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**ActionAid Zimbabwe**

**March-April 2021 Newsletter**

**The Prospects for Systems Change  
for Economic Justice as we celebrate  
International Women's Month.**

**When women are empowered, they are safer, and economies grow!**



<http://www.zimbabwe.actionaid.org/>

## The Country Director Welcome Note

Joy Mabenge,  
ActionAid Zimbabwe  
Country Director.



March is the International Women's Month and this year's theme is **"Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world"**. ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ) took this opportunity to celebrate women from all walks of life in their phenomenal leadership during this pandemic. We also took time to reflect on the increased incidences of gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 induced lockdowns and shared findings from an AAZ survey entitled **"Gender Based Violence During Lockdown"** conducted in 2020. Through rooted campaigning, women came out to share how they are challenging the odds and leading in economic strengthening at community level.

During a breakfast meeting to commemorate the Women's Month, policy makers and civil society organizations were presented with research findings from an SMS based **"GBV During Lockdown"** survey that revealed a spike in economic GBV in Zimbabwe during the 2020 lockdown. There was information pointing to the financial exclusion of women and youth in national economic strengthening initiatives with a call for the meaningful inclusion of women in the country's economy. An urgency to **"follow the money"** and ensure that women are afforded an equal opportunity to access national financial machinery to support their economic growth was emphasised during this meeting.

Our March - April 2021 Newsletter is focusing on our Priority 1 which looks at empowering women and girls living in poverty and exclusion to challenge the structural causes of violence and secure economic justice. As such, the initiatives covered in this newsletter issue such as the Women's Month Policy dialogue, the "No Love without the reduction of unpaid care work" February 14th movement creativities and social media campaigns on #ChooseToChallenge Economic Injustice are some of the endeavours aimed at tackling systemic causes of violence against women. Other initiatives, also published in this issue of the newsletter include the celebration of women growing rural economies despite challenges and radio series on women's stories during lockdown, which are also some of the actions aimed at pushing for systems change to promote economic justice. **We hope you will enjoy reading the newsletter!**



**Zimbabwe Gender Commissioner Naomi Chimbetete speaking during the Women's Month Policy Dialogue.**

## A call to empower women to reduce gender-based violence

**By Maxine Gowera  
Leonard Cheshire  
Disability Zimbabwe**

**A** AZ and partners hosted a Women's Month breakfast meeting with policy makers to push for the prioritisation of the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls by providing gender responsive public services to reduce GBV including economic violence. The policy engagement was aimed at obtaining the commitment of national stakeholders and ensuring financial inclusion of women including those with disabilities, as they are more vulnerable during

pandemics. The meeting, held on 26 March 2021 ran under the theme **"When women are economically empowered, they are safer, and economies grow."**

The Women's Month Breakfast meeting was attended by representatives from Parliament of Zimbabwe including the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women Affairs, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) Victim Friendly Unit (VFU). Civic society organisations like Family Action for Community Empowerment (FACE) Zimbabwe, the Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZ), Southern Africa AIDS Dissemination Service (SAFAIDS), Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT), Musasa, Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Childline and Women and Law in



**Rumbidzayi Makoni AAZ Women's Rights & Economic Justice Manager presenting the findings of the AAZ Survey on "GBV in the Lockdown" during the breakfast meeting.**

Southern Africa (WILSA) were in attendance. They stood in solidarity with women and youth movements such as the Rural Women Assembly (RWA) groups and Activista Zimbabwe and AAZ representatives to advocate government to take necessary measures to provide decent work and economically empower women and girls.

Speaking during the breakfast meeting, Rumbidzayi said COVID-19 restrictions have had



**Some of the delegates at the Women's Month Policy Dialogue including members of the Parliament Portfolio Committee on Women Affairs, the Gender Commission and AAZ staff**



Some of the delegates during the breakfast meeting

detrimental effects on the economy and the greatest pinch is at household level where families are being pushed deeper and deeper into poverty, with women and girls bearing the brunt the most. She said COVID-19 induced economic shocks have increased the risks of violence against women and girls in and outside the home.

One of the recommendations made by the CSOs during the breakfast meeting was that Government should focus on promoting progressive and gender responsive revenue collection to provide social safety nets for those most affected by the pandemic to reduce financial pressures which are causing a spike in GBV during COVID-19. The Government was urged to put in place mechanisms that strengthen GBV reporting systems and consider people with disability (PWD), so that survivors are confident to report cases through official reporting channels such as the ZRP VFU.

The Parliament representatives present committed to push for the allocation of more resources to be channeled towards the empowerment of women including those for hosting public hearings to understand the informal sector and to drive towards the enactment of a Gender Equality Act. and the Sexual Harassment Bill. The Gender Commission vowed to provide capacity building to frontline workers to deal with GBV survivors, to ensure that there are user friendly systems for reporting GBV. This included looking for alternative ways to report GBV cases during the lockdowns and equipping women and girls on their rights.

A press release to cement the policy engagement was published. See [link: https://zimbabwe.actionaid.org/publications/2021/actionaid-zimbabwe-international-womens-month-policy-engagement-press-release](https://zimbabwe.actionaid.org/publications/2021/actionaid-zimbabwe-international-womens-month-policy-engagement-press-release)

**GBV in Lockdown**  
An analysis of GBV in lockdown.

**Economic Violence**  
There is a strong correlation between levels of violence with income and gender inequality. Out of 209 respondents (133 females and 76 males), 79% experienced economic violence during lockdown. 80% of the respondents stated that economic violence occurred within the home.

**Causes of violence**  
Lack of economic empowerment and finances during the lockdown was the root cause of violence experienced among women and girls while 10% of respondents said customs and beliefs in society were the root causes of abuses experienced.

**Reported where**  
50% of respondents reported the abuse to neighbors, relatives or friends, due to good social networks within communities. 33% reported via social media. 43% did not report which shows that a lot of silence is still attached to GBV and 5% reported to the police.

**Conclusion**  
When women are economically empowered, they are safer and economies grow.  
We #ChooseToChallenge Economic Injustice  
#SystemsChange4EconomicJustice

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A flier summarizing the survey on “GBV in the Lockdown”

## What they said

**“Women and girls suffered economic violence in the home because they were locked with the abusers and experienced other COVID-19 restrictions. Women are exposed to GBV in public spaces every day and express frustration at the referral pathways as these pathways are filled with challenges such as under resourcing, bureaucracy and corruption that discourage reporting violence, whether it occurs in a public space or a private space,”** said Rumbidzayi Makoni citing the survey on **“GBV During Lockdown.”**

**“There is need to create a more inclusive and gender-equal world,”** Lydia Madyirapanze, national coordinator for FAWEZI said.

## The women growing economies in the Zambezi Valley



**Naume Mpofu, from Sinasengwe, Binga**

Naume Mpofu (41), from Sinasengwe, Binga is one of the few women leaders in Binga, situated in the Zambezi Valley, north West of Zimbabwe. She is a ward-based (Agricultural Extension Worker in the district.

**“I train women groups on conservation farming techniques because the area is generally dry and receive little rains annually. Conservation**

**farming promotes mulching and conserves water. I advise the women groups to grow small grain crops such as millet and the women are provided with small grain seed under the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF),”** said Naume.

Naume’s biggest challenge is on transport. She travels long distances of over 40 km on foot to



**Naume Mpofu and with some of the women farmers she supports in her community**

support the women implementing climate resilient sustainable agriculture programmes supported under the ZRBF programme.

**“If I get a motorbike, I will be able to reach more women who are the bulk of the farmers who produce food in the community,”** said Naume.

There is limited women leadership in Binga with only one female Councilor out of 25 wards. Government departments are mostly male led.

Generally, in the Zambezi Valley and elsewhere in rural Zimbabwe, women leadership at community level is limited with are few pockets of women leaders in form of agricultural extension officers, however they are not key decision makers at district level. Because of the limited women participation in leadership, the Zambezi Valley Alliance, (ZVA) under the ZRBF is mainstreaming gender issues.

The ZVA has employed a female to lead as a gender and advocacy officer who was recruited to provide capacity to district staff who are cascading this to women groups supported under the ZRBF in the community.

In the Zambezi Valley, the ZRBF programme is being implemented by the ZVA Consortium where AAZ is the lead organization working in partnership with other organizations such as the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association, (ZELA), Afrosoft Private Limited, and the African Breeders Services Total Cattle Management (ABS-TCM-). The programme whose objective is to support the communities to cope with shocks and stresses such as floods and drought and promote transformative resilient livelihoods is funded by the ZRBF.



**Farisayi Madhaka, the AAZ Gender and Advocacy Officer (left) with women from Mbire supported under the ZRBF programme from left: Takaitei Kahondo, Mavis Ingwani and Edna Chipanya.**

The AAZ, Activista Zimbabwe and staff social media platforms were on 8 March 2021 awash with messages advocating for economic justice in the era of COVID-19 as part of the International Women’s Day commemorations for 2021.

Some of the issues being advocated for is a push for economic security which is an important safeguarding measure for women against domestic violence and violence in public spaces.

One of the ways the government has been trying to address the effects of COVID-19 on various sectors in Zimbabwe has been through the introduction of the ZWL18 billion (USD209.3 million) Economic Recovery and Stimulus Package.

However, only 516 out of the 7852 women who are members of the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Association (ZCIEA) accessed this fund with very low allocations of between ZWL280 and ZWL600 each (USD3.20 and USD6.90

respectively). As such, the Government should ensure that the most vulnerable are granted a fair share from the ZWL18 billion allocated to the informal sector,

particularly women whose lack of financial resources increases their vulnerabilities to GBV and can be immediately life threatening.



**actionaid** **walk for survival**

## No Love without Recognising, Redistributing and Reducing Unpaid Care Work

This Valentine's day, join our celebration of art and music, as we stand together in solidarity for a better world, #NoLoveWithoutJustice - #WalkForSurvival

12 February, 12pm UTC <https://zoom.us/join/https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYsc-ysrDMoEt1AFWM4J1mD4aft5n9Taqil>

**Raising our voices against injustices through music and art: NO Love Without Justice Concert!**

In February 2021, AAZ joined other ActionAid Federation countries in a “No Love Without Justice” concert using music and art meant to raise voices of vulnerable groups against injustices. This concert was a follow up to the Walk for Survival campaign which saw 4000 people walking the earth’s circumference protesting against GBV.

The concert celebrated online, was held on the 14th of February, a day when lovers celebrate their love. As such, in the campaign ActionAid is saying love cannot be there if there are injustices like lack of gender responsive public services (GRPS). Hence the “No Love” concept. Women in Zimbabwe have experienced GBV in the homes and in public spaces due to lack of GRPS. So, there cannot be love without critical services such as water in the house, thus the need for policy makers to address access to water in the communities of Zimbabwe. Women have also experienced the burden of unpaid care work due to lack of public services in the home. So how can there be love in the home when the woman is burdened?

Zimbabwe was represented by Activista alumni Emmanuel Manyathi who sang a song about corrupt leaders during COVID19 pandemic and how funds meant to assist vulnerable groups have been abused. In his song, he cited Mutoko where he comes from as a case study of a town which produces black granite for export, yet the

town does not have a ventilator or protective clothing to assist community members in preventing COVID-19

ActionAid International (AAI) Board Chairperson, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda gave a closing speech during the concert. In her speech, she talked about the need to have a collective action for activists in the Global South to make COVID-19 vaccine free for all. She highlighted the importance of revamping the health systems in the Global South to ensure the right to health for all people.

She said: “Developed countries should not block developing countries from developing COVID-19 vaccines. Profits should not come before lives. We have seen how in HIV drugs where developed countries dominated. “Roll up your sleeves as a sign that we are ready to act and demand justice,” Nyaradzayi said as the concert ended.

**actionaid** **walk for survival**

## No Love without Quality Gender Responsive Public Services

Together we walked the earth's circumference for justice. We will continue walking and fighting until our demands are met. Leaders should prioritize workers, gender responsive public services & communities #WalkForSurvival

12 February, 12pm UTC <https://zoom.us/join/https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYsc-ysrDMoEt1AFWM4J1mD4aft5n9Taqil>



## COVID-19 Response Radio Series: A women's story during national lockdown



**A** AZ is implementing a project entitled ‘Enhancing the Health, Social and Legal Protection of Women and Girls from GBV during COVID-19 in Chitungwiza and Hopley” funded by the Canadian Embassy. As part of raising awareness and showing the extent to which women are impacted by GBV during the COVID-19 lockdown, a series of radio dramas and shows were aired between February and March

2021. The radio shows and dramas have been instrumental in awareness raising on GBV as well as leading advocacy towards GRPS provision. The radio programmes are reaching 81 150 daily listeners.

The radio shows have seen different topics being discussed such as how the pandemic has affected adolescent girls in the areas of

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**HER HOME IS NOW HELL.  
OUTSIDE - VULTURES LURK.**

#COVID19LOCKDOWN  
#HERSTORY 


**SAT**  
13 FEB 2021 - 10:30AM

**SUN**  
14 FEB 2021 - 10:30AM


LIVE RADIO DRAMA ON  
CAPITALK 100.4FM



**MASK UP, SANITIZE AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING**

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**THEY WANT WATER.  
IN A LOCKDOWN!**

#COVID19LOCKDOWN  
#ACCESSTOWATER 

**SAT**  
27 FEB 2021 - 10:30AM

**SUN**  
28 FEB 2021 - 10:30AM

LIVE RADIO DRAMA ON  
CAPITALK 100.4FM



**MASK UP, SANITIZE AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING**

menstrual hygiene and access to menstrual management materials. With most women operating in the informal sectors livelihood strategies have been compromised and access to sanitary pads has become a luxury when compared to purchasing food. “Period” poverty had pushed women and girls into compromising situations where they can be forced to engage in transactional sex in exchange for sanitary wear. ActionAid, with support from the Canadian Embassy, has to date distributed dignity packets to vulnerable women and girls in Hopley and Chitungwiza to address the women and girls’ access to sanitary wear.

AAZ has prioritized the drilling of solarized boreholes for provision of safe drinking water which helps in managing menstrual hygiene. The radio shows provided an opportunity for AAZ to lead advocacy on provision of water and highlight women’s rights abuses that are associated to the

lack of water provision. Without safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene facilities at home and in places of work and education, it is disproportionately harder for women and girls to lead safe, productive, healthy lives. Addressing the needs of females in relation to water, sanitation and hygiene is a key driver in achieving gender equity and unlocking the potential of half of global society, which was also part of the radio drama series discussions and the International Women’s Day Commemorations.

The radio shows have also touched on the plight of frontline health workers in accessing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), testing and psychological support services. ActionAid has distributed PPEs to 500 frontline health workers at Tariro Clinic in Hopley and Zengeza Clinic in Chitungwiza as an example to promote the safety of the workers. The organisation is advocating for social safety nets for women in the informal sector who are the worst affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The negative impacts are more pronounced in urban set-ups where there is hardly any alternative means of survival for them.

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**THE MONSTER IN MY HOME!**  
**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE LOCKDOWN**  
 #COVID19LOCKDOWN   
 #NOTOGENDERBASEDVIOLENCE 

**SAT**  
 06 MAR 2021 - 10:30AM  
**SUN**  
 07 MAR 2021 - 10:30AM

LIVE RADIO DRAMA ON  
**CAPITALK 100.4FM**  


**MASK UP, SANITIZE AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**STOP  
 GENDER  
 BASED  
 VIOLENCE**



## AAZ shifting power to young people

### Youth Corner



From left: AAZ Country Director Joy Mabenge, Medawn Sidhlo and AAI Learning and Knowledge Management Advisor Precious Gombera during handover of certificate to Medawn after completing the HRBA Training in December 2020

In this newsletter Youth Corner, we are profiling Medawn Sidhlo (28), one of the young men whose life has been transformed through support from AAZ in partnership with movements like Activista Zimbabwe, the Global Platform and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD). The following is his story:

My journey with Activista Zimbabwe began in 2018. As someone who is passionate about youth development, I saw Activista Zimbabwe as an opportunity to amplify the voices of my community. However, the question that continued to flood my head was how this was going to be

possible in a large movement like Activista which has a membership of more than a thousand brilliant young minds across the country. I decided to dedicate myself to community service focusing on youth empowerment programmes.



**Medawn Sidhlo**

It all began with me attending a Social Economic Justice Activism training in August 2020 run by ZIMCODD with support from AAZ. From this training, I learnt that activism is not all about marching and protesting without a clear

motive. There are times when one needs to engage deeply with all parties involved to reach an understanding on both ends and see how some of the issues affecting youths can be solved to bring change. As if that was not enough, I got an opportunity to be part of the Unpaid Care Work online campaign implemented by AAZ and Global Platforms Zimbabwe from October to December 2020. Through this campaign AAZ introduced me to the “sound of my voice”. I was a presenter in the campaign dubbed “#UCW” that ran through a radio programme aired on the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) Radio Zimbabwe. Being my first time to be live on air, I had

mixed feelings of being happy and nervous at the same time. Little did I know that many doors were going to open for me through that radio campaign. I attracted the attention of various radio stations like Breeze FM who called to interview me on a programme to encourage young people to participate in various community projects. I also attracted international based radio stations attention where I work on a part time basis as a Tonga correspondent.

I received yet another training in form of acquiring skills on Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) Documentation conducted by AAZ and the

Global Platform Zimbabwe. Through this training, I have become a citizen journalist. I am now documenting issues affecting my community. Some of the issues are around climate change, GBV and the advocacy work on provision of GRPS. As a skilled citizen journalist, on the 1st of January 2021 I produced a video about broken sewer pipes at Mfelandawonye Township, in Beitbridge. I shared the video on social media and physically showed it to local leaders. The broken sewer pipes were a health hazard to people especially women and girls who are the most vulnerable as they stepped on the sewer pipes when they looked for water. The pipes were fixed within 48

hours as the local council feared of tarnishing its name on social media.



AAZ and Global Platforms Zimbabwe have greatly capacitated me and made me discover my talent and passion of using my voice to bring change through advocacy and activism. I am now widely known as the 'Golden Voice' through the Unpaid Care Work campaign radio show. I am currently running my own personal podcast programme entitled 'Life Realities Through the podcast, I do motivational speaking and youth mentoring I am a holder of a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Education.

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