

National Students' Conference

2022 Report



Contents Table

• Abbreviations and Acronyms	i
• About National Students Conference	1
• Conference delegates	2
• Conference Proceedings	3
• Opening Remarks	3
• Keynote Address	3
• Feedback from structures/forums.	4
• The National Coordinating Committee (NCC)	4
• SRHR Defenders	4
• TB Champions	5
• Web for Life Network	7
• Mugota/Ixhiba Young Men's Forum	8
• SRHR programming for young people	9
• Parliamentarians and Youth Round Table	10
• Conference Resolutions	12
• Conclusion	14

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- **CRAFT** **Creative Reproductive Arts For Transformation**
- **CSO** **Civil Society Organisation**
- **GBV** **Gender Based Violence**
- **LCC** **Local Coordinating Committee**
- **NCC** **National Coordinating Committee**
- **ICT** **Information and Communication Technology**
- **PAY** **Parliamentarians And Youth**
- **PCC** **Provincial Coordinating Committee**
- **POTRAZ** **Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
of Zimbabwe**
- **SARSYC** **Southern African Regional Students and Youth
Conference**
- **SASI** **Speak And Solve Initiative**
- **SRHR** **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**
- **UNFPA** **United Nations Population Fund**
- **ZETDC** **Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution
Company**

About National Students Conference

Every year students and young people from all over Zimbabwe come together to attend the National Students Conference. For over 11 years, SAYWHAT has convened the National Students Conference with young people deliberating on their sexual reproductive health gains, challenges, and proffering recommendations. The conferences have seen young people engaging with high level delegates such as members of the cabinet and members of the parliament while holding them to account for young people's sexual reproductive health rights.

The 12th edition National Students Conference theme 'This is our show: Youth-focused health and education systems for all' brought the realization that young people are not only beneficiaries of services but can also be leaders of health and sustainable development efforts. Young people have the capacity to engage in meaningful discussions with service providers and duty bearers on the need to prioritize young people's sexual reproductive health rights.

The 2022 National Students Conference saw young people sharing different experiences and challenges relating to their sexual reproductive health rights. The conference invited members of parliament, donor agencies and service providers to interact with young people and share their commitments in as much as the sexual and reproductive health rights of students and young people are concerned. The conference was also attended by regional delegates from Malawi, Botswana and Zambia who shared their experiences and interacted with their peers.

Conference delegates

The conference was attended by young people who make up the different movements for SAYWHAT. These include SRHR Defenders (20), TB Champions (30), and Web for Life Representatives (5), Mugota/Ixhiba Young Men's Forum Representatives (5) and National Coordinating Committee Members (12). Representatives from different youth organizations working on SRHR, GBV and TB issues for young people were also invited. Representatives from Government Ministries, UN Agencies including UN Women, UNFPA, and UNESCO, the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, Parliamentary Portfolio Committees also graced the event.



Conference Proceedings

Opening Remarks

In her opening remarks, Vimbai Mlambo the SAYWHAT Deputy Director reiterated the importance of the National Students Conference as a platform that contributes meaningfully to sustainable development goals. She further highlighted that the conference was driven by the need to address various young people's needs at a time when the organization has broadened its niche into areas such as child protection, education, and TB programming. Vimbai Mlambo further alluded to the importance of dialoguing with policy makers and openly sharing concerns and recommendations for a healthier generation.



Keynote Address

Representing the Permanent Secretary for Provincial Affairs, the Conference Guest of Honor Ms. Nyamatore acknowledged SAYWHAT work in tertiary institutions and the deliberations made by young people in the conference contributing to National Development Strategy 1 and achievement of vision 2030. Ms Nyamatore noted that the government is working tirelessly to ensure youth-friendly service provision in all health centers. She emphasized that the epitome of education 5.0 is to ensure that no young person is left behind in the improvement of the education system. Ms. Nyamatore noted that her participation in the conference is to take note of young people's concerns in the attainment of their sexual reproductive health rights. It was noted during the presentation that there is a rise in child abuse cases and sexual abuse. Young people were said to play a key role in challenging all societal delinquencies and coming up with initiatives that complement the government's efforts in response to sexual abuse.



Feedback From Structures/Forums

The National Coordinating Committee (NCC)

The National Coordinating Committee is a structure in the governance board of SAYWHAT which supports the secretariat with ideas on programme formulation, design, implementation, and formulation of annual work plans and budgeting. The committee works in liaison with the board of directors to provide the strategic guidance towards the fulfilment of the SAYWHAT strategic plan. Represented by Rumbidzai Mushonga, the NCC reported the work of the Committee throughout the year 2022, milestones and challenges faced. The NCC highlighted that they successfully ensured that every college and university that SAYWHAT works with has a Local Coordinating Committee (LCC) structure which made it



easier for coordination of local activities. Furthermore, they also supported establishment of Provincial Coordination Committee (PCC) which feeds into the NCC. It was further noted that budgets and work plans were reviewed and approved, program activities implemented and supported throughout the year leading to high impact.

The presenter hailed the introduction of TB champions, SRHR defenders and the voucher system, new innovations that received enormous buy-in from the young people community. The hosting of different flagship events such as the Southern Africa Regional Students & Youth Conference (SARSYC), provincial and national quiz and Speak and Solve Initiative (SASI) debate competitions, the CHASE, and the Creative Reproductive health Arts Festival for Transformation (CRAFT) was said to have been part of the successes that saw not only young people from Zimbabwe participating but also young people from the region. It was further noted that the NCC is in process of reviewing the SAYWHAT handbook and the constitution which would also be ready by the next Annual General Meeting of 2023. Questions arising from the house were on how one becomes a SAYWHAT member, and it was responded that they should fill in a registration form, pay a subscription fee and be part of an institution's Local Coordinating Committee. The amount would be shared once the review of the constitution and handbook are finalized.

SRHR Defenders

The presentation began with an introduction of the structure with the house appreciating that SRH defenders are made up of a cohort of highly competent young people in SAYWHAT structures who drive the advocacy arm to ensure ownership and youthfulness of the advocacy initiatives by young people. The SRH defenders on behalf of their peers are responsible for running advocacy activities linking grassroots to the National level targeting the relevant parliament portfolio committees.



The group represents other young people and participates in different technical working groups with a focus on SRH and GBV issues. The structure's work plan comprises of participating in technical working groups, conducting social media campaigns, engaging duty bearers on policy gaps, hosting quarterly meetings with the different parliament portfolio committees on specific SRH and GBV issues, meeting with different civic society organizations as well as SRH and GBV service providers to promote the provision of youth friendly and age-appropriate services.

The defenders shared different activities that they implemented during the year, and these included taking part in different provincial and district technical working group meetings, recording and broadcasting podcasts, supporting community advocacy activities, participating in legal talk shows and radio shows. In addition, the SRH Defenders also partnered with peer educators to conduct physical dialogues, radio listening sessions, and research on drug and substance abuse to feed into the national anti-drug policy. The activities conducted were aimed at advancing young people's SRH and GBV needs through identifying challenges and engaging with responsible authorities.

TB Champions

Delegates were introduced to another structure under SAYWHAT's programming, the TB champions. These are a group of young people responsible for accelerating TB notification through conducting awareness sessions, advocate for the elimination of stigma and discrimination on TB, advocate for quality and youth friendly TB services.



The TB champions shared achievements and challenges faced in TB programming throughout the year. It was noted that the team began their programming through college inception meetings to introduce the project to the college authorities and local stakeholders. The main priorities of the year were said to be information dissemination through different platforms, promoting access to TB services as well as advocacy for quality TB services. The house learnt that of the targets set for the year, the TB champions managed to surpass the targets, and this was achieved through various innovations employed such as working with other structures and mainstreaming TB in every health centered programs.

TB Champions organized engagement platforms with college authorities that successfully resulted in the college authorities having the urgency to prioritize TB treatment and care services within the colleges. Challenges faced in TB programming were said to be related to limited access to TB services by young people and health facilities being under resourced when it comes to testing TB with provincial hospitals being burdened when it comes to screening and producing results. Delegates highlighted that in their programming, TB champions should further look at budgeting for TB programs. Issues of limited budgeting for TB programs in Zimbabwe were raised and TB champions were tasked with a role to play in advocating for adequate funding for National TB programs.



Web for Life Network gave an overview of the movement, its work in 2022, the achievements, challenges, and resolutions for 2023. Web for life was described as a platform for young women within SAYWHAT encompassing adolescent girls and young women both in school and those in communities whose primary focus is advocacy for adolescent girls and young women's access to SRHR. The movement recognizes, advances, and protects the SRHR and Gender rights for young women and adolescent girls. In 2022, the movement strengthened the active participation of female students in SRHR advocacy at national and regional levels through the identification and capacitation of Ambassadors, who are operating in 33 tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe. The presentation outlined the ambassadors' responsibilities that include generating demand for SRHR services among female students and young women. In addition, Web for Life ambassadors promote and strengthens active participation and involvement of female students in SRHR advocacy.

Further, ambassadors also focused on strengthening capacity and networks of female students in responding and addressing their sexual and reproductive health challenges, providing accurate information and opportunities for the exploration of personal goals and values that challenge and empower female students to make safe and informed decisions.

Interventions done included capacity building through trainings and information dissemination, networking, advocacy, data and information generation, and experience sharing. The web created coalitions at national and regional level where students at college, provincial, national, and regional level interacted with various organizations, campaigns, and initiatives on young women SRHR. Notable challenges raised by the movement included COVID-19 posing a threat to young women and adolescent girls' access to SRHR services. Young Women are vulnerable to unintended pregnancies, GBV, HIV, unsafe abortions, STIs, and early child marriages that are still rampant despite the existence of the new marriages act as evident with the cases trending on social media. Menstrual Health Management issues were also highlighted as a continued challenge in colleges.

Mugota/Ixhiba Young Men's Forum



Mugota/Ixhiba was introduced as a platform under SAYWHAT's movement building for male students and other young men where they can interrogate their unmet sexual reproductive health needs. The platform is a safe space for young men which has been broadly acknowledged in SAYWHAT's programming after the realization that SRH issues needed a collective effort of both males and females and formally addressing them. The idea of Mugota/Ixhiba was born in Zimbabwe's institutions of higher learning borrowing the name Mugota/Ixhiba meaning the traditional hut where single men would sleep.

Mugota/Ixhiba was said to be symbolic in shaping the behaviors and the practice of responsibility by young men. The presentation highlighted that in the movement, young men learn the ropes of interacting with their environments including the enforcement of behaviors, perceptions and their general world view since the space has potential to influence character and attitudes of young men.

Some of the key highlights of the year 2022 included capacity building where Mugota Ambassadors were trained on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Men to Men dialogues on male engagement in eliminating GBV. The ambassadors disseminated information about Mugota and SRH through physical dialogues, online and community outreach during the Men conference and World Provincial AIDS Day commemoration. The ambassadors were also involved in extensive recruitment of young men into the movement through different high-volume platforms and reaching out to a wider audience through radio listening sessions. Challenges encountered by the movement included limited budgeting to cater for all planned Mugota activities, limited Mugota visibility material such as IEC material, structures being highly affected by the recent ended COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and low turnout of male students to physical activities.

SRHR Programming For Young People

Blessing Nyagumbo shared a presentation on the work being done by United Nations Population fund in addressing young people's sexual reproductive health needs. He noted that young people should actively contribute to the formulation and review of policies as they have implication on young people's sexual reproductive health rights. Nyagumbo further shared different challenges faced by young people in response to their sexual reproductive health. It was noted that there is need for young people to hold the government accountable in different areas of supporting the health needs, the need for domestic funding and strengthening national coordination platforms addressing young people's sexual reproductive health.

Young people sought clarity on the selection criteria used by the donor agency in funding colleges as approximately 25 percent of the colleges are covered. The presenter highlighted that funding is informed by data from colleges and districts in line with young people's challenges. He further highlighted the possibility of more funding which will also mean more colleges being supported. Delegates also engaged the presenter on whether the agency also caters for young people in high school. It was noted that through different partners there are various in school programs supported such as the sister-to-sister model and parent to child communication model. The presenter further highlighted that there is need to integrate the already existing models in the education system to reach out to all young people.

Parliamentarians and Youth Round Table



The Parliamentarians and Youth (PAY) Roundtable platform was also conducted during the conference. The panel comprised of three members of parliament namely, Honorable Bridget Mangura, Honorable Shakespeare Hamauswa and Honorable Oscar Gorerino. Honorable Gorerino represented the Transport and Infrastructure development committee speaking to infrastructural issues that affecting young people, this includes issues such as accommodation in and out of college. He also represented the youth committee speaking to all issues relating to young people from equal participation, sustainable development and empowerment. Honorable Hamauswa represented the Higher and Tertiary education, innovation and technology committee and spoke on policies and issues relating to access to education. The members of parliament shared the work being done by the different parliamentary portfolio committees that they represent. During the round table young people had an opportunity to engage the honorable members on different policies issues which are of concern to them.

Challenge	Discussion
Shortage of education and ICT infrastructure in remote areas.	<p>The members for parliament raised that they are pushing for CMeD and District Development Fund to be allocated budgets to develop road networks in rural areas.</p> <p>It was also noted that there is need for collaborative efforts i.e., Ministry of ICT collaborating with Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) to develop base stations in partnership with network service providers, and Ministry of Energy working with Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company (ZETDC) to supply electricity.</p>
Removal of the age of restriction when it comes access to sexual reproductive health services.	
Exorbitant college fees and lack of adequate accommodation.	<p>The honorable members acknowledged the existence of such challenges and committed to continuing advocating for building of more schools to cover wider areas and reduce distance travelled by the learners, advocating for reduction of school fees, and looking into other education funding mechanisms.</p> <p>Parliament proposed a workshop to gather stakeholders and discuss fees issues. Student loans were said to be available, however a few students accessed the loans facility due to the inability of the majority to meet the pre-conditions. Other institutions were said to also have introduced the work for fees models which also has gaps and accommodates a few students.</p>
Disability inclusion in all areas - transport, infrastructure etc.	Members of parliament solely responsible for standing in for persons with disabilities were said to be working to ensure that all needs for young people living with disabilities are covered.
Meaningful youth participation allowing young people to engage with the government and share their concerns.	SAYWHAT was encouraged to invite Ministry representatives to on platforms where young people have an opportunity to air out comprehensive information on issues affecting them.

The SRHR Awards Dinner

During the conference, SAYWHAT hosted the inaugural SRHR Award, an event intended to be a platform to celebrate committed, innovative and impactful young people who work towards improving the health and education outcomes of others in society. A total of 70 young people were awarded certificates.

The categories included the NCC, Defenders and Champions, and Langaletu award for SRHR excellence which was awarded posthumously to the late Langa Nkala for having demonstrated impact in the SRHR, GBV, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/TB field during her lifetime. She was described as someone who possessed outstanding leadership skills/experience, embodied values of advocacy and a passion for human rights and possessed professional competency.

Conference Resolutions

The Conference made the following resolutions:

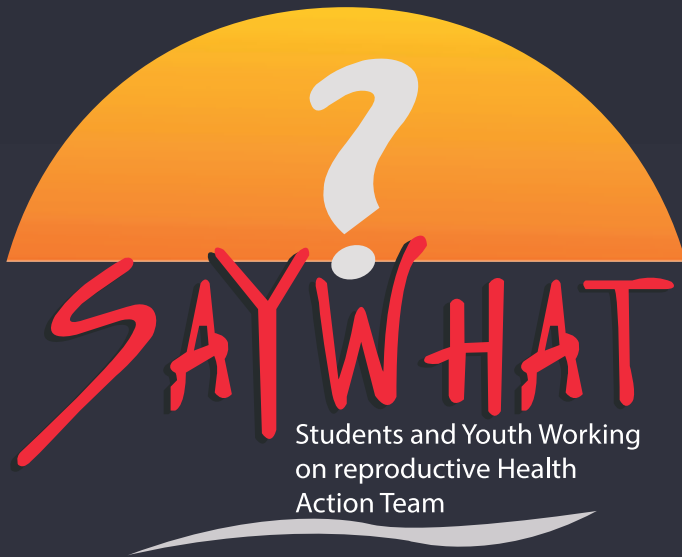
Resolution	Responsible	Timeline	Next Date of Review
Addressing support structures in health sector that enhance availability, affordability, and friendliness of the services.	Member of Parliament	2023	July 2023
Lobby for the recognition that young people's health is interlinked with other areas such as economic resources, service providers' skills capacitation among others.	Parliament	2023	July 2023
Create platforms for young people to dialogue frequently with policy makers to enable both parties to come up with comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the health agenda for young people.	SAYWHAT	2023	July 2023
Prioritise subpopulations such as young people with disabilities, key populations, AGYW in addressing stigma and discrimination when it comes to provision of services.	Ministry of Health, CSOs	2023	July 2023
To integrate and mainstream contemporary issues affecting young people such as mental health, drug and substance abuse into the SRHR programming as these were identified as part of the key drivers to SRH and GBV related issues.	CSOs, Donor Agencies	2023	July 2023
Address lack of support structures in education sector that protect, recognise, and advance young people's education and health rights through	Government	2023	July 2023

Lobbying governments to prioritise investments in tertiary education so that education is accessible and affordable for all.	CSOs	2023	July 2023
Lobbying for sexual harassment policies to be created/made clear to students in universities	CSOs	2023	July 2023
Lobbying for youth friendly financial support structures e.g., removal of parental guarantor, requirement of pay slip.	CSOs, Members of Parliament	2023	July 2023
Young people to hold each other accountable and to act such as research and advocacy into their own hands	Young People	2023	July 2023
To call upon the ministry of health and childcare to ensure that there is unconditional provision of SRHR services in all tertiary institutions and that there are youth friendly services in all health care facilities.	Parliamentarians	2023	July 2023
To continue advocacy on Menstrual Health Management until there is universal access to menstrual hygiene services and products in all tertiary institutions.	CSO, Young people	2023	July 2023
To bring perpetrators of Sexual harassment to book regardless of protecting their institutional image.	Government	2023	July 2023
Collaborate with SAYWHAT call center team to create mental health zones for young women struggling with mental health issues Covid-19 posed a threat to young women and adolescent girls' access to SRHR services.	Web for Life	2023	July 2023
Establishment of clear structures of Mugota at local, provincial and national level.	Mugota	2023	July 2023

Mugota/Ixhiba to strengthen its social media platforms using other media platforms such as Tick Tock, the production podcast, video plays, talk show, and orange hub.	Mugota	2023	July 2023
Mugota/Ixhiba to produce a biannual newsletter showing activities done, young men's success stories, and articles.	Mugota	2023	December 2023
Mugota to host institutional Mugota indabas.	Mugota	2023	December 2023
Lobby for Sexual Harassment policies to be provided to students in tertiary institutions either on student portals or school ordinance.	CSOs	2023	December 2023

Conclusion

The National Students Conference saw students, young people, and representatives from the government, civil society organizations and donor agencies coming under one roof to discuss issues affecting young people in relation to sexual reproductive health and access to education. Conference delegates left with a vision that young people are key stakeholders in achieving the national Vision 2030. Young people shared different achievements and challenges faced in 2022 towards building a generation of healthy young people. During the conference the young people brought to account the policy makers on issues affecting them ranging education rights, the right to health and the right to access to information. Commitments were made by the policy makers present to table young people's concerns over exorbitant fees that affect access to education, barriers that limit access to information for children in the hard-to-reach areas, and legislations that hinder access to comprehensive sexuality services. Donor agencies committed to ensuring continued funding towards initiatives that promote young people's sexual and reproductive health rights.



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