



Kingdom of the Netherlands

NEWSLETTER REGIONAL SRHR AND HIV PROGRAMME SOUTHERN AFRICA 2023

CHANGE IN PROGRESS



Introduction

Proudly we present to you the third edition of the newsletter of the Regional SRHR and HIV programme Southern Africa, supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The regional programme started in 2001 and in 2020 a new phase was designed to run from 2021 to 2026. The current phase is based on a revised framework developed for this period with multi-annual objectives that seek to protect, promote, and fulfil universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including HIV/AIDS. Activities of the programme during this Phase II include Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), provision of HIV and SRHR-services, skills training, and employment promotion. Implementing partners are Aidsfonds, Frontline AIDS, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA-ESARO and Young Africa.

Geographically, the programme covers Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Phase II was approved for six years (2021 - 2026) with a budget of a bit more than EURO 67.4 million. Due to the achievements so far of the programme the Ministry for Foreign Affairs approved a topping-up of EURO 22 million, bringing the total overall budget for the programme's phase II to a little over EUR 89.4 million.



Introduction by the Ambassador, H.E. Dr Margret Verwijk

Wonderful to meet every one in Zambia: implementing partners, colleagues from the Ministry and embassies in the region and Paul and Carmel from Singizi! The Netherlands, together with all of you, works towards the goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including family planning.

Through your efforts, lives are being saved and improved in all ten countries where this program is active. You are contributing to unlocking Africa's human capacity and potential in a meaningful way.

Moreover, given regressive social and cultural stigma, taboos, and practices around sexual health and HIV, the work you are doing among key populations is doubly important. From what I have seen and learned in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, I am struck by the diversity in action.

I am impressed by the use of traditional well-established strategies, research-driven approaches, and innovative and more experimental methods. I look forward to more interaction with the many lead and implementing partners under this programme.



Introduction by the Deputy Head of Mission / Head of Development Cooperation, Mr Maarten Rusch

Time flies as I remember well attending the previous Regional Advisory Group meeting about one year ago in Sandton.

It was the first in-person RAG meeting in a couple of years which took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere.

We had lively discussions and I was happy to inform that we would propose that the regional program could expand and grow; not only to sustain and enhance the successful approach of all six implementing partners, but also in order to pay more attention to two 'new' topics: digitalization and the effects of climate change.

Moreover, we agreed back then to strive for even more synergies among the six programs. This meant that the programme will phase out from three countries where only one implementing partners is active.

I am happy to see that these plans have now been made concrete and that we have been able to allocate the additional € 22 million to the six partners. For the coming year another important process is on our agenda, as Phase II is nearing its mid-term review which will be carried out in the first half of 2024. During this year's RAG meeting we will collect inputs from all our partners for this important review, which will not only allow us to improve the program during the present phase, but will also be used to secure funding for a possible continuation of the program after 2026.

A highlight to me of this year was the participation of the local partners of our six implementing partners in our synergy workshop in Cabo Delgado last June in Pemba. As all six are active over there this was a unique opportunity to connect them to the implementing of our other programs as well, such as those on water, FNS, PSD and others. And for the other to get to know the SRHR programs better. I am looking forward to the follow-up of this and I trust we will be able to include some of the good examples in next year's newsletter.

Last but not least we at EKN Maputo are also pleased that the Netherlands Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Ms. Dr Margret Verwijk will join the RAG meeting and field visits this year, as she is also responsible for Zambia and Malawi, so for three of the countries in which the regional program is active.

Introduction to the programme

The Hands Off! is one of the projects of EKN Regional Programme aimed at reducing (gender-based) violence against (young) sex workers in Southern Africa. This is one of the structural drivers that increases the risk of HIV infections as violence leads to inconsistent condom use and prevents sex workers from accessing information, legal support and health care services. The goal of the programme is to improve sex workers' rights, wellbeing, and health by increasing information, their access to justice, HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, and therefore enabling them to make informed choices about their health and safety. Hands Off! works in close partnership with the sex worker community, sex worker-led networks, police, religious leaders and health care providers in the region.

The first phase of the Hands Off! Project (2014 - 2019) demonstrated that following an integrated model, which is a combination of (I) engagement with police in the HIV response, (II) crisis response and litigation, and (III) movement building, results in reduced violence against sex workers. Hands Off Phase II (August 2019 to December 2026) has sustained and built on this learning, working directly with sex worker-led groups, police and NGOs working on human rights and health services. Hands Off! targets female, male and transgender sex workers.

Hands Off! is now implemented in Angola (from 2023 onwards), Botswana (will phase out in March 2024), Eswatini (from 2023 onwards) and since 2014 in Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Launching SASWA: A Bright, Young Future for Sex Workers in Southern Africa

The Hands Off! project is looking forward to the next ambitious step in its mission to end violence and discrimination against sex workers across Southern Africa: the official launch of the Southern African Sex Workers Alliance, or SASWA. Under SASWA's dedicated and vibrant young leader, the future of the sex worker movement in the region looks very bright indeed.

Leeroy Gumpo of Zimbabwe, aged 26, is the regional coordinator for SASWA. As a human rights activist and feminist, his dedication to sex work advocacy and deep passion for the community made him the perfect fit to lead this new regional movement. "I've been living with sex workers in the environment that I was brought up in. Back then sex work was really criminalized, there were no platforms to speak out for sex workers' rights," Leeroy explains. "Growing up, I saw parents really striving to provide for their families through sex work and ensuring that their children would have a brighter future. That's when I realized that sex workers are human and should be treated with dignity and respect."

When he started his position at SASWA, Leeroy's focus and priority was and is on the meaningful engagement of young sex workers. This priority has probed him to immediately establish the Hands Off! Regional Young Sex Workers Advisory Group. This group will drive and inform future Hands Off! programming. And, aware of the need that by working together in the regional programme more can be achieved, he has also fostered the inception of a great partnership between fellow regional programme implementing partners, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), SASWA and Aidsfonds.



Leeroy Gumpo-SASWA Hands Off!

Leeroy's dream now is to coordinate the successful roll out of a Regional Young Sex Workers Empowerment Academy in 2024, in order to raise a new generation of resilient young sex worker activists.

These activists will be key in claiming sex worker spaces and demanding full decriminalization of sex work in Southern Africa.

The regional structure is critical as while the country-based Hands Off! partners work tirelessly towards having resilient sex worker movements, a regional sex worker movement to unite Southern African sex workers in one strong voice to call for decriminalization throughout the region is a much-needed next step forward.

That it is led by a young person, ready to mobilize his peers to action, makes its success all the more vital.

"At SASWA we have a dream... we can lobby for change in policies that criminalize sex work, policies that fuel discrimination and violence against sex workers," Leeroy says on the work SASWA sets out to do. And in mobilizing and capacitating his peers, he hopes that in the short-term, sex workers feel empowered to demand the rights and respect they deserve. "Whenever sex workers are raped, whenever sex workers are beaten, we need justice for that regardless of what policies say."

SASWA will formally launch and introduce themselves to the global sphere at ICASA 2023 in Zimbabwe in December. Rally with the SASWA and Hands Off! team in contributing to the successful launch of SASWA!

For more information on SASWA and Hands Off!, find the details of the project here:
Hands Off! //: reducing violence against sex workers / Aidsfonds.org

See for more information on Hands Off:
<https://aidsfonds.org/work/hands-off-reducing-violence-against-sex-workers>.

Introduction to the programme

READY+ is part of a portfolio of Frontline AIDS programmes designed to build Resilient and Empowered Adolescents and Young people (READY).

The first phase of the four-year programme (2016-2020) worked with and for over 27,000 adolescents and young people living with HIV in Mozambique, Eswatini, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Its focus was on increasing access to holistic care and support: promoting not only sexual and reproductive health and rights but also mental health in order to foster resilience.

The programme will continue to build on this work during phase II until 2026, expanding its reach into Angola, Malawi and Zambia, and increasing focus on youth-centred action on gender norms transformation, advocacy and movement building. READY+ is led by Frontline AIDS in partnership with Y+ Global (lead partner in Malawi and Zambia), AFRICAID/Zvandiri (lead partner in Zimbabwe), Coordinating Assembly of NGOs in Eswatini (CANGO – lead partner in Eswatini), Paediatric – Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA), and the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) (lead partner in Mozambique and Tanzania).

Cyprian, an Impact Story

When something happens in our lives, we have two choices: be silent or do something.

“My name is Cyprian Narzis Komba, a Tanzanian youth advocate. I started my work as a change maker when I was a young adolescent. As a young person openly and proudly living with HIV, I personally experienced different challenges of accessing services and facing stigma due to my HIV status”. Cyprian explained that these challenges, “made me determined to help others who have similar experiences and motivated me to help my community.



With all those desires, I didn’t know where to start and how to start doing what I was determined to do, until I met my fellow young people who told me about the many things that the READY+ project does with them. I was really interested and started participating in their clubs and learning”.

Cyprian observed that surprisingly, some of the young people participating in the programme were younger but were very articulate and knowledgeable. Through the project Cyprian began to attend a facility implementing a READY+ project and observed that in these facilities “Health workers are trained to provide youth friendly services, community adolescent treatment supporter (CATS) provides support and there are safe spaces”.

Cyprian explains that “under the READY+ project I received numerous trainings on leadership, advocacy and I got to meet many of my peers who built my resilience and I felt empowered.

By that time, I decided to come out to the world about my HIV status with the aim of helping many who live in silence, loneliness, and fear of HIV stigma and discrimination. I did that through my social media accounts. Many started following me and coming to my inbox asking for help and we had to create a WhatsApp group of young people living with HIV. My work was appreciated, and I was selected to be the focal point for the READY+ project, working on enhancing greater accountability of decision makers.

Being READY+ focal point for Tanzania I kept on receiving training on advocacy, gender, report writing and program management. I was able to strengthen the capacity of other other young people living with HIV (AYPLHIV) and we were able to identify our service delivery changing needs, challenges and offer solutions from local level to the national level, I was linked to meet with other youth activists and researchers in different forums such as the AIDS 2022 in Montreal and the Forum 2022 on Sexual Violence Research Initiatives in Cancun, Mexico, to learn and take good practice to my country”.

This advocacy work contributed to the development of other young leaders and advocates who are sitting at different decision-making tables from district level to the national level and influencing changes that respond to the needs of young people.

As a result, the Tanzanian Ministry of Health as well as the Tanzania Commission on AIDS (TACAIDS) have invited young people to sit in three HIV technical working groups for prevention, treatment and care and to ensure that when they consult young people this is done in a manner that is ethical and meaningful.



Cyprian concludes that, “sincerely all of these could have not been possible without the READY+ project, because it has strengthened our capacity, provided spaces, built partnership, promoted our accountability. I see myself differently now. Young people are learning from my work as I keep on learning too. I envision a future where every adolescent and young person is meaningfully engaged in shaping HIV responses in our communities: We are innovative. We know what works and what doesn’t. We have our own tools and instructors. We only need more trust and support. We can show a way toward AIDS free generation”

For more information: <https://frontlineaids.org/our-work-includes/ready/>

Introduction to the programme

The IOM's Regional HIV-Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Knows No Borders (2021–2026) project is being implemented in six countries, namely: Eswatini, Lesotho (will phase out mid-2024), Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. This project is being implemented in partnership with Save the Children (SC) and other partners. Its goal is to improve the quality of life and HIV-SRH outcomes among vulnerable youth, migrants and sex workers and others in migration-impacted communities, aged 10-29 years old, in Southern Africa. This is achieved by:

- Promoting healthy sexual and reproductive choices among migrants, sex workers and young vulnerable people in migration-affected communities;
- Increasing migrants, sex workers and young vulnerable people's access to and use of integrated sexual and reproductive health – HIV services and quality health care; and
- Advocating for the respect of HIV and sexual and reproductive health rights of migrants, sex workers and young vulnerable people at all levels.

Mission: Eswatini

Cultivating the effects of CSE among school-going adolescents – It is possible to delay early sexual debut

*18-year-old *Andiswa Shongwe from Makhewu, in the Lubombo region, was dumped by her boyfriend for delaying her sexual debut. Andiswa is currently a pupil in Form Five in one of the schools in the Lubombo region. She aspires to be a lawyer after completing her studies, a profession she values for its ability to defend those who cannot defend themselves in society.*

According to the form five pupil, the decision to delay the sexual debut is attributed to the SRHR-HIV project. "The KNB project has played a key role in enhancing my decision-making skills; hence my decision to delay my sexual debut," said Andiswa. Andiswa has attended over five SRHR-HIV education sessions since 2021 through the door-to-door approach conducted by the Knows no Borders-programme's Change Agents. "I have been privileged to be part of the door-to-door sessions conducted by Ncamsile Myeni, a Change Agent from Makhewu." Andiswa explains that during the sessions, "we discussed topics that included sexual reproductive health and rights, gender, relationships, and decision-making skills amongst others".



Andiswa continued, "Before attending the SRHR-HIV education sessions, I had low self-esteem. My schoolmates would make fun of me and call me names because I am short and dark in complexion; hence, I was scared to even partake in any school or sporting activities. I felt less of a human, and I hated school; thus, my results were always bad. After four consistent sessions with Ncamsile since 2021, my confidence began to grow, I began to discover myself and the potential that I have to be the best version of myself.

Towards the end of the year 2021, I decided to try my luck in the school's debate team, which was not an easy decision to make considering that I have been made to feel inferior before."

After joining the debate team, Andiswa began to increasingly enjoy being at school and during this time she entered a love relationship with her schoolmate. "I was enjoying being at school and I was one of the best in my debate team. My schoolmate proposed love to me, and I was very happy that at least someone was noticing me, so I decided to give him a chance to be in a relationship with me. We dated for 7 months and after that, he began making comments like I needed to show him that I love him by engaging in sexual acts with him like other couples. I took time to consider if I should have sexual intercourse with him, but after careful consideration and discussions with Ncamsile, I decided I was not ready to engage in sexual intercourse with him; hence he decided that we should end our relationship.

I was hurt but I know that I made the right choice. I couldn't let someone decide for me because I wanted to be in a relationship. I want to delay my sexual debut because I want to complete my education and make my family proud by attaining my goal of being a lawyer and further be an SRH champion amongst my peers for the right choice I have made". I am incredibly grateful to the KNB project for the intervention that they have brought to my community because it will have an impact in ensuring that young people make informed decisions in the near future, " she added.

***Not real name**

For more information on the results of the Knows no Borders programme, phase 1: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/projects/srhr-hiv-knows-no-borders>

UNDP – #WEBELONGAFRICA



Introduction to the project

#WeBelongAfrica - The Southern Africa Young Key Populations Inclusion Initiative seeks to boost the accountability and responsiveness of state institutions in Southern African Development Community countries to the perspectives, rights and needs of young key populations (YKPs) on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

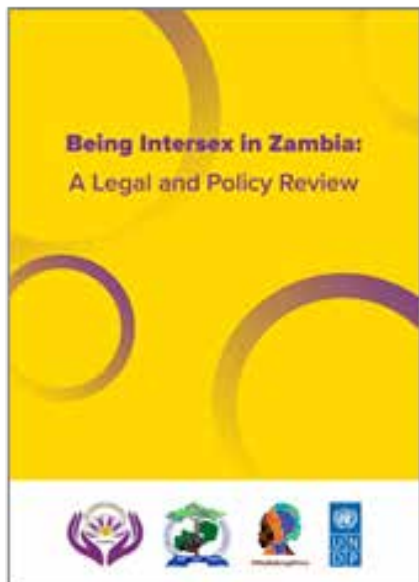
The project works to end inequalities for young key populations by supporting alignment of national laws and policies with global as well as regional strategies and commitments on HIV and AIDS and sexual and reproductive health.

The project aims to achieve this by supporting decision-makers, primarily from government within four key sectors - health, justice, gender, and youth, to develop inclusive, rights-based and enabling frameworks to protect and promote the SRHR of young key populations.

The project also works on developing the capacity of YKPs, their allies and champions in policy and legal advocacy. The project is implemented in five SADC countries – Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and, more recently, Eswatini as well as with regional level partners including the SADC Secretariat.

New report sheds light on the diverse issues, needs and challenges of the intersex community in Zambia.

A new publication has been released that sheds light on the diverse issues, needs and challenges of the intersex community in Zambia, and emphasizes the importance of leaving no one behind in the mission to achieve sustainable development.



The report, *Being Intersex in Zambia: A Legal and Policy Review*, was developed by UNDP, the Intersex Society of Zambia and the National Human Rights Commission, through the #WeBelongAfrica project. The report found that intersex persons in Zambia face stigma, discrimination, exclusion and institutional violence, and that they struggle to participate in society on an equal basis or to realize their rights, including those related to sexual and reproductive health. The report offers a comprehensive overview of the policy and legal issues that the intersex community face and outlines tangible recommendations to strengthen protections.

These recommendations relate to the need to review existing legislation, such as the Gender Equity and Equality Act, the Employment Act, the Persons with Disabilities Act, Births and Deaths Registration Act, Education Act, Employments Act and the Public Health Act, in order to suggest revisions that will promote inclusion and positive outcomes for intersex persons.

The report also advises the establishment of an inclusive multidisciplinary intersex health and human rights taskforce for strategic oversight, guidance and monitoring of regional and international commitments.

The study is a vital step towards understanding and addressing the challenges of intersex individuals in Zambia and ensuring a more inclusive and just society.

Young key populations in Zimbabwe gain new skills in digital advocacy



Young key populations (YKPs) in Zimbabwe have gained new skills in digital advocacy as a result of a recent training workshop by UNDP and GALZ in Harare, Zimbabwe. The three-day training, which took place from 11-13 July 2023, equipped YKPs with skills to use digital tools to create and disseminate advocacy content safely and securely.

The workshop focused on a range of topics, including campaign framing, effective storytelling, digital security for YKP advocates, crisis communications and communicating through “owned” and traditional media. Young people commenting on the value of this learning made the following observations:



The skills imparted here will enable us to produce content that addresses our needs as YKPs – a group that is disadvantaged because of age, sexual orientation and gender identity,” said Sunflower, National Sector Representative at the Young People’s Network on Sexual & Reproductive Health.

“I look forward to growing my audience, to amplifying my work and that of other queer people who did not get the opportunity to be here.”



Learning about crisis management has equipped me with skills to prepare for potential backlashes or security risks that I might encounter in the future as I carry out my work as an artist and LGBTQI activist,” said Richard ‘Fufu’ Makurundundu, Artist and Founder of the Rainbow Alliance Coalition of YKPs.

For more information: <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/project-brief-southern-africa-young-key-populations-inclusion-initiative>

Additional information on the project activities may be found on the WeBelongAfrica webpage - <https://www.undp.org/africa/projects/webelongafrica>.

UNFPA – SAFEGUARD YOUNG PEOPLE (SYP)



Introduction to the programme

Since 2013, Safeguard Young People (SYP) has been empowering adolescents and young people aged 10 to 24 years (with special focus on adolescent girls) to protect themselves from STIs including HIV, early and unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, early marriage, gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices, while promoting gender-equitable norms. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has provided the funding for the programme in Angola and Mozambique and from 2023, the programme expands to Eswatini, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The programme will scale up existing interventions for adolescents and young people using a human rights and gender-based equality approach across multiple sectors.

This includes building an enabling policy and legal environment, expanding access to quality youth-friendly, integrated HIV and SRHR services, delivering comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in and outside formal classroom settings, and strengthening youth leadership, participation and empowerment.

Breaking barriers: Angola's youth take charge of their sexual and reproductive health through the Safeguard Young People programme

The SYP programme in Angola is supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Embassy of the Netherlands and aims to reach 60,000 adolescents and youths by 2026. The focus of activities is on the group of adolescents and youth aged 10 to 24 years, with secondary beneficiaries being adult women and men, health professionals, teachers, community and religious leaders.

A youth activist at the Youth Support Centre in Cazenga, Silvia Francisco, was confronted by an internal battle and so chose to join UNFPA's Safeguard Young People hoping that it would assist her. She explained that, "I live with someone very close to me who has been HIV-positive for many years," and so she joined the programme because it empowers young people and adolescents to lead healthy lives and make informed decisions. Silvia commented, "Being an activist helped me to help that person, sharing correct information about the disease. Today, the person has accepted to follow all the protocols, so that she can be healthy."

Silvia also highlighted that there are still parents who think that talking about sexuality with adolescents and young people is encouraging them to practice sex. Passing on accurate information about sexual and reproductive health is not easy, as she attests to, "as an activist, it has been a constant battle to transmit information about sexuality, because there are still parents who think that talking about sexuality with adolescents and young people is leading them to practice sex. But with our dynamics and methods that we have learned through SYP, we always manage to pass on the message of protection [against unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections] and delay teenage courtship".

Reaching youth out of school

Community-led social mobilization is crucial for reaching out-of-school youth in Angola, as the gender imbalance in the education sector remains a challenge. For instance, 17 per cent of young people have never attended an education institution, with a gender breakdown of 11 per cent for men and 23 per cent for women. Angola also has a widespread HIV epidemic, with a prevalence of 2 per cent in the adult population aged 15 to 49 years – 3 per cent in females and 1 per cent in males.



Eva Monteiro Teixeira, a Safeguard Young People mentor, leads a discussion with young people on sexual and reproductive health, at Escola Grafanil, Luanda. © UNFPA Angola/K Karlo Cesar

Angola is home to a very youthful population, with 47% under the age of 15 and 66% under the age of 25. Unemployment rates are high, particularly among young people aged 15 to 34 years (31%) and aged 15 to 24 years (above 35%). GBV also remains a major issue, with about 33% of women aged 15 to 49 experiencing some type of physical or sexual violence.

Reaching their full potential

Despite these challenges, the Safeguard Young People programme (SYP) is making strides in empowering young people and adolescents in Angola to enable them to reach their full potential. SYP addresses their sexual and reproductive health needs and empowers them to lead healthy lives, protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, prevent unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, early marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), and harmful cultural practices.

To date, 90 social mobilizers from youth civil society organizations (CSOs) have been trained with knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, GBV, prevention of STIs and HIV, and life skills, so they can empower the youth. These activists lead community benches in 5 provinces, and their community engagement and peer-to-peer behaviour change activities aim to reach 10,265 youths in 2023.

The project also aims to promote inclusion, gender equality norms, and protective behaviours, contributing to achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the realization of reproductive rights for adolescents and youths in five provinces of Angola.

For more information on the programme:
<https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/topics/safeguard-young-people-programme>.

Young Africa - SKILLS2LIVE



Introduction to the programme

The Skills2Live programme from Young Africa empowers vulnerable youths through Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) complemented with entrepreneurial and life skills training in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Currently, there are nine training centres in five countries in Southern Africa.

They all provide holistic skills training for employability and entrepreneurship to economically, educationally, and socially disadvantaged young people aged between 15 and 29. Skills2Live is a consortium with Frontline AIDS, International Organization for Migration Mozambique and ideaLab.

Young people who have changed their lives through the project: Blessed from Zimbabwe -an awakening experience

“My name is Blessed Twala, I am 23 years old. I am a single mother of 1, I fell pregnant at the age of 15, and this affected my chances of completing my secondary education. I grew up in Karoi in Chikangwe. I did my academic education up to form 3. I dropped out of school to take care of my child as there was no one to take up that duty for me. Being a young single mother with no academic qualifications’ life became very hard for me. It is because of my struggles that I started engaging in sex work for survival. I would get \$5-\$10 per week and the money was not enough to meet my daily basic needs”.

“I heard about the Skills2Live training through Ministry of Youth, and I decided to enroll in plumbing. I enrolled in plumbing out of passion for it and its masculine nature. The mentorship and support that we got from our trainer pushed me to venture into freelance plumbing. I started using the skill that I acquired before completing training and generating \$USD20-\$USD30.00 from it. This helped me to stay in training and to also take care of my child. Being fully engaged in training helped to keep me busy and it reduced my engagement in sex work. Besides acquiring a skill in plumbing, I also learned about sexual reproductive health. Prior to learning about SRHR, I was very reckless with my health, and I would just engage in unprotected sex for the sake of money.

I would not think about the implications of unprotected sexual intercourse. I have now realized that I can earn a decent living without having to engage in non-risky means of survival”. Blessed states that learning about SRHR was an awakening for her as she gained relevant information about her sexual rights, her body, and sexual reproductive health in general. The acquisition of this knowledge has helped her to be conscious about her health, assertive and to stand up for herself and not depend on high-risky activities for income as this can shorten her lifespan. Blessed was quoted as saying” My life has completely changed due to the Skills2live training, I am now financially independent, and I am happy that I am generating this income in a non-risky manner. I am now able to take care of my 8-year-old child. My dream is to study further and get a journeyman certificate. This will improve my chances of setting up my company and registering it. My life has changed due to my participation in the Skills2Live project”.



Set-up and running of Wellness centres at Young Africa vocational training centres : Collaborative efforts between regional programme implementing partners Young Africa and Frontline AIDS.

The new Wellness centres for young people have been set-up by Frontline AIDS through its implementing partners Africaid and REPPSI.

The centers can be found at the Young Africa vocational training centres. Since the start, they have been highly commended for raising awareness on SRHR and provision of services and commodities among the young people.

To date four wellness centres have been set up, two in Mozambique and the other two in Zimbabwe.



Young people who are enrolled at the centre can access services such as mental health screening, counselling services, SRH information, STI screening, checking of vitals as well as referrals.

Demand for services at the wellness centres has been overwhelming, with over 200 young people accessing different services every month. And the first results are becoming visible and include:

- (i) Improvement in mental health well-being. At enrolment several young people suffer from mental health challenges due to the uncertainty about their lives (health, economic well-being) but once they enrol for the training programme at the same time receive psychological support through the wellness centre, often these young people are empowered to see beyond their current circumstances.
- (ii) Skills trainers have observed that a few weeks into the training programme, most young people struggle in terms of concentration, attendance and engaging fully but as they engage with the wellness nurse and Community Adolescent Treatment Supporters (CATS) there is a significant improvement and commitment.

This positive impact clearly shows the need for a more holistic approach to the issues that young people face in realizing their full potential and fulfilling lives, including their SRHR needs. This is exactly what the regional programme's Theory of Change envisaged when incorporating the economic and mental health issues in the programme design.

For more information on the programme and Young Africa's work: <https://youngafrica.org/en/>

Graphic design notes: more photos available.

Copyright of photos included rests with the implementing partners. Titles and CR forthcoming.