



# Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equality and Safety for all (TORCHES) Newsletter

A collection of community stories

## Community groups take collective action against Gender-Based Violence in Chitungwiza

Ephilda Magwaza (32), a SASA together champion in Chitungwiza is inspiring her community to take a stand against gender-based violence (GBV) amongst school going girls. In Chitungwiza young girls are prone to being abused especially when they are leaving school and walking home. According to Ephilda there are both men and young boys that wait around for young schoolgirls to pass by and harass them.

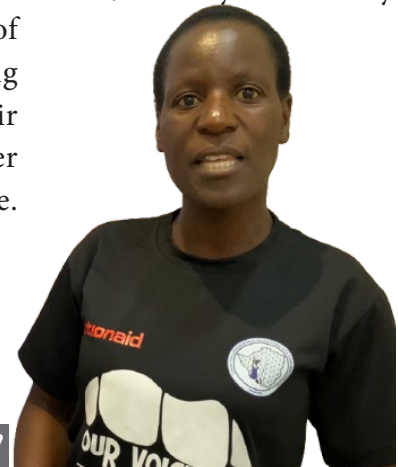
“I recognized the critical need for proactive measures, to create community groups focused on safeguarding women and girls, particularly during vulnerable times such as after-school hours. We have set up groups that protect girls when they are coming from school and extra lessons and these groups are strategically placed in areas where we know they are most vulnerable,” she said.

Ephilda is successfully practising collective use of power to fight violence which is one of the methods that are taught during SASA Together training. “Being a SASA together champion has equipped me with the skills to identify and address the problems faced in my ward, helping in building a culture of respect and safety. Every small step we take brings us closer to a community where

women and girls can thrive without fear,” said Ephilda.

She added that the community groups have received assistance from the local Zimbabwe Republic Police’s victim-friendly unit and the partnership has been instrumental in providing training for the multi-age volunteers who are interested in these community efforts. “Our volunteers are being trained on key issues such as safeguarding, to ensure that there is no further harm and that our efforts are effective,” Ephilda noted.

Ephilda’s passion for ending violence against women and girls involves preventing and creating a culture of accountability and support to women working with various members of the community. “We gathered volunteers from all age groups, and everyone has a role to play, and together we can make a difference,” she says. The story of Ephilda is an example of how communities working together to address their problems can create a safer environment for everyone.



*-Ephilda Magwaza*

## Gender Based Violence service funds a game changer for rural communities

The introduction of the access to justice funds under the TORCHES project being implemented by Act:onaid Zimbabwe together with the Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI), FACT Zimbabwe and Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe is making an impact in rural communities for girls and young women like Sarah (Not her real name).

Sarah, a 41-year-old woman from Ruchera village in Nyanga recently accessed the fund following a sexual assault. In July 2023, a member of the neighbourhood watch committee raped Sarah when she was left alone at her parents homestead taking advantage of her mental health challenge coupled with difficulty in speech.

She however confided with a few of her family members who later alerted a ward coordinator under the Ministry of Women Affairs. With the assistance of the ward coordinator, the case was reported to the police leading

to the arrest of the perpetrator. The survivor was also referred for medical services and legal services which she accessed at Nyanga Hospital with a distance of 60km from the village and Rusape which is 170km from the village.

In strengthening access to justice, the survivor and her caregiver were assisted with funds on 3 occasions for transport, accommodation as well as food by the partner, FACT ZIM through the Access to Essential GBV service funds. On 16 January 2024 the perpetrator was sentenced to an effective 18 years in prison.

“Sexual and gender-based violence offences are often committed in private and without any witnesses. Apart from that, the perpetrators target the most disadvantaged people particularly children and people with disabilities especially girls and women. The lack of evidence, fear, discrimination and costs to access services compromise the reporting process and demotivates survivors from accessing post GBV services,” said Fungai Saunyama, Ward Coordinator under the Ministry of Women Affairs.



## “I can now serve my community better” -Jesman’s story

When Jesman (46) joined the TORCHES project to save her community as a SASA Together Champion, little did she know that her own life would be changing positively. Jesman has a physical disability called leg length discrepancy, which had limited her mobility throughout her life.

However, when she joined the TORCHES project as a SASA Together Champion, her life completely changed. With the assistance of Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe (LCDZ), ActionAid Zimbabwe’s TORCHES project technical partner who did a physical disability assessment and prescribed her custom-made orthopaedic shoes and an Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO), Jesman can now move from one place to the other with much ease.

Today, Jesman is no longer hesitant to walk long distances to facilitate more SASA sessions with women including people with disabilities. “Being a SASA champion needs a brave heart to take the bull by the horns as women with disabilities are often subjected to barrages of unwarranted negative attitudes,” she said.

“When I joined the TORCHES project I vowed to persevere and not let the hard found opportunity of representing other persons with disabilities especially women. This was my turning point.”

As a survivor of abusive marriage Jesman vowed to fight for the rights of all girls and women including those with disabilities. Through the support of her family, Jesman has fully overcome her fears and concerns hence she now conducts her sessions with confidence.



*-Jesman Nyakatsapa*

## Strength in Diversity: Story of a builder



*-Daniel Kampaundi*

“I never had the privilege to get any comprehensive therapy to regain physical and emotional function after my arm was amputated.” This was Daniel Kampaundi’s (41) statement.

He however does not regret it as he recalls how the local clinic nurse managed his wound with very limited resources. Daniel was beaten by a venomous snake while herding cattle when he was twenty-five.

Daniel failed to get the right medical

interventions as he lived far away from the hospital and had no funds to get there. When he finally got to the hospital the doctors had no option but to amputate his arm which had been badly affected by the snake’s poison. After the wound had healed, he had to teach himself some mobility exercise. “I had to relearn how to walk or run as my balance was adversely impacted by the loss of an arm”. For years Daniel has tried to enrol to a poly technical college for a vocational training but in vain. One other challenge Daniel had was to fend off was stigma attached to disability by society. He narrated that it needed a “miracle” for him to be accepted by the SASA Drama Group in his area.

The group only approached him as TORCHES emphasised disability inclusion in most of the GBV sessions that he attended. He was ecstatic and vowed to prove that he was worthy.

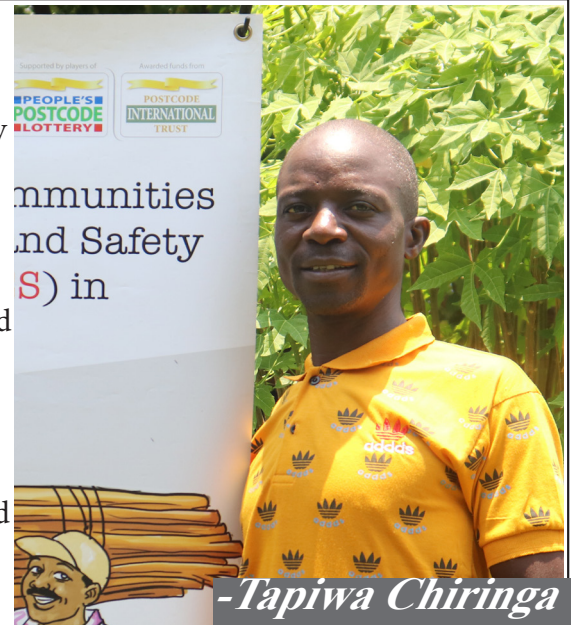
Daniel is now an integral part of the group. He has transformed the group through his strength to memorise scripts, projection and vocal clarity, charisma, ability to adapt to different directing styles and comfort while on stage.

He deplores roles where persons with disabilities are portrayed as weaklings in need of sympathy. Visibility through his gift in acting has helped marketing his other skill of building. Daniel has been getting house construction contacts from clients more and more as his acting career blossomed. His parting words were: “I will not let anyone tell me what I cannot do. I will adapt, I will learn and I will overcome.”

## “This is a life changing Approach” -testimony from a SASA Champion

SASA champion Tapiwa Chiriga (46) says, facilitating SASA sessions was initially challenging for him as he lived a life in contrast to SASA together teachings. Prior to joining the TORCHES project, he was a well-known abusive husband and a drunkard. Tapiwa resides in ward 4 in Munondo 1 village, Nyanga. and lives with his wife and six children. Because of his past way of life, he had low self esteem in delivering SASA Together sessions. “Whenever I drank alcohol, I would sleep in the bar or return home very late reeking of alcohol,” said Tapiwa. “My children were even scared of me because I did not have a bond with them, they only knew me as a drunk father.”

“As I started to facilitate SASA! Sessions, I felt the need to make a change in my life” said Tapiwa. According to him he wanted to try and be an example to the people he held sessions with so that they could accept the information that he gave. His transformation journey started with him attending church and quitting smoking as well as drinking alcohol. “Despite my efforts my wife thought that at some point I would backslide and go back to my old ways, my children were still hesitant to be around me,” he said. He added that he faced criticism from his friends as they felt betrayed by his change of lifestyle. Tapiwa now implement family laws and decisions together with his family using the methods that are taught in SASA. He also gives everyone in his



-Tapiwa Chiriga

family to share their opinions. .

“This change has been a process and now as I start the Action phase I have confidence because I know I’m living my beliefs and the joy I have with my family is a testimony of how SASA can change a person’s life,” he said.

## “We are no longer dying in silence” -Forgiveness’ story



-Forgiveness Karima

Forgiveness Karima (35) is a SASA champion in Ward 16 of Shamva District. As a SASA Together Champion, Forgiveness is tasked with engaging community members on various issues with the aim of ending violence against women and challenging patriarchal systems under the TORCHES project.

Upon reflecting on her community work, Forgiveness is pleased with the results she is seeing, especially regarding the referral pathway, which most community members were previously unaware of.

“Through the SASA together sessions, we have empowered our community with the knowledge of where and how to

report cases of violence,” said Forgiveness. She added that before, such issues would die a silent death because people did not know the right places to take their concerns. Now, our communities are informed and are taking action,” She added.

According to Forgiveness her sessions have not only raised awareness but have also instilled a sense of urgency among community members. “People now know where to report cases of violence against women and girls and the steps to follow in our ward,” she said.

In Forgiveness’ community a 13-year-old girl was raped, and the community, guided by the referral pathway as taught by Forgiveness, acted swiftly. “The case was reported to the police, and the matter went before the court. The man is now in jail, and the girl is back in school,” Forgiveness said.

Forgiveness also shared her reflections regarding the increase in reported GBV cases in her community. “Reports of violence against women and girls have increased not because of the rise in incidents but rather a reflection of more people coming forward to report cases,” says Forgiveness.



## TORCHES DOCUMENTARY The impact of SASA Together

Click the link to watch

<https://youtu.be/KZZkfqq4lUs>



## Unlocking change -SASA Together champions against violence

Click the link to watch

<https://youtu.be/sz2RxAOXmIw>



“SASA together program helped  
me because I used to be a very abu-  
sive person.” -Zacharia Peperere

Click the link to watch

<https://youtu.be/bMzTlnPf5Oc>





# TORCHES IN PICTURES

