence and rights awareness were some of the benefits I got from the She Leads Program.

I am now ready to participate in my area as Village Head with no fear, but with the confidence that I can make it as a woman, improving policies and practices towards women and be the first female Village Head in my community where all leadership positions are male-dominated.

However, there is still a need for serious panel beating and grooming so that we can be the best leaders and show the world that women can do it better.

Challenges Faced as a Leader

Blackmailing was one of the major challenges that I faced as a leader. People, both male and female, try to degrade you when you're in a leadership position.

I faced a lot of opposition challenges from my fellow women and men who wanted the same position that I was in and, sometimes, they would influence people to boycott whatever I did because I am a single woman.

Serious stereotypes exist against single women which is a leadership challenge. Lack of finances limit the flow of leadership. There are people who threaten you to abandon your leadership position.

I have faced this from a man who challenged me because they had money and resources to hold my position as a church administrator and also because of my age. People believe in older leaders

I have managed to solve the problem of blackmailing by simply ignoring, putting a deaf ear to whatever I hear people saying. Instead, I am proving my worth by showing that I can do better than men by showing progress.

I am a hard worker and when I am in a leadership position, I usually make sure that I change a lot for the better. To be a leader requires total commitment.

I also learned this from the She Leads program. The issue of finances is still a major challenge that is very difficult to solve.

Surviving During Covid-19 Era

I am a holder of a bachelor's degree in Psychology, but because of unemployment, I am into buying and selling cosmetics, children's wear (0-12 years), braids and weaves so that I can survive. I buy my goods mainly online and sell both online and directly to my customers in my community.

At the peak of Covid-19 lockdowns, it was a different issue. My business was extremely low. I could not go to town to collect my orders and I could not travel from point A to B to supply my orders. It was very difficult for me to survive.

Digital Engagement During Covid-19

Yes, I managed to do a lot of meetings online, both on WhatsApp and on Zoom. I also helped women in my area to attend the Zoom meetings.

Network connectivity was a problem, but I would sacrifice to buy a WiFi bundle that was better in terms of a network. My fellow women in the village would also use my WiFi and gadget to go online for Zoom meetings.

Looking Ahead

I am eagerly waiting for another leadership training from She Leads where they can panel beat my skills, polish and groom me and other members from my area to be better leaders.

We also need projects as young women that can help us raise funds and help women when we campaign for decision-making positions.