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NEWSLETTER



ActionAid Zimbabwe **RIGHTS, LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WOMEN AND YOUTHS**

THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S WELCOME REMARKS JOY MABENGE, ACTIONAID ZIMBABWE (AAZ) COUNTRY DIRECTOR



Greetings! It is my pleasure to welcome you to the May to June 2025 edition of our newsletter, focusing on the vital theme of “Rights, Leadership, and Responsibilities for Women and Youths.” This theme resonates deeply with our ongoing commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering the next generation of leaders.

In a world where the voices of women and youth are often marginalized, it is imperative that we amplify their rights and leadership roles. The empowerment of women and youths is not just a moral obligation; it is essential for sustainable development and social justice. Our collective efforts in advocating for their rights and responsibilities can lead to transformative change within our communities.

Throughout this newsletter, you will find inspiring stories and impactful initiatives designed to foster leadership

among women and youths. We believe that by investing in their potential, we are not only addressing immediate challenges but also paving the way for a brighter and more equitable future.

As we reflect on the challenges and triumphs faced by women and youths in our society, as AAZ we us reaffirm our commitment to fostering an environment where their rights are upheld, their leadership is nurtured, and their responsibilities are recognized. Together, we can create pathways for women and youth engagement and empowerment, fostering inclusivity and support for all.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the cause.

Happy Reading!

YOUTH AT THE FRONTLINES: STRENGTHENING ZIMBABWE'S CLIMATE RESILIENCE



Disasters are no longer isolated by natural events—they are deeply influenced by human choices and systemic vulnerabilities. In Zimbabwe, where climate change is intensifying the frequency and severity of droughts, cyclones, and floods, the urgency for youth-led disaster risk reduction (DRR) has never been greater. In the face of worsening climate shocks, Zimbabwe's youth are rising to the challenge. The 2nd Zimbabwe Youth Symposium on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), held from 27–28 May 2025 in Harare, brought together 85 youth leaders, civil society actors, and government representatives to champion youth-led, community-focused solutions to disasters. Held under the theme “Innovative and Inclusive Solutions for Youth-Led DRR,” the symposium emphasized the urgent need to localize global frameworks to suit Zimbabwe's evolving climate context.

The symposium spotlighted the urgent need for youth to take a leading role in addressing climate and disaster risks in Zimbabwe. With erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and food insecurity on the rise, youth in Zimbabwe are among the most vulnerable due to limited livelihoods options—yet they are the most vital change agents, hence the need to localize global frameworks and address the crises. As the impacts of climate change intensify, young people were urged to step forward with creativity and determination to develop local, inclusive, and technology-driven solutions that protect their communities. From building digital awareness campaigns to shaping early warning systems, young people are uniquely positioned to lead transformative action.

Young people were encouraged to play a more active role in disaster preparedness by leveraging climate data, digital tools, and community engagement. A clarion call was made for youth to utilize information from the Meteorological Services Department to develop practical solutions such as mobile apps, early warning systems, and awareness campaigns that enhance local preparedness using social media platforms like TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp to strategically amplify disaster risk reduction messages, foster peer-to-peer engagement, and highlight youth-led initiatives. At the local level, youth were urged to participate in disaster risk planning and response activities—particularly in vulnerable wards and districts—by contributing innovative ideas, joining community structures, and supporting localized resilience-building efforts. Youth must not only be seen as beneficiaries but as leaders and innovators in resilience-building.

The youth participants passionately called on the government, development partners, and international NGOs to introduce a “Youth Resilience Microgrant”—a dedicated funding stream that supports community-driven and innovative youth-led climate solutions. They proposed that the grant be awarded annually and offer flexible requirements, mentorship opportunities, and a focus on innovation and scalability. This funding mechanism would empower Zimbabwean youth to take ownership of building safer, more sustainable futures. Zimbabwe's youth are no longer asking for a seat at the table—they are building the table. With the right support, they are ready to lead the country toward a more resilient, inclusive, and climate-smart future.

BE INNOVATIVE AND RESILIENT, YOUTHS URGED

BY THESEUS SHAMBARE



Young people must be innovative and resilient as the SADC region seeks to tackle disaster risks exacerbated by climate change. These sentiments were shared by participants at the recently held second Zimbabwe Youth Symposium on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Harare.

The symposium, which followed the successful inaugural National Youth Symposium in November 2024, aimed to inspire the replication of youth-led disaster risk reduction (DRR) structures regionally. Its central theme, "Innovative and Inclusive Solutions for Youth-Led Disaster Risk Reduction in Southern Africa", underscored the pivotal role young people play in building community resilience. AAZ country director Joy Mabenge represented by AAZ Programmes Lead, Dr Selina Pasirayi, stressed the immense potential within

Africa's youth. "Africa's demographic reality, with over 60 percent of its population under 25, is not a challenge, but was a greatest strength and an unprecedented opportunity for youth to lead in designing and implementing DRR solutions," he said. A key session, he said, included a disaster simulation that provided "valuable insights into preparedness and response strategies that need to be considered when responding to disasters". The exercise also helped reveal gaps in emergency response plans and highlighted the need to improve coordination and enhance collaboration among different stakeholders. National coordinator for Youth desk on DRR, Darlington Mupfupi, noted persistent challenges such as lack of knowledge, lack of capacity and resources at district levels and no access to DRR-related information.

YOUNG WOMEN FIGHT FOR RIGHTS AND PROTECTION IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

By Annle Ncube, Tendilonge Museme, Anna Manfu, Olivia Chikumba and Tulindile Mleya.

Five young women from the communities of Chipinge and Binga are on a mission to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights, particularly in the face of climate-induced disasters and socio-economic challenges. With the support of ActionAid Zimbabwe, they conducted a feminist youth vulnerability assessment, producing the report titled “Young People’s Perspectives on Risk, Vulnerabilities, and Protection of Rights in Chipinge and Binga.” The report seeks to understand the vulnerabilities faced by young people, especially women, as they navigate the treacherous landscape of climate change. “We wanted to shine a light on the protection rights of youth in times of crisis,” said one of the young women involved in the project.

Their work culminated in a presentation at the 44th Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), where they shared a policy brief connecting local realities to the El Niño-induced droughts affecting their districts, country, and region. The findings of their report are not just statistics; they represent the daily experiences of young women in these communities. In Chipinge, residents brace for cyclones and floods, while in Binga, the threat of drought looms large. “These are not just headlines to us; they shape our lives,” they remarked.

The young women revealed a painful truth: many in their communities are unaware of their rights, leaving them vulnerable and silenced. “We are tired of being held back by patriarchal norms,” they declared. Determined to make their voices heard, the group began taking action. In June, they conducted radio programs on Twasumpuka FM and Vemuganga FM to share their findings. They also launched an online campaign with the Activista network, reaching out to peers and local leaders to amplify the report’s recommendations. Their goal is clear: to build a future where young people, especially women, lead their own protection. “We are not victims; we are the solution,” they asserted.

The young women outlined several key demands that reflect their commitment to change. They call for real power in decision-making processes, emphasizing the need for meaningful youth and women’s participation in disaster management discussions. They also stress the importance of investing in local youth groups, which are often the first responders in crises, seeking support to enhance their capacity and effectiveness. To combat poverty, they demand sustainable economic



opportunities and programs that build climate resilience. Furthermore, they emphasize the need for strengthening and funding child protection systems and GBV support services, especially in times of crisis.

“This is more than a campaign; it is our promise to ourselves and our generation,” they concluded. “We are empowering each other to demand the safe, just, and equitable Zimbabwe we all deserve.” Join their movement on social media with the hashtags #ActOnDRM, #YouthVulnerability, and #YouthProtectionInEmergencies to support their fight for change.

ACTIONAID ZIMBABWE LAUNCHES NEW PROJECT TO ENHANCE GIRLS' EDUCATION IN BINGA DISTRICT

From June 9th to 13th, 2025, ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ), in partnership with Basilwizi Trust, held a critical inception meeting with various stakeholders and government ministries in Binga district, focusing on a new project aimed at promoting infrastructure development and raising awareness about child rights in two primary schools as part of the Lusulu Local Rights Programme (LRP). Scheduled to run from July 2025 to December 2026, this project is set to create a significant impact on the educational landscape of the region.

During this period, the AAZ Country Management Team (CMT) conducted a comprehensive field assessment in the northern part of Binga LRP, visiting Njobola Primary School and Sinamusanga Secondary School, both established with the assistance of the TX Foundation, where asset handover took place in 2018. The assessment aimed to evaluate learning conditions and engage community members, students, and district stakeholders, establishing a direct link to an upcoming Child Sponsorship Programme project in the Lusulu LRP, expected to benefit 986 learners, 510 girls and 476 boys, addressing critical barriers to quality education in the area. The assessment revealed several significant challenges, including overcrowding and infrastructure

gaps, where many students experience “hot sitting,” learning outdoors or in incomplete structures due to a shortage of classrooms.

Njobola Primary School head, Mr Boy Tlou highlighted that ECD learners are learning in an uncompleted block and emphasized the need for a safe and conducive learning environment to shape the future of the pupils. AAZ Country Director Joy Mabenge during the visit to Njobola Primary School highlighted ActionAid's commitment to girls' education and proposed establishing the school as a Grade 7 examination centre, reducing travel distances for pupils, especially the child. Gender-based violence (GBV) poses increased risks for girls, negatively impacting their access to a safe and quality education, while existing facilities lack necessary accessibility features, limiting participation for students with disabilities.

In alignment with Education 5.0, the project aims to implement sustainable solutions such as constructing disability-friendly infrastructure to ensure inclusivity, strengthening GBV prevention measures to enhance safety for vulnerable students, and mobilizing community involvement for long-term sustainability efforts. ActionAid Italy has committed to pre-financing the project, with ongoing fundraising efforts to support these initiatives, and an Italian delegation is scheduled to visit the schools from June 23rd to June 29th to further engage with stakeholders.

AAZ remains steadfast in its commitment to transforming education in Binga, prioritizing equity, safety, and community-driven progress, as they work together to build a foundation where every child can thrive.



AMPLIFYING YOUTH VOICES: A ROUNDTABLE FOR CHANGE IN CHILD RIGHTS ADVOCACY.



ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ) recently hosted the Child and Youth Leaders Roundtable, reinforcing its commitment to placing the voices of those most affected by policies and budgets at the core of decision-making. The event brought together passionate child and youth leaders from Chitungwiza and Hopely to commemorate the Day of the African Child, a significant occasion that highlights the struggles, resilience, and immense potential of African children. This year's theme, "Planning and budgeting for children's rights: progress since 2010," served as a powerful call to action, urging participants to critically examine how resources are prioritized and allocated for the well-being of children. The roundtable fostered meaningful dialogue between child and youth leaders, local stakeholders, and decision-makers, emphasizing the importance of child-friendly governance and budgeting. The event showcased child and youth leaders who have been actively advocating for child rights in their communities. Through their experiences and insights, they illuminated the challenges children face, alongside successes and best practices in promoting child rights. This highlighted the impact of community-led initiatives and partnerships, demonstrating how collective efforts can drive change. AAZ envisions a future where children's rights are respected, protected,

and fulfilled, empowering young people to shape their own destinies.

The objectives of the roundtable included amplifying child and youth voices by providing a platform for leaders to share their perspectives and experiences, thereby ensuring that their voices are heard and valued. It also aimed to promote child-friendly governance by discussing the integration of child rights into planning and budgeting, underscoring the necessity for child-friendly policies and programs. Additionally, the roundtable sought to foster partnerships and collaboration by bringing together child and youth leaders, local stakeholders, and decision-makers to enhance cooperation in advancing child rights.

Gathering recommendations and insights from child and youth leaders was also crucial to inform policies and practices, ensuring that children's needs and rights are prioritized. As the roundtable concluded, it became evident that empowering children and youth is essential for creating a just society. By amplifying their voices and fostering collaboration, AAZ and its partners are paving the way for a future where children's rights are at the forefront of decision-making processes.

NATIONAL OFFICE

26 Divine Road, Milton Park, Harare

+263-242-788123/5, 776127,

+263-772164449

info.zimbabwe@actionaid.org

zimbabwe.actionaid.org

www.facebook/ActionAidZimbabwe

www.twitter.com/ActionAidZim

ActionAid Zimbabwe



REGIONAL OFFICE

281 Chimurenga Street, Rusape

+263-25-3537,

+263-772395967

For feedback and comments please contact

Felistas Nyamayaro, Communications and Campaigns Officer on

+263771764270 or

Felistas.Nyamayaro@actionaid.org.