



actionaid



ActionAid Zimbabwe

**NEWSLETTER
JANUARY - FEBRUARY
2023**

End Femicide to Attain Women's and Girls' Rights

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

**ActionAid Zimbabwe Toll free lines for reporting GBV:
Chitungwiza - 08080490, Nyanga - 08080483, Harare - 08080522**

THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S WELCOME NOTE

Joy Mabenge, ActionAid Zimbabwe Country Director.



Happy new year and welcome to 2023, a year that marks the 20th anniversary of ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ). **AAZ@20!!** Already? Yes, AAZ was first registered to commence programmes in Zimbabwe in 2003.

We celebrate 20 years of rooted programming, strategic partnerships and of course unapologetically taking sides with people living in poverty, exclusion, and vulnerable groups. Stay tuned for our commemorative events that will be taking place during the year. For now, let us talk about our January to February 2023 Newsletter issue which is focusing on some of AAZ and partner campaigns on fighting violence against women and girls. Between 25 November and 10 December each year, AAZ joins the world in commemorating the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence (16 DOA).

The 16 DOA global theme for 2022, was "UNITE! Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls," with ActionAid emphasising on **Ending Femicide**. Femicide is defined as the "killing of women because of their sex and/or gender", as a result of deaths from harmful practices (including child sexual abuse) and deliberate acts of omission by the state including the lack of political will to severely punish those who sanitise child sexual abuse under the guise of child marriage in religious sects. The femicide also includes poor gender

responsive public service delivery such as provision of menstrual hygiene, lack of which can result in health complications, and loss of women's dignity.

AAZ and partners engaged in various activities that aimed at advocating an **end to femicide**. To kick off the 16DOA campaign, there was a launch of the "Orange bag conversations" at the Zimbabwe Women and Resource Centre Network (ZWRCN) garden on 25 November 2022 which created a safe space for women from all walks of life to share and reflect on issues affecting women universally. The 16DOA campaigns in our Local Rights Programmes (LRPs) and project work under the Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all (TORCHES) project sought to strengthen local work around GBV, establish a clear link between local, national, and international work to end GBV. This also included creating tools to pressure governments on their commitments to eliminate violence against women and girls.

To close the campaign, we launched the Menstrual Hygiene and Tax report as we continue to engage government to make taxes work for menstrual hygiene **to end "period poverty and femicide"**.

I invite you to delve into the issue for more. Happy reading.

ACTIONAID ZIMBABWE POSITION ON GBV AS OUTLINED IN OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

To get an in-depth appreciation of AAZ's theory of change which amongst other things focuses on ending gender based violence, our Programme Quality, Learning and Accountability Advisor, **Rufaro Mavhera (RM)** conducted a question-and answer session with **Betty Sithole (BS)**, Manager for the TORCHES project aimed at creating communities where women and girls, including people with disabilities, are free from violence and have amplified voices and agency. Their discussion follows:

RM: What is VAWG?

BS: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is any act or threat (physical, emotional, sexual, economic) directed at a girl or woman that causes harm and is meant to keep a girl or woman under the control of others. These acts can occur inside the home (private) or outside of the home (in public). The root cause of VAWG is unequal power relations between women and men. Violence is then systematically directed at women in our families and communities and is accepted as normal. VAWG affects women, children and men, institutions, and society differently. The consequences for the women include injury, unwanted pregnancy, hopelessness, stress, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, isolation, fear, limited enjoyment of sex, lack of freedom to be herself, not reaching full her potential and does not enjoy the benefits of a positive relationship. The consequences for children include depression, poor performance in school, fear, distrust of adults, believing that violence is normal, more likely to experience violence, more likely to become violent, no safe space. The consequences to men include poor relationships with partners (wife and or girlfriend) and children, unhappiness, lack of intimacy, lack of meaningful connection with the partner, failure to enjoy family time and relationships and, lack of trust. GBV also has negative consequences that are transferred to institutions that focus on social development, health, security and women's rights, thus over burdening on the available resources. The ripple effect also felt in communities resulting in poor development, lack of peace, power imbalance and poor health support services.

RM: What is AAZ doing to address VAWG?



Source: Freepik

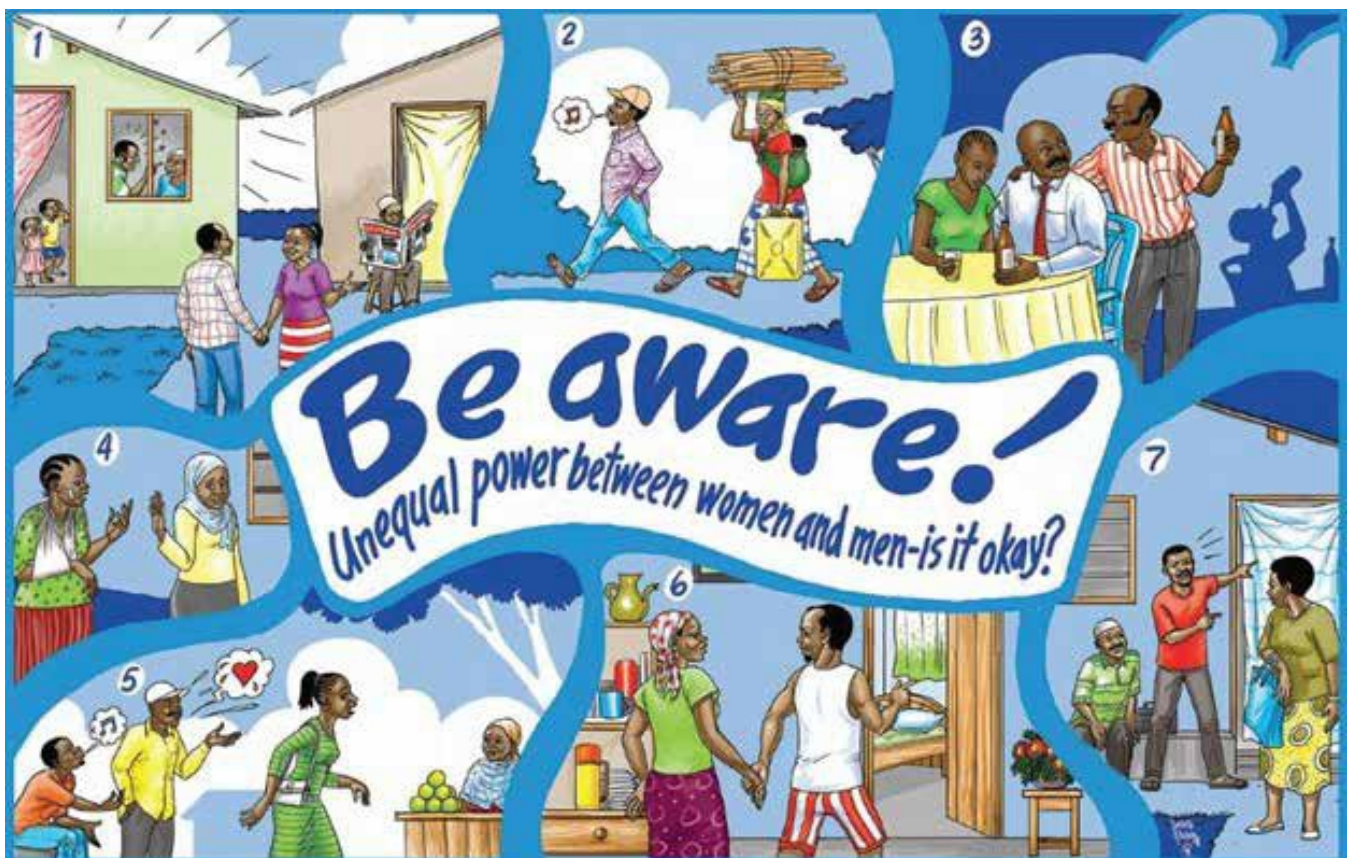
BS: AAZ works with partners in Zimbabwe to create communities where women and girls, including people with disabilities, are free from violence and have amplified voices and agency. This has been achieved by successfully fostering personal and community reflection about power relations, deepen analysis of men's power over women, and amplifying girls' voices in schools and communities.

AAZ work on VAWG is integrated across most projects including the TORCHES Project using two approaches in addressing VAWG which are SASA Together and Tuseme.

"SASA Together" is a community mobilization approach to prevent violence against women and girls which uses participatory activities in communities (such as community conversations, posters and communication materials and street theatre) to encourage individuals, community leaders and institutions to balance power in their personal and work relationships to prevent violence against women and girls. It is a

holistic approach to VAWG programming as it involves the whole community, community members, community leaders and institutions. It has four phases which focus on different types of power as follows; **Start** phase which focuses on power within an individual, **Awareness** phase which focusses on men's power over women, **Support** phase which focusses on power in solidarity with others to end violence and **Action** phase which focusses on power to sustain the progress made in preventing VAWG.

"Tuseme" (which means 'let us speak out') is a participatory theatre-based approach being used in schools to create safe spaces for girls and boys to take action on gender equality and transform social norms. This centerson the empowerment of partners established the Tuseme clubs in 15 schools across three districts namely Nyanga, Shamva and Chitungwiza – five schools per district. These clubs are supported by the Learner Welfare department from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. "Disability inclusion", a cross cutting thematic area is being used to ensure disability mainstreaming across all AAZ project areas. This ensures that no one is left behind as people with disability are as facilitators as well as participating community members.



The SASA Together – Set Up Guide, used by community facilitators.

RM: Whom does AAZ partner with, in fighting of VAWG?

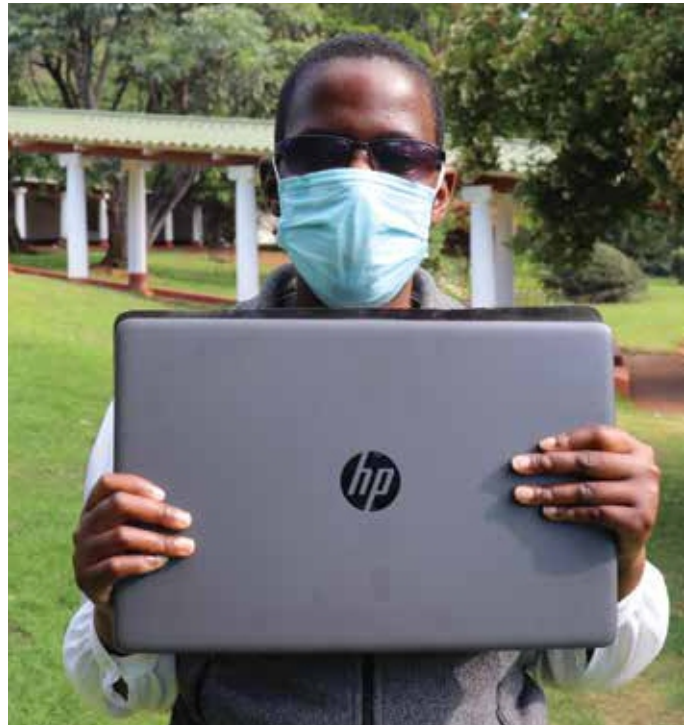
BS: AAZ employs a multi-stakeholder approach in fighting VAWG with various interventions being implemented in partnership with:

- Local Civil Society Organizations that include Family Aids Counselling Trust (FACT), Forum for Women Educationalist in Zimbabwe (FAWEZI), Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe, Simukai Child Protection, Basilwizi, HEFO and JPV.
- Government departments that include Police Victim Friendly Unit (VFU), Department of Social Services, and the Department of Learner Welfare Services, Ministry Women affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, department of disability affairs,
- Local community stakeholders including village heads, headmen, chiefs, councilors, Case care workers (CCWs) and various recognized religious leaders.
- Strategic movements and coalitions such as the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI), Activista,

RM: How are local interventions linking with or contributing to national, regional, and global initiatives around VAWG?

BS: The VAWG work being performed by ActionAid and its partners has been and is linked with the national, regional, and global initiatives through press statements, national level advocacy meetings, radio shows and community advocacy during international commemorations targeting at policymakers bringing out the GBV challenges and calling for action.

National level advocacy meetings have been used to link up our VAWG work with national interventions. For example, ActionAid and its partners conducted a national level advocacy meeting for Tuseme learners as they engaged with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education. They highlighted the issues that affect their academic and social development such as child marriages, the need to speed up the alignment of the laws on child marriage to reduce violence against girls and availability and affordability of sanitary wear for girls.



Nyasha Gande, who is an officer in the Ministry of Social Development, received a disability friendly laptop that has been installed with an application called JAWS (Job Access With Speech) developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing content or navigating a mouse. This was support through the TORCHES project. Nyasha, who is visually impaired now serves four clients in a day instead of one as was the usual case. Her clients are mostly survivors of GBV.

RM: What change has been brought by AAZ and partners interventions?

Everyone Wins with balanced power!

#SASATogether

SASA! TOGETHER

By changing the imbalance of power between women and men, we can prevent violence against women.

BS: Demystification of power imbalance and VAWG at community and family level

- Recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work
- Increase utilisation of the GBV referral System Improved access to Justice
- Communities engaged with relevant stakeholders on GBV during 16DOA commemorations and received assistance.



“As a woman, I never imagined I could impact my community positively. I now have the confidence to stand and speak against violence against women and girls,” said Sekai Zhwaki, a SASA Community Champion from Nyanga.

- Community leaders have been engaged and sensitised on the importance of fighting VAWG in the community at large.
- Synergies have been created between community structures; churches, traditional leadership, schools to fight GBV.
- From the Chitungwiza toll-free number is 08080490, a total of 44 cases (including GBV and child abuse cases) were received from 2022 to date and were successfully referred to relevant service providers for action.
- Toll free lines for Harare and Nyanga have

increased and facilitated access to information on GBV services for survivors of violence.

- Survivors of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse benefited from access to essential services funds which were used to support survivors to travel to court, seek medical assistance, professional counselling, age estimation, refreshments, purchasing post exposure prophylaxis and pregnancy testing kits. The funds supporting GBV survivors are channeled via the partners, the department of social development, VFU and Ministry Women’s affairs.
- Sign language training assisted stakeholders in appreciating the challenges that people with disability (PWD) face in accessing services. Stakeholders made an effort to learn sign language so that they can be able to assist those with hearing impairments when they seek services.
- Disability inclusion has been successfully mainstreamed in VAWG programming through ActionAid’s programming. For example, the TORCHES project ensured that at least 7% of the project participants, stakeholders and the rights holders are persons with disability.
- Among its various initiatives in addressing VAWG, AAZ and its partners created platforms for strengthening referral systems and improving dialogue with service providers and duty bearers such as the VFU), Department of Social Services, Ministry of Women’s Affairs, and the Department of Learner Welfare Services to schools.

RM: What needs to be prioritised to effectively and sustainably reduce VAWG?

BS: The Government of Zimbabwe (Govt) must ensure the availability of services to survivors of violence to help reduce VAWG. The services required include counselling, availability of VFU police and health services. These are limited and in some rural areas, especially remote areas.

- Govt needs to speed up the alignment of the gender and child marriages laws and Acts such as the Criminal codification and reform act with the national constitution.
- Community members, leaders and institutions should continue with the discussions on power issues and gender equality in communities and more men should be engaged in VAWG programming.
- Consistently conduct service gap analysis and engagement meetings with decision makers.

FEATURE STORY

HOW SAFE ARE GIRLS IN HOMES WITH REPORTS OF SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ON THE RISE?

**By Lovage Nhamoyebonde- Information and Communications Officer,
Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter**

For a long time, society successfully socialised and convinced its members that a home is a place where a child is guaranteed total safety. Yes! Indeed, the safety features - security precast walls, and over-protective male relatives - justify the claim that the girl child is safe at home.

The common questions and statements - "Are you safe at home? "Thank God you are safe at home"- are a reflection of the socialisation that has shaped society. In Zimbabwe, recent increases in cases of parents, guardians and close relatives targeting the closest girl child for sexual abuse is a wake-up call to rethink if women and girls are safe at home.

The home security systems are now confining the girl child and making her live with abuse while preventing outsiders from noticing the activities happening within the security parameters of the private home.

The Zimbabwe media has been awash with cases of Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) perpetrated against the girl child by those who have access to invade her private

space or comfort zone. A Start Awareness Support Action (SASA) Together community

champion working on ending GBV in communities supported by Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI) with support from AAZ, Faith Piki (not her real name), narrated how a 15-year-old girl lived with abuse in the 'safety' of her home.

"The girl was home with her two elder brothers. She decided to take a shower and while she was in the shower room the door was forcibly opened. Before she removed the soap foam from her face to see what was going on, she was sprayed with an unknown substance in the eyes. What happened afterwards is still a nightmare. Two unidentified men suspected to be her two brothers took turns to sexually abuse her," said Faith.

The girl failed to disclose the matter to her parents and the issue came to light when the survivor approached Faith who was moving around with a loud hailer denouncing VAWG in this community. Unfortunately, the

investigations have identified the suspected culprits as the two brothers who were supposed to protect their sister as perpetrators. The SASA Together programme, which uses trained community members called Community Champions like Faith is one of the methodologies used by AAZ and partners to tackle the root cause of VAWG (being unequal power between women and men) implemented under the Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all (TORCHES) project.

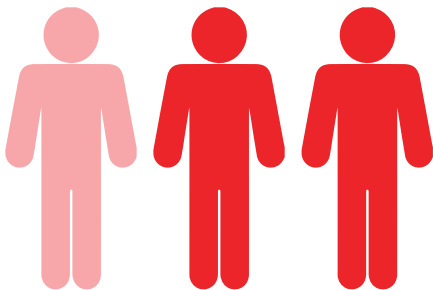


The case of the girl who was sexually abused by her brother is but a drop in an ocean as many other similar cases are happening, but they will remain veiled with the “home is safe” mantra. Towards the end of 2022, the Zimbabwe media was abuzz with yet another GBV case involving a 9-year-old girl who was sexually abused, fell pregnant and gave birth later. The sexual abuse reportedly took place within the confines of her “safe home”, allegedly perpetrated by her cousin brother while her father is equally guilty for violating the child with some bizarre “goblin” circumstances.

With several stories published daily in the media the question now is how many women and girls out there are living with abuse in the “safety” of their homes and are failing to report?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2021), one in three women (736 million) are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or a non-partner. To deal with the GBV including violence that happens in the private spaces, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO general director said: “But unlike COVID-19, violence against women cannot be stopped with a vaccine. We can only fight it with deep-rooted and sustained efforts – by governments, communities, and individuals – to change harmful attitudes, improve access to opportunities and services for women and girls and foster healthy and mutual respectful relationships.”

736 Million Women are subject to violence



According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2021), **one in three women** (736 million) are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or a non-partner.

AAZ and its partners FAWEZI, FACT and LDCZ is responding to VAWG using community champions who conduct power sessions in communities. Using the SASA Together methodology, which is tackling the root cause of VAWG and unequal power relations between women and men, the TORCHES project has gone a long way in eradicating GBV in both public and private spaces.



Lourine Purazeni, a Start Awareness Support Action (SASA) Community Champion, supported under the TORCHES project, using a loudspeaker for communities to speak up against GBV.

In the past, efforts were focused only on using the law and policies to reduce VAWG. AAZ and partners have noticed VAWG has not gone down despite the myriad of programmes to tackle the challenge. The SASA community champion sessions conducted by GBV activists such as Lourine (above), enables community members, leaders and institutions to discuss power issues using posters as tools to trigger discussions, a method that has emerged as a holistic approach in tackling GBV. Through this, women, girls, and people with disability have been made aware that they have power within themselves to speak about issues affecting them and finding solutions to their challenges. The TORCHES project has reached 19988 (11792 females and 8196 males).

MOVING FROM 16 TO 365 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GBV

AAZ and partners are advocating for 365 days of activism against gender-based violence in Zimbabwe and the world at large instead of just 16 days. This ensures that all types of violence in Zimbabwe are eliminated. GBV has a significant negative impact on women's physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing and happens every day.



Women during a 16DOA solidarity walk at Kanyimo Ward in Nyanga in November 2022.

“Issues of GBV need constant focus because they have become a societal problem that has been described as a pandemic and it continues to affect our society. We need to play our part to end GBV not just for 16 days but for 365 days every year,” said Judith Zvirikuzhe, AAZ’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Coordinator during a Kanyimo Ward, Nyanga 16DOA commemorations.

Amongst the delegates in attendance at the Kanyimo 16DOA commemorations were the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) VFU representatives who explained to residents and pupils some of the services they

provide including the duty of providing timely services to females affected by GBV. Residents also held a solidarity walk as a way of raising awareness on the need to stop GBV in the area.

The 16DOA campaign in Nyanga was done through several activities including poems, quiz and GBV dramas played by SASA drama groups and TUSEME clubs as a way of empowering women to stand against all forms of GBV. In partnership with AAZ and partners, Nyangani FM Community Radio covered the event and provided a platform for communities to speak out on VAWG in private and public spaces.

ORANGE BAG SESSION TO FIGHT GBV

On 25 November 2022, AAZ, in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN), hosted an event called the "Orange Bag Session" to join the global fight against GBV.

The event, which took place in ZWRCN's Secret Garden, was attended by 50 people, including men.

The participation by men in the event demonstrated that men can also fight gender

GBV, making it a safe space for both young men and women to unite in the fight against GBV and intimate partner violence (IPV). The event focused on discussing the effects of GBV and IPV. Examples of IPV discussed included how verbal abuse can cause low self-esteem, which can force the survivor to withdraw and not participate in private and public sphere as well as affecting their ability to speak out. Another notable trend discussed on IPV included the economic dependency of women on men noted to be one of primary causes of this type of violence. A course of action was devised to empower women economically to reduce their dependency on men and contribute to a reduction in IPV.



Pauline Gundidza, an artist, sharing her experience on GBV at the Orange Bag Session at ZWRN's Secret Garden.

MAKING TAXES WORK FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

By Wendy Makaza, Activista Zimbabwe Media team member

Menstruation – a seemingly difficult and awkward conversation to have, yet it is as important as having a pulse. To mark the end of the 16 DOA and the commemoration for the International Human Rights Day, AAZ launched its Research Report on Taxation and Menstrual Hygiene Management Tools in Zimbabwe on the 9th of December 2022 during a breakfast meeting held in Harare.

To inform advocacy and lobbying for AAZ, the study on taxation and menstrual hygiene was commissioned to assess the impact of taxation of menstrual hygiene instruments in Zimbabwe. The research has made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in support of ActionAid's advocacy for the elimination of all taxes on all menstrual hygiene products and the supply chain that supports them for these to be affordable for women and girls.

Period poverty affects an estimated 500 million people worldwide and in Zimbabwe it is estimated that 72% of menstruating girls do not use sanitary pads because they do not afford them whilst 62% of schoolgirls miss school every month, the study reported.

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72% of menstruating girls do not use sanitary pads

62% of school girls miss school every month

The Taxation and Menstrual Hygiene Management Tools in Zimbabwe report reveals there is very little research on menstrual products in the Zimbabwean context. The Government of Zimbabwe recently removed Value Added Tax (VAT) and import tax on all menstrual hygiene products, which is globally regarded as “tampon/ pink taxes”, and to reduce what is popularly known as “period poverty” which affects women and girls. However, tax reduction on the importation of sanitary hygiene products did not necessarily translate to reduction in retail pricing for sanitary wear, nor did these exemptions apply to local producers of menstrual hygiene management tools which made their products less competitive in the market.



Zimbabwe Gender Commission Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Muwanigwa officiating the launch of the Taxation and Menstrual Hygiene Management Tools in Zimbabwe Report.

Menstrual hygiene products include cotton wool, sanitary pads, tampons, sanitary towels and plastic and rubber cups. These are unaffordable subsequent to many women and girls resorting to unsafe practices like using cow dung, tree leaves and cloths during their period, causing diseases like cervical cancer. Allowing such a crisis to persist, promotes femicide which means Zimbabwe, is systematically allowing women and girls to slowly die. Menstruation is a natural phenomenon that every woman would gracefully embrace for generally, that one week every month, but many women and girls suffer from period poverty resulting in poor menstrual hygiene management, cited the report.

Unaffordable

Menstrual hygiene products

- cotton wool
- sanitary pads
- tampons
- sanitary towels
- plastic/rubber cups.



Unsafe practices

- cow dung,
- tree leaves
- cloths

Officiating the breakfast meeting, also attended by Parliament of Zimbabwe representatives, Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation, Zimbabwe Gender Commission and civic society organisations, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Muwanigwa (above left):

“Menstruation has a direct reproductive consequence and as such it is regarded as a basic need. Access to menstrual hygiene management products is a basic human right and is critical for wellbeing of women and girls.”

The report said various factors contribute to the cycle of period poverty, e.g., high cost of local production – leading to high retail pricing, a hyper-inflation economy with a multi-currency system (with foreign currency shortages in the same vein), irregular and lack of urgency in the disbursement of sanitary wear in schools, , and price controls by the authorities.

To curb “period poverty,” here are some key recommendations proffered by the study:

The government to permanently exempt import duty, VAT both import and sales tax to menstrual hygiene products and raw materials for a lengthy period, as compared to short term statutory instruments.

Government should regulate and monitor prices of the end products of menstrual hygiene products while enforcing penalties for offenders to curb retailer and wholesalers profiteering, ensuring the tax relief benefits women and girls.



AAZ Women's Rights and Economic Justice Manager, Rumbidzayi Makoni, giving a speech during the launch of the Taxation and Menstrual Hygiene Management Tools in Zimbabwe Report.

More recommendations were published in the local press. For further reading: <https://www.herald.co.zw/lowering-tax-on-menstrual-hygiene-products-critical/> <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200004821/govt-must-legislate-for-free-sanitary-pads-mp>

UPDATES SECTION:

Actionaid Zimbabwe Wins Most Committed NGO Award

From left to right: Takaitei Bote, AAZ Communications Officer, Joy Mabenge, AAZ Country Director and ActionAid International auditors from the Global Secretariat, Teresa Maina and Steve Murray receiving the Corporate Social Responsibility Most Committed NGO Award at Harare International Conference Centre on behalf of AAZ.



On November 11th, 2022, AAZ was awarded the "Most Committed Non-Governmental Organisation" during the Zimbabwe National Annual Responsible Business and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Network Awards. AAZ has since 2019 been on an annual basis winning awards under the CSR and Megafest Business Leadership Awards, a huge milestone in the recognition of our humanitarian and sustainable development work.

The CSR Network is a national business association aimed at raising awareness, building capacity, promoting, and supporting the development and implementation of best corporate social responsibility practices in the public and private sector. The CSR Awards celebrate the top 100 responsible organizations that are making an impact in the communities of Zimbabwe. In 2022, the CSR continued to applaud and appreciate AAZ for its continued efforts

in supporting sustainable development and community empowerment. AAZ received a trophy and a certificate at the 2022 CSR awards which were held at the Harare International Conference Centre (HICC) in Harare under the theme "Celebrating Sustainability Excellence Towards Achieving Vision 2030."



The "Most Committed NGO" trophy handed to AAZ.

COVER PICTURE CREDIT: Tryness (12) a student with Special Needs Education (SNE) was one of the learners who advocated for Violence Against Women and Girls in Shamva in 2022.

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