



**SHE
LEADS**

Her Stories

NEWSLETTER VOLUME 2



Ambasáid na hÉireann
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From the Communications Desk

Welcome to a new edition of the She Leads Her Stories newsletter (Volume 2). Our first publication captured various articles that we had done, with support and lead from our partners, within various communities and this edition builds on that. This edition centers around some of the work that was done in the lead up to and during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is an international campaign that commences on 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and ends on 10 December (Human Rights Day).

Originally created by activists, it continues to be co-ordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. The United Nations supports this civil society-led campaign through the "United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign (UNiTE)".

The UNiTE campaign uses the orange colour to represent a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls, as a unifying theme running through all of its global activities.

Look out for impactful stories from across Zimbabwe, sharing the different activities we ran alongside our partners. You will read more on how we communicated and engaged communities in sharing the anti-violence against women, girls and vulnerable groups message.

There are a number of videos you can click to watch including an exciting and captivating short film titled *Ndafunga Kure*, highlighting the issues affecting women and girls.



The She Leads project

She Leads is a program that focuses on promoting the full and effective participation and leadership of women and girls in political and societal decision-making in Zimbabwe.

She Leads aims for three main results. The first is increasing women's representation and leadership positions in civic and political institutions. Secondly, the program wants to create more space for divergent voices in public debates. Finally, women's rights platforms, networks and alliances must become better at influencing how policies on women's participation and leadership are crafted and implemented at local, national and regional levels.



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A memorable engagement for Watsomba women

The atmosphere in Watsomba was expectant as we arrived and set up our equipment for the day's engagement. The group of young women were new to She Leads programming through Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) and stated in their introductions how they had wished to be a part of the organization and to continue learning about various women's issues as they affect them in their day to day lives.

As the conversation unfolded, most of the women present stated that they knew that there was a Constitution but were not aware of its specific provisions and sections. However, the group was largely aware of their rights as individuals and were also able to state clearly the spheres of their lives where their rights were violated as well as identifying clearly the perpetrators of these violations.

The discussion was participatory and this greatly helped in ensuring that everyone contributed to the day's events. Participants were placed in groups to discuss social, economic and political issues hindering their participation in political processes. As the women came together to discuss issues affecting them, the interconnectedness of their issues showed that women face a lot of challenges in fully engaging with political processes around them.

Feedback included role playing, which also brought to the fore how women in some cases perpetuate their oppression through not having enough correct and accurate information about legal provisions that affect them as women. This factor at times results in women missing out on opportunities that affect them in their different communities. Other factors that were raised were domestic violence, discrimination, sexual



One of the groups that were present in the discussion

abuse, lack of access to education. This was coupled with the burden of unpaid care work as the women shared that they travel long distances to access water and health services

What was crystal clear by the end of the day's deliberations was that communities continue to miss out on the valuable contributions that women can make towards sustainable community development. Such efforts to bring women together are important in information harvesting as well as amplifying the voices of women towards harnessing community potential and achieving meaningful community engagement and sustainable development.



Women equipped with self-defense skills



Sensei Vusa led stretches before demonstrating how women could defend themselves when faced with an abuser

Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) facilitated a Self-Defense Master Class which was held on the 4th of December at Island Hospice and Health Care.

The session was attended by 30 women from around Bulawayo. Among these women were Honourable Sichelesile Mahlangu, Member of Parliament for Pumula Constituency and ward 17 councillor Sikhululekile Moyo.

As part of the annual commemoration of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), the session was meant to build self-defense skills and self-esteem as well as to encourage physical fitness. This was done in order to equip women with skills which they can use to protect themselves against physical violence and abuse.

The first part of the session was Zumba dances in preparation for the self-defense class as a way of providing warm up for the participants. The second part of the activity saw Sensei Vusa leading self-defense lessons as he showed women multiple ways in which they can escape rape and physical harm situations.

During the event, Lucia the poet recited a Ndebele poem titled *"Madoda khulumanini las'hlukumeza kangaka kwenzenjani"*, which was a call for men to explain why women are being abused. Through the poem, Lucia highlighted the widespread abuse that women face in different spheres and how this affects their participation in public processes.

"Women are now living in fear because of the violence that



happens every day. Women are killed, raped and beaten. Men should explain why they are exposing their fellow sisters and mothers to such uncalled-for pain. Women have lost their voices because of this violence. This violence needs to stop now!" recited Lucia.

Honourable Sichelesile Mahlangu urged women to speak out against GBV so that they can get the help they need and also spread the word to their peers.

Mahlangu highlighted that as the country is preparing for elections there is need to address GBV especially that which is targeted towards women in politics so that they can have better chances as candidates.

Councillor Sikhululekile Moyo highlighted that many young women are being subjected to GBV and drugs, and emphasised the need to end GBV as it is detrimental to women's well-being. She also called for the protection of school going girls as child marriages are rife and constantly violate children's right to education as they end up dropping out of school.

Every Voice Matters

Through our partner Gender and Media Connect (GMC), we used the 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as an opportunity to spread the message around GBV using 16 different voices of both men and women who come from different work backgrounds – which included creatives, media, civil society and even housecare workers.

Everyone can be a victim of GBV hence it was seen as important that people from all backgrounds would speak out against this twin pandemic of COVID-19.

Speaking to Gender and Media Connect, an upcoming radio personality for Capital FM Ndomupeishe Chipendo highlighted the importance of including the youths in the #16_VOICES considering that much of the cyber-attack and abuse is being generated among youths who do not know the effects and consequences of abusing a fellow friend.

“Having us the youths as part of the campaign is very commendable, this is because with the coming of social media we have had many youths who use such platforms to inflict pain on their fellow friends, hence giving us the opportunity to speak out helps in creating awareness among the youths” Chipendo said.

Because of young people’s ability to question practices and challenge mindsets, they must be at the forefront of the

battle against GBV. But it is also an absolute necessity to create a space for an intergenerational dialogue on these matters.

GMC national director Abigail Gamanya said that inclusion and involvement of people from all backgrounds was a critical move because some do not even understand what GBV is all about.

“Some people are ignorant not because they choose so but because they are constantly left out in such programs or because the people who talk to them about GBV do not relate to them in the way they understand. This is why we decided to involve everyone from all walks of life so that the message can easily be accepted,” Gamanya said.

Veteran journalist Moses Matenga also cited that the media had a very crucial role in helping end the troubling virus called GBV in the nation of Zimbabwe.

“As the media, we have a very important role to play especially in disseminating information that helps curb GBV.

“We are supposed to talk about GBV all year round not only during the 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, this will bring more positive results if we make it our duty to speak against it every day,” Matenga said.



Radio personality Nyasha Mandimutsira (left) being consoled by Doc Vikela (right) in an act to show the effects of gender-based violence

Oranging the World through Visual Arts

To create engaging content that could easily be shared, The Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD), Just Associates, Zimbabwe Coalition of Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Southern Africa Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST) came together to use visual arts in Commemoration of 16 Days of activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

On Friday 26 November 2021, the consortium hosted the premiere of the film production, *Ndafunga Kure*, a short film that uses the lens of everyday community to theatrically stage a viewpoint on the issues that affect women and girls.

The premiere was held at the Ster Kinekor Borrowdale movie theater in Harare.

The showcase was attended by representatives from Parliament, civil society organizations, government departments, funding partners and various other invited guests.

To whet your appetite and here is the link to the Trailer:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY4M3I5fVIA

Memory Musiyiwa, a young woman from Shamva, who is also an actress in the aforementioned short film had this to say: "When I joined the crew for the production of the *Ndafunga Kure* film, I was shocked to be rubbing shoulders with popular celebrities in the industry.

"I was excited to express the pain women go through daily through my role as a battered wife. On the day of the premiere, it was also a new experience since it was my first time to be in a movie house.

"I also narrated my story of how I survived domestic violence. I hope this film gives strength to every battered woman in the

country and beyond".

We were excited to be sharing this film with Zimbabweans and the rest of the world, as we advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Below is the link to the full 16 episodes:

<https://bit.ly/NdafungaKure>

We look forward to your reflections and thoughts as we fight for safe spaces for women and girls across the country.



Blow the Whistle Movement : Young Women Standing up Against GBV



Onai Chitakunye is an Area Facilitator at She Leads partner, the Institute of Young Women's Development (IYWD). She has benefited from and led feminist leadership trainings, dialogue and discussion platforms, community-based livelihoods projects, and information documentation and dissemination processes.



The women who attended a #BlowTheWhistle movement awareness raising meeting in Chiwaridzo in Bindura, Mashonaland Central.

Onai Chitakunye

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the government taking steps to curb the spread of the virus. Measures implemented include the popular lockdowns, which saw a surge in cases of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women and girls (VAWG).

GBV has become more rampant to the extent that it is now referred to as another "pandemic within the pandemic". Lockdown has led to closure of schools and has seriously hampered small business that women engaged in that bring food on the table. Women are bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout caused by Covid-19 and have become more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, forced marriages, and sexual harassment. Ending VAWG has become more urgent, and requires more investment and action.

As the young women and women of Bindura, we noted that most of the GBV cases have not been reported to the police. This has left a number of young women and women vulnerable to more violence in their lives.

The few cases reported would not be seen to finality as the survivors would withdraw the cases. As we know, the wheels of justice turn slowly and survivors tend to lose confidence in the justice system as the help they need is delayed, and at times, never served.

In order to rectify this anomaly, we decided to form a movement called #BlowTheWhistle (#BWM). This movement is aimed at raising awareness and eliminating violence against women and girls. Furthermore, the movement seeks to encourage young women, women and girls to report all forms of violence to the police.

As aforementioned, the #BWM is determined to raise awareness and provide resources to young women and women in Chiwaridzo to reduce the prevalence of GBV. The #BWM was inspired by the Transformational Leadership training.

As members of the Institute for Young Women's Development, we are also part of an intervention called What Women Want: Building grassroots women's collective power against GBV in Zimbabwe. The intervention is empowering young women and women to build a strong and vibrant anti GBV movement, where women can collectively challenge structural violence and manifestations of GBV.



Constable Venda unpacking the legal provisions that protect women against violence in Zimbabwe

Currently, the #BWM has a membership of more than 50 young women and girls who are eager to stand in solidarity with victims of human rights violations in Chiwaridzo, Bindura.

The movement has been instrumental in mobilizing and organizing young women and women in Bindura district to form a united front which challenges social and cultural norms that limit women's human rights. The members periodically meet to share nuggets with regards to their constitutional rights, and their entitlements to services provided by various stakeholders who are committed to protecting the rights of women and girls.

Since its inception in April 2021, the #BWM has witnessed over 150 cases of GBV which were reported to and successfully resolved by the Chiwaridzo Victim Friendly Unit.

At a community level meeting held in commemoration of 16 the Days of activism Against GBV, the young women and women invited a representative from the Zimbabwe Republic Police, in particular the Victim Friendly Unit.

"We have noticed an increase in the number of GBV reported cases. As a result of serious engagements with the law enforcing agents, the Victim Friendly Unit has been in the past months refusing to withdraw any GBV reported cases at the station level. One can only withdraw her case at the Magistrate's Court," said Constable Venda.

The interaction between the young women and women and Constable Venda gave them an opportunity to ask all the questions they had around GBV and the law.

Blow the Whistle Movement: Young Women Standing up Against GBV

The Bindura Chapter organised community conversation circles in Bindura rural that had 30 young women participating. The activity was primarily used to reflect on the actions taken by young women from the previous engagements under the 'She Leads Phase 1'.

The results were quite pleasing as young women had since managed to take up leadership positions in various community based committees.

The women listed hereunder secured leadership positions:

1. Precious Nyamutowa – Finance Secretary for women's league at district level;
2. Priscilla Mufumira – VIDCO secretary
3. Fungai Utah – Chairperson of YWCA
4. Alice Chiarikire – Vice-secretary Semaio Projects
5. Nokuthula Gombera – Political Commissar and chairperson of Chidamba Creche
6. Vainess Takavadini – YWCA vice chairperson
7. Yosefa Chitauo – Health worker in the women's league
8. Sharai Mazhindu – Treasurer Wadzanai Community Trust
9. Caroline Majonga – Secretary for Agricultural show
10. Nomatter Majonga – Secretary for Hope; and
11. Tendai Chiveso – Chairperson for group of chiefs' wives.

The conversation circles strengthened the young women's capacities to participate effectively and represent women's voices as they were imparted with skills and knowledge on leadership. The young women had the opportunity to outline the challenges they were encountering in taking up leadership positions.

The issue of 'vaui' and lack of 'history' proved to be major stumbling blocks in the journey to leadership in communities. In the same vein, the young women developed an advocacy plan centered on these and other challenges.

They further decided to engage with the female headmen so that the issue of 'vaui' could be raised during traditional leadership meetings while on the later challenge they would engage the party women's league chairperson.



The Young Women and Women who attended a #Blow the Whistle Movement awareness raising meeting in Chiwaridzo Bindura, Mashonaland Central

Reaching women through the pandemic

Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCOZ)'s Chinhoyi chapter has groomed phenomenal young women over the years, including the young women forum chairperson Esther Chinovainzva – who also sits in the board of Zano Mukadzi Trust.

Despite the banning of physical meetings for almost 70% of the year and other challenges faced in 2021 (including economic challenges), the young women's forum chairperson mobilized young women to group together resources used to support marginalized young women living in rural areas.

On the 10th of December 2021, WCOZ young women's forum distributed 67 packets of sanitary wear to marginalized women benefitting 28 young women.

The young women mobilized these resources collectively from their own pockets for the greater good of their communities.



Taking gender-based violence education to Gwanda

The Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus in partnership with Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) Gwanda Chapter commemorated the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) at Stanmore rural, Shake Centre.

The commemoration reached a total of 110 participants including women, men, young women and young men.

The commemoration afforded community women and men the opportunity to share experiences and also to find solutions as the women parliamentary caucus, together with WCoZ, proffered solutions to the challenges that women continue to face as far as GBV is concerned.

It was quite evident that women and girls continue to suffer abuse and violence in silence as they are scared to speak out. Fear and discrimination were major hindrances that continue to expose women as victims of GBV.

The vice chairperson, Berverline Ndlovu, was able to share with participants the service providers established by the government, local and national instruments that exist, that are meant to combat GBV at all levels.

"There is need to continue sensitizing communities on GBV, it should be a continuous cycle", said Berverline Ndlovu.



Stella Ndlovu, vice chairperson of the Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus, giving welcoming remarks and introductions



Berverline Ndlovu, vice chairperson of the Gwanda chapter, giving a presentation on the existing local and national instruments that are meant to curb GBV at all levels

A reflection on women, peace and security

Lizwe Chitunganya

Women leaders require support from all stakeholders in order to fulfill their mandate and meaningfully participate in development issues. The protection of women helps in their contributions to national decision making, giving the assurance to implement as per their designations.

On the 21st anniversary of the adoption of the Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security by the United Nations Security Council, 31 October 2021, the She Leads project conducted a discussion to reflect on Zimbabwe's implementation of the resolution. This project and discussion was supported by the Embassy of Ireland in Pretoria, South Africa.

What came out of the discussion showed there was important need to look back on the thoughts, actions and transformations required in order to not only protect women, but also provide concrete pillars for their involvement in leadership.

The key points to takeaway from the reflection were:

Decision Making

Women leaders should be placed at forefront for decision making on issues regarding peace. The involvement of women at the point of decision crafting and implementation will increase the development of more solutions that assure and reinforce the security of women.

Collective Planning

For any action plans that are being developed, it is important to have collective participation. This entails the inclusion of all parties, women and men, can result in inequalities being addressed as plans will be developed with all relevant voices getting space.

Empower security forces

There is need to have security forces that understand issues around women's issues. This could be through hiring of specialist women in the security forces or training more of the men and women that are already in the establishments. It is important to be able to make it easier for women to report issues where their peace and security has been violated.

A replay of the discussion may be found here: https://youtu.be/bN1hNE_T6jU



She Leads in Mbare



Pictures from a Patsime Trust She Leads campaign launch road show in Mbare, Harare. The road show featured a play, engagement with the crowd and other related activities

