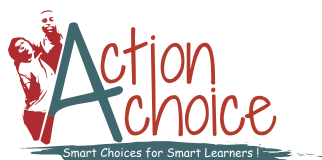
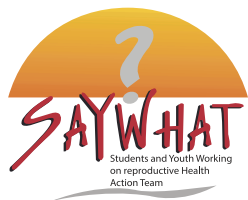




IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN SRH-GBV
ADVOCACY & STRENGTHENING THEIR ACCESS & UTILIZATION
OF THE RESPONSIVE SERVICES IN ZIMBABWE

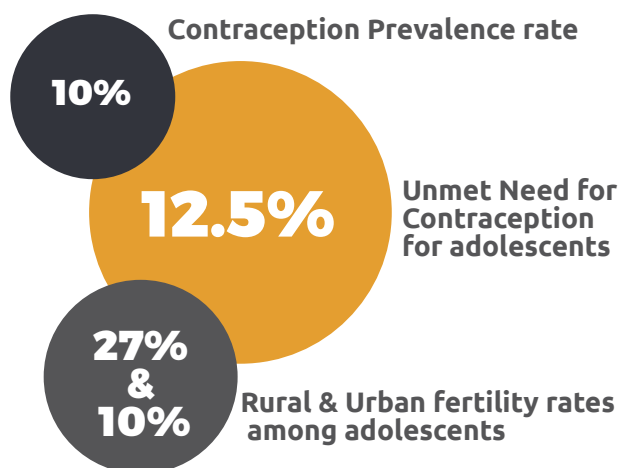
CASE STUDY



SRH-GBV CHALLENGES

COUNTRY CONTEXT PRE-INTERVENTION

Zimbabwe is an extremely young country, with 62% of the population below the age of 25 years however these young people have since experienced sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) challenges which hinder their capacity to contribute fully to economic and social transformation. Below are the statistics pre-2018.

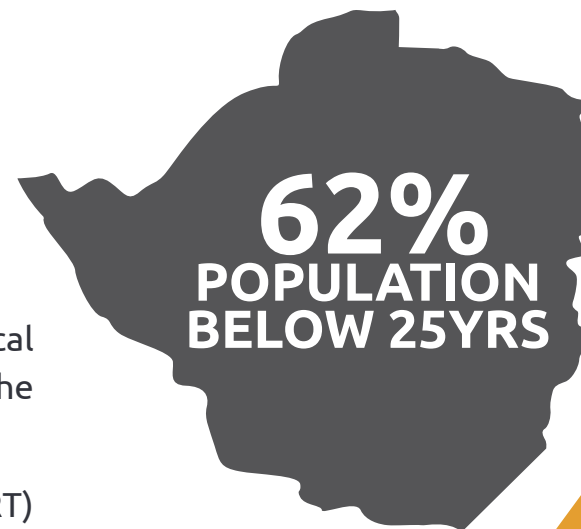


84.5%

AGED 15 - 24
TESTED & KNOW
THEIR HIV STATUS



58.9%



4 500
2014

girls dropped out of their grade seven in 2014 due to teen pregnancy.

61.5% of women below the age of 25 experiencing physical violence and 17.2% experiencing sexual violence since the age of 15.

2015/16

50% of new HIV infections & poor adherence to (ART) among young people.

THE SRH-GBV INTERVENTION

ACTION FOR CHOICE PROJECT

Students And Youth Working on reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT) supported by the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe set to promote the health rights of young people, capacitating them to make safe choices, manage and prevent SRH and GBV vulnerabilities through the Action for Choice Project. Implemented in two phases through the theory of change approach, the Action for Choice project targets the 10-24 age group and is inspired by the belief that once capacitated young people have the power to make positive choices on their health and wellbeing thereby positively impacting their communities and environment.

Phase I: 2018-2021

Mediums were established for young people to access comprehensive sexuality information and education and strengthen peer-to-peer digital and virtual information sharing. The mediums included:

Resource centres for young people in institutions of higher learning to access sexuality information and education.

A state-of-the-art **studio** to provide young people with an enabling and supportive environment to optimise the generation of SRH and GBV artistic products and sharing of sexuality information with more young people.

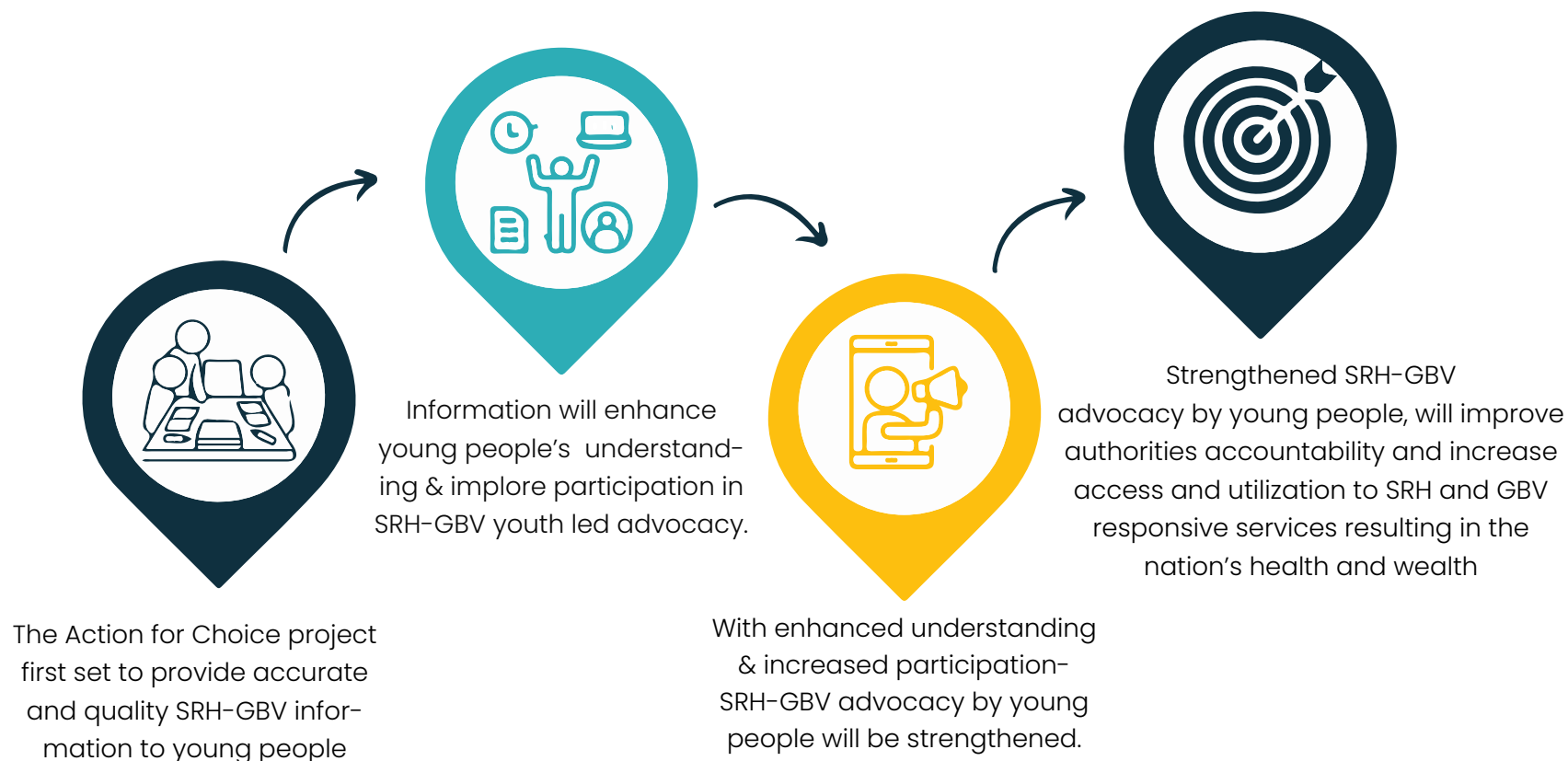
Telehealth **Call Centre** to contribute towards providing youth friendly SRH information as well as referrals to access and utilise SRH and GBV responsive services.

Phase II: 2021-2024

While strengthening youth-led advocacy, access, and utilization of SRH-GBV responsive services with the mediums established in phase I, digital engagement was enhanced with an **online curriculum-based CSE** complemented by structured and systematic **research enquiry by young people** on issues that affect them to influence SRH-GBV evidence-based advocacy on policy platforms.

THE THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH

The theory of change approach informs that, activities undertaken by an intervention contribute to a chain of results that leads to the intended outcomes.



Multiple activities were executed to apply the theory of change to the Action for Choice project and achieve its intended outcomes.

1. STRENGTHENING OF EXISTING & ESTABLISHMENT OF MORE RESOURCE CENTRES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

The Action for Choice project strengthened eight (8) pre-existing resource centres and supported the establishment of six (6) more resource centres that are stationed across institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe, each with an average of **100,000** young people enrolled per annum.

PRE-EXISTING RESOURCE CENTRES

Bindura University of Science Education
Great Zimbabwe University
Harare Institute of Technology
Hillside Teachers College
Midlands State University
Mutare Teachers College
National University of Science and Technology
University of Zimbabwe.

NEWLY ESTABLISHED RESOURCE CENTRES

Chinhoyi University of Technology
Great Zimbabwe University Mucheke Campus
Gwanda State University
Lupane State University
Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences
Midlands State University Zvishavane Campus.

The resource centres serve as a safe space for young people to access SRH-GBV information, discuss issues affecting them and act as referral point to SRH-GBV service providers. Young people visiting resource centres have an opportunity to join and be capacitated within the **Mugota/Ixhiba Young Men's forum** and **Web for Life Network for Girls**.

THE SAFE SPACES

Mugota/Ixhiba and the **Web for Life** movements

provide safe spaces to young men and women respectively to discuss issues regarding their sexuality, well-being, unmet needs and explore solutions. The capacity and confidence of young people are built within the resource centres, Mugota/Ixhiba, Web for Life movements, equipping them with skills and knowledge to shape their communities and drive positive change.

Young people then actively participate in activities that promote the sharing of accurate and quality SRH-GBV information with other young people at institution and national levels and shape policy related to their development. The Studio branded **Studio of Choice** is one medium established during the Action for Choice project to this end.



2. OPTIMISING GENERATION AND SHARING OF SRH-GBV ARTISTIC PRODUCTS TO MORE YOUNG PEOPLE

The **Studio of Choice** was established in 2021 and serves as a dynamic platform for generation and dissemination of accurate information in the realm of SRH-GBV. In the digital era where young people primarily seek information on digital platforms, the studio hosts engaging talk shows, games, and produces insightful podcasts that are disseminated via online forums.

Young people from the **Mugota/Ixhiba** and **Web for Life** from institutions of higher learning across Zimbabwe are mobilized to contribute to the public health discourse, cultivate the skill of critical thinking and speak out on issues affecting them confidently. To date, the studio hosts three flagship events that are broadcast on both national and regional television – the **National Quiz Challenge**, the **SASI Debate Challenge** and **The Creative Reproductive health Arts Festival for Transformation (CRAFT)**.



THE NATIONAL QUIZ CHALLENGE

The challenge begins at the provincial level where institutions of higher learning represented by 2 members – male and female – compete showcasing their ability to retain SRH-GBV information gained through the resource centres and its movements. 12 provincial winning teams compete at National level in a 5-round challenge at the Studio of Choice where teams get a fair chance to compete against each other. Teams with the lowest scores are eliminated and the emerging champions take the roving trophy home.



THE SPEAK AND SOLVE INITIATIVE (SASI)

DEBATE CHALLENGE

The SASI debate challenge also begins at provincial level where institutions of higher learning represented by 2 members –male and female compete, and 12 winning teams battle for the national championship at the Studio of Choice. The challenge adopts the British Parliamentary debating style where there are 4 competing pairs representing the opening government, opening opposition, closing government, and closing opposition.

The challenge provides young people with a platform to amplify their voice on emerging health challenges affecting them while sharpening their advocacy skills to access their health rights and services. Both the National Quiz Challenge and the SASI Debate challenge are broadcasted to national (ZTN and 3ktv) and regional (DStv) with **488,000+** weekly views.

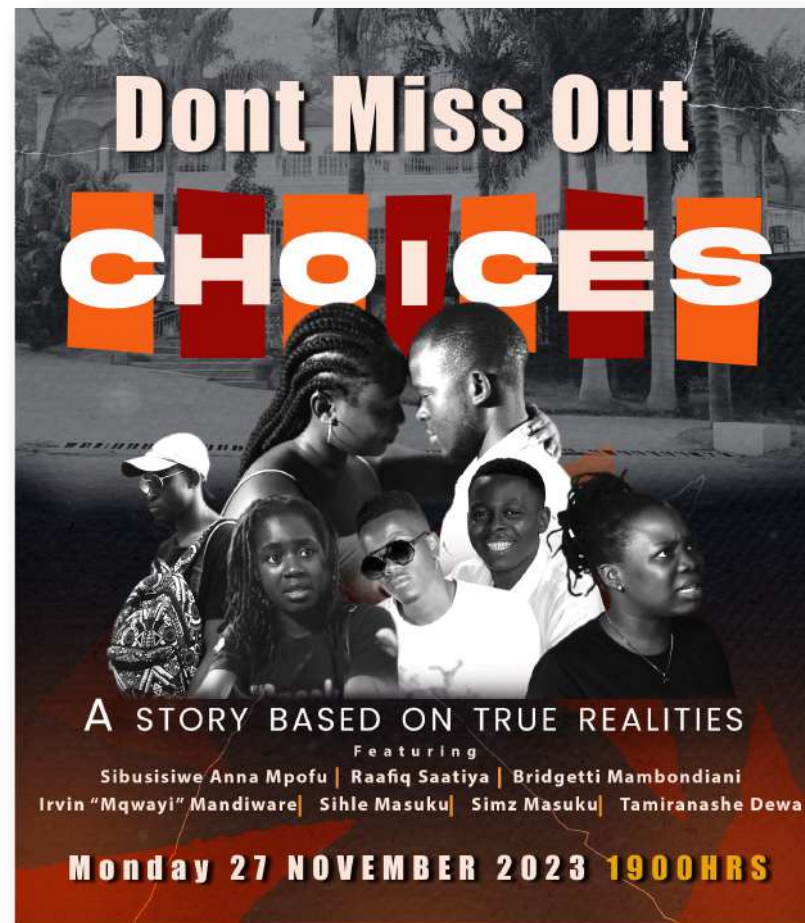


THE CREATIVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ARTS FESTIVAL FOR TRANSFORMATION (CRAFT)

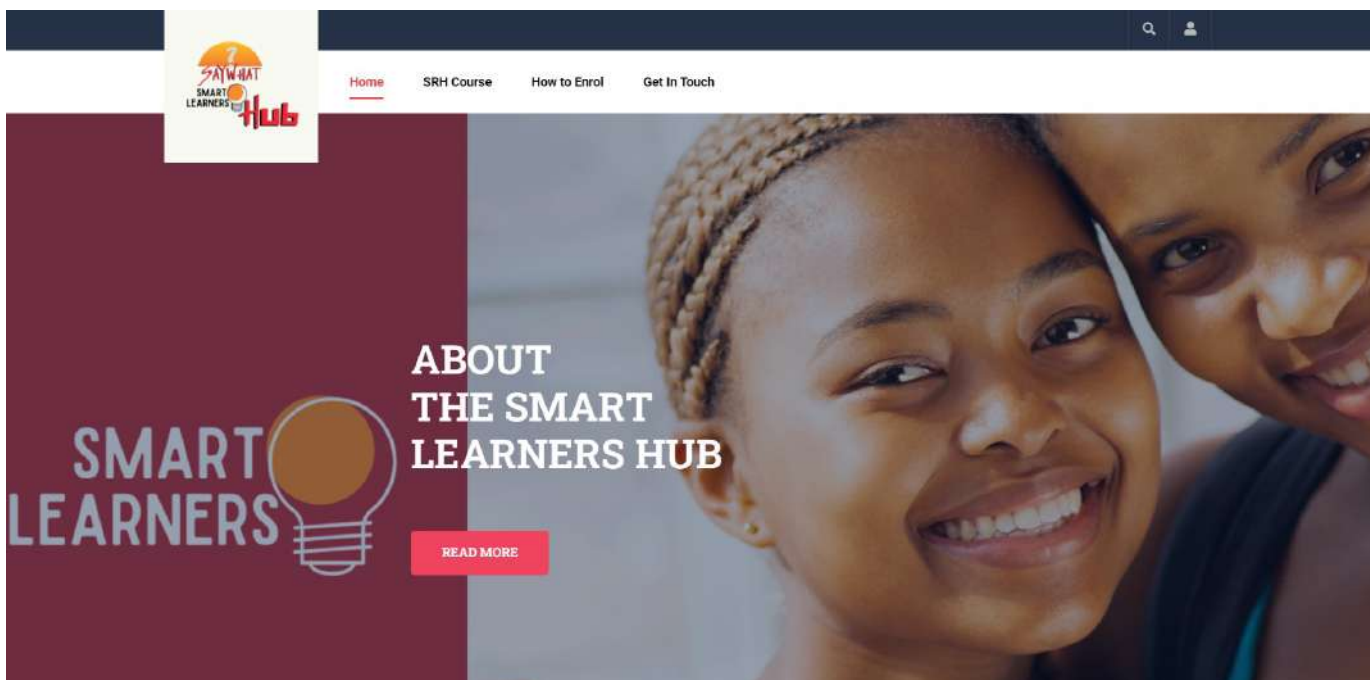
Students and young people in communities surrounding institutions of higher learning showcase their artistic talents – music, drama, poetry, and public speaking at provincial and national level. The national winners on each category receive mentorship from seasoned artist (**Feli Nandi, Joe Njangu, Rutendo Mutsamwira**) and take lead in the production of creative SRH-GBV content.

The 2022 national winners produced a short film titled **“CHOICES”** and a sound track titled **“Themba”** meaning **HOPE**. The short film features gender-based-violence theme among young people specifically on campus, and the song expresses the need for young people to not lose hope amongst the struggles that they face. The products are broadcasted on national television (Ztv), resource centre college screens, and youth

conferences, not only reaching millions of other young people but placing issues that affect them in the spotlight for all. The national winners gained traction in mainstream arts industry, allowing them to live meaningfully by utilizing their talents.



3. ENHANCING DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT WITH AN ONLINE SRH-GBV COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION



The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in high demand for stern investments in information communication technology infrastructure to disseminate information to young people. In response to the demand, the Action for Choice project supported the launch of the Smart Learners Hub, an interactive online learning service that provides young people with accurate and quality SRH-GBV information to live a healthy and self-determined sexual and reproductive health life. Young people can enrol for free on <https://smartlearnershub.net/> and receive a free certificate upon completion. In the first quarter after the launch, the school received over 300 enrolments and a 44% pass rate.

4. IMPROVING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY THROUGH STRUCTURED AND SYSTEMATIC ENQUIRY BY YOUNG PEOPLE ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THEM.

To advance young people's SRH-GBV realities and experiences on the right platforms with evidence-based advocacy and improve their health outcomes, young people are being empowered on research methodologies, conducting structured and systematic enquiries on sexual harassment, SRH service delivery, and other cross-cutting themes that contribute to risky sexual behaviour and GBV such as drug and substance abuse.

The Action for Choice project supports young people in the SAYWHAT Young Researchers Initiative program and to-date date, over 50 research articles on various issues that affect young people have been produced. In 2023, Ambassador Per Lindgärde of the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, together with Jimmy Wilford SAYWHAT Executive Director unveiled the first research book that is home to 10 research articles by undergraduate students sharing the hidden realities of young people in Zimbabwe. The book titled **“Empowering young voices: Unveiling the hidden realities of young people in Zimbabwe”**, explores in-depth the issues, providing a fresh perspective and call to action for all who seek to empower and advocate for young people.



5. STRENGTHENING UTILIZATION OF SRH-GBV RESPONSIVE SERVICES THROUGH A 24-HOUR CALL CENTRE



The Action for Choice project supported the establishment of a 24-hour call centre with the toll-free line 577. The call centre serves as a crucial resource for young people across Zimbabwe providing a wide range of services, including a platform to report abuse, service linkages, access to free psychosocial support, mental health support, and counselling.

6. IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH PARTNERING WITH KEY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

The call centre team also facilitates child protection case management conducting physical visits and psycho-social assessments in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Department of Social Development, the Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) and community cadres.



Since its inception, the unit has handled 861 child protection cases.



STORIES OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

“

I became sexually active in high school but never used condoms or contraceptives for fear of not fitting in among my peers. I was introduced to the SAYWHAT resource center at Lupane State University where I became a member of the Web for Life Network. I enjoyed the meetings seeing my peers discuss similar issues with confidence and accessing SRH health services. I gained insightful knowledge such as the correct use of condoms, long term contraceptives and during a health fair I decided to have Jadelle and protect myself from unwanted pregnancies during the duration of my studies. Ever since that decision I have been happier and more focused on my studies.

ANONYMOUS
LUPANE STATE UNIVERSITY

”

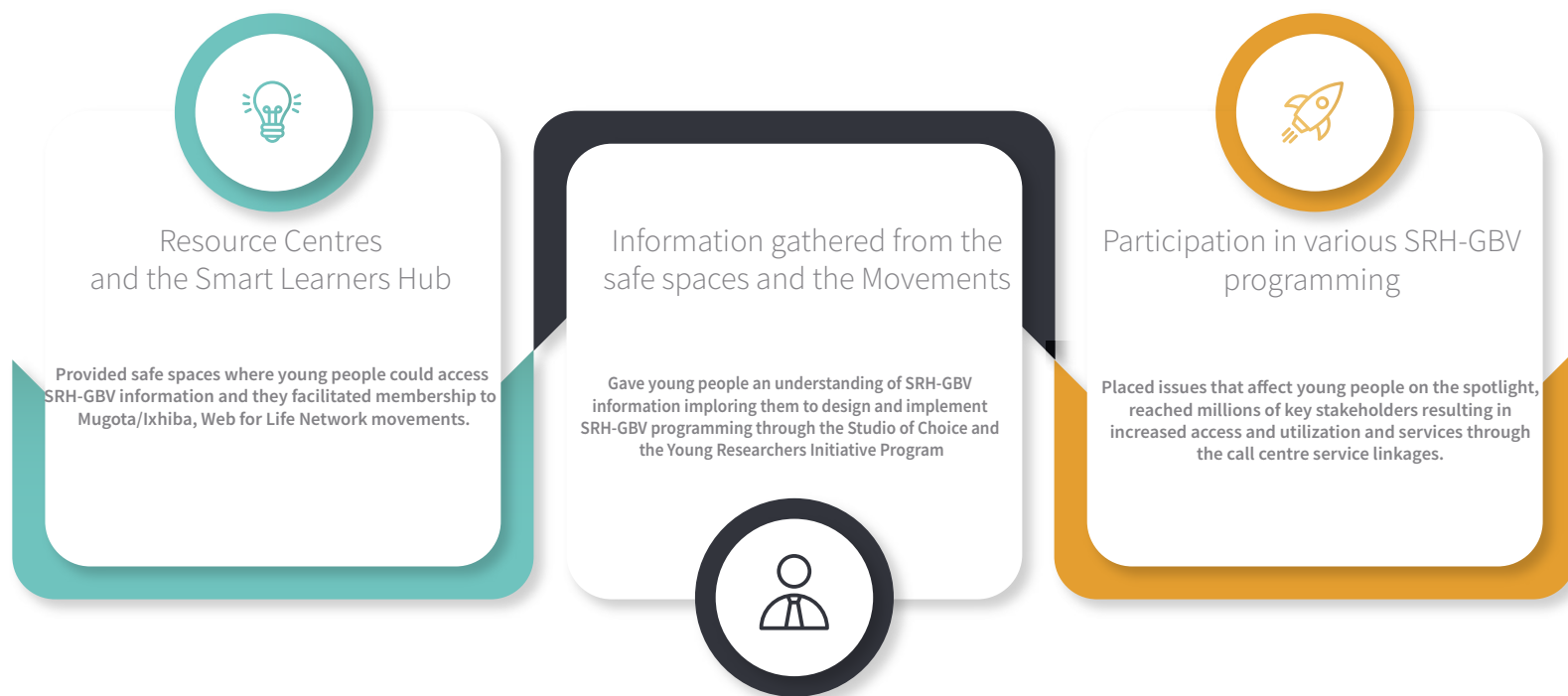
“

I grew up in an environment where sexual harassment and gender-based violence was a norm and women were inferior people. Nicknamed keyboard warrior I'd express myself through sending offensive chats/ messages to female peers. The truth and bond shared in the Mugota/Ixhiba changed my view of women and enabled me to redirect my energy in meaningful things. I got the opportunity to participate in the National Quiz competition which not only enhanced my public speaking skills. Today am no longer known as a keyboard warrior but an SRH defender who reaches out to peers and young adults in the community changing young men's perspective on condoms and violence.

CARLTON JACOB,
CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

”

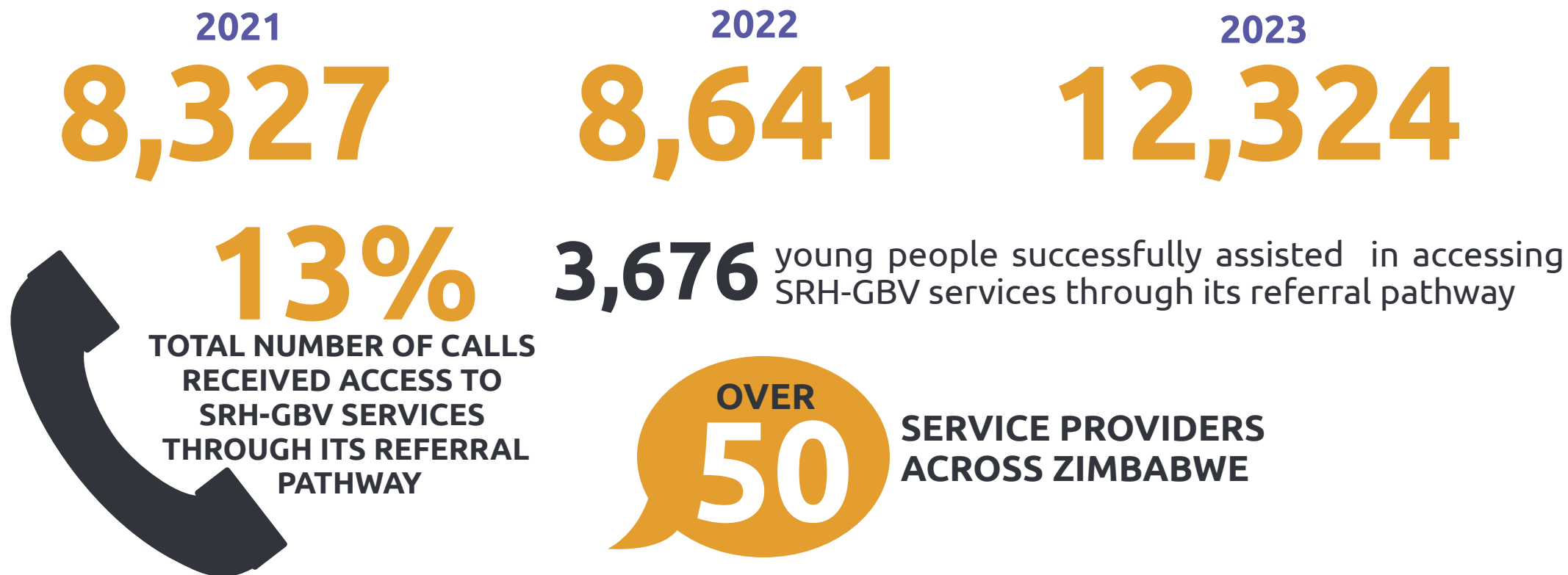
OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES



The above chain of results follows the change theory showcasing how activities undertaken under the Action for Choice project to provide young people accurate and quality information led to improved understanding of SRH-GBV information by young people. Enhanced understanding increased young people's participation in designing, implementation and review of SRH-GBV programmes thereby strengthening SRH-GBV advocacy by young people.

OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES

An increase in the number of young people seeking SRH-GBV responsive services at the Call Centre was observed showing an increase in young people's health seeking behaviour.



In 2022, HIV treatment coverage in the Eastern and Southern African Region was 83% for people aged 15 and above living with HIV and adhering to antiretroviral therapy with an estimated of 93% viral suppression. Zimbabwe is among the countries that have achieved 95-95-95 targets.

NEXT STEPS



Despite the progress made with the Action for Choice project phase I and II, Work still needs to be done in Zimbabwe as new trends emerge that threaten the sexual reproductive health of young people in particular **drug and substance abuse, and extreme weather events**. Young people need to be continuously capacitated on emerging trends, emergency, and disaster preparedness to build generations of healthy and empowered people who have a full realization of their sexual reproductive health and meaningfully contribute to the social and economic development of their nations. In addition, young people need to take their advocacy a step further and influence policy review and changes where their health needs and rights are concerned.