



# BASELINE STUDY REPORT

Assessing Knowledge Values and Attitudes  
On Culture and Women's Bodily Integrity  
And The Reproductive Health and Rights of Adolescent Girls  
and Young Women

Debunking Inaccurate Values and Attitudes on  
Culture, Women's Bodily Integrity,  
And the Reproductive Health and Rights of  
Adolescent Girls and Young Women  
BOMISO (BODY, MIND and SOUL)

Determined

Resilient

Empowered

AIDS-Free

Mentored

Safe



Changing the Lives of Ordinary Zimbabweans



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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ABYM** Adolescent Boys and Young Men
- AGYW** Adolescent Girls and Young Women
- ATR** African Traditional Religion
- BCF** Behavior Change Facilitator
- CBO** Community-Based Organisation
- CKT** Creative Knowledge Toolkit
- DREAMS** Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS Free Mentored Safe
- FDG** Focus Group Discussion
- GAD** Gender and Development
- HIV** Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
- ICT** Information and Communication Technology
- MDG** Millennium Development Goals
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organisation
- SRHR** Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
- STI** Sexually Transmitted Infection
- STS** Sister to Sister
- VHW** Village Health Worker
- WAD** Women and Development
- WID** Women in Development
- ZDHS** Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust (Culture Fund) was approved by the United States of America State Department through the United States President's Emergency Plan on AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), to implement a DREAMS Innovation Challenge programme starting October 2016. The overall objective of the Culture Fund programme is: *Creating demand for SRH services among adolescent girls and young women as part of a global campaign to reduce HIV in this target group.*

The Zimbabwean social value system is deeply rooted in culture and tradition, more so in the rural areas, where about 70% of the population resides. This value system has some retrogressive elements. Of concern are beliefs that are falsely peddled as culture which undermine the capacity and ability of girls and young women to assert themselves and make autonomous decisions.

The epistemological positioning Baseline Study that underpins is that patriarchy is not synonymous with culture, nor is modernity synonymous with women's emancipation. It focuses on identifying forms of feminist interpretation and resistance to patriarchy within culture and *'take the battle to the cultural home-ground'*. This means assuming a position of not arguing about how retrogressive certain cultural beliefs and practices are, but challenging the values and practices to see if they are culturally authentic. This is intended to debunk certain cultural arguments once and for all, so that when people engage in practices, the perpetrators cannot hide behind *'culture'*, but their actions can be understood for what they are; i.e. people just behaving badly.

Out of a targeted 1 200, the study was able to sample 1 045, which translates to 87% of the targeted number. This translated to an average of 174 questionnaires administered in each district. A total of 52 focus group discussions were held with community opinion leaders, traditional leaders, groups of adolescent girls and young women, and groups of adolescent boys and young men. The last two were sometimes held as single sex groups and sometimes in combination depending on the availability of time. The predominant respondents were out of school, having completed O'level or other lower levels of secondary school. The respondents that were still in school participated as part of the community youth groups in the urban centres. The study reached 611 AGYW, who constituted 58.5% of the total sample group. There was good balance of the sexes with the ABYM constituting 41.5% of the respondents. The highest number came from the 18 – 20 age group.

The questionnaires were structured into three categories of *correct, incorrect and ambiguous* statements. The responses were used to gauge the levels of knowledge of the *correct* cultural positions of sexual and reproductive health matters, to establish the range of norms, beliefs and traditions that affect women with regards sexual and reproductive health matters, and to highlight the most prevalent beliefs that are, in fact, culturally erroneous, but make AGYW sexually vulnerable to HIV infection.

The positive responses to the correct set of statements reflect solid knowledge of culture and tradition by the target age group. The positive responses to incorrect statements highlight the high levels of acceptance of beliefs that are not culturally *correct*. The responses to the ambiguous statements reflect how sometimes personal opinion is used to *'define'* culture and how this results in inconsistencies and contradictions that serve to limit women's choices in sexual and reproductive health matters. Most of the respondents, constituting about 90%, correctly agreed with the correct statements, with the older groups aged above 18 years

reflecting stronger opinion regarding the correct set of questions, while the younger respondents disagreed with some of the correct cultural positions.

There is consistency in the inaccurate knowledge regarding women's sexuality and culture where respondents agreed that a well-raised girl should not know about sex and sexuality, i.e. *"It is not culturally proper for a young girl to know about sex and sexuality"*, and that *"young women must remain ignorant about all things sexual until they get married"*. This is in direct contrast to the high responses given agreeing that a married woman is expected to know how to sexually please her husband.

It was encouraging to note that only 27% agreed with the statements that are culturally wrong. This too reflects a fairly solid knowledge about the basic aspects of culture and tradition by the respondents. Although the perception of shared decision-making in the family has gained traction, the 'cultural' value of the women's inferiority is deeply imbedded.

However, when asked about the roles of men and women within the family, what emerged was a clear pattern of shared responsibility. Although a high number of the respondents were of the opinion that the use of contraceptives (ways of preventing pregnancy) by women is a modern Western phenomena, this was refuted by the elders who provided information reflecting that traditionally there were methods of birth control used by women and men. Few respondents agreed that in our culture the man is allowed to beat his wife whenever she displeases him, and correctly agreed that a woman who is beaten by her husband has the right to report him to the family elders. However, less respondents knew that a man whose wife reports him for beating can be made to pay a goat as a way of apologising.

Evidence of ambiguities between culture and personal opinion emerged on the statements that in African culture a man has the right to marry another woman if his wife fails to give him a son, and that in our culture all men are expected and allowed to have many wives. The tensions arise from the fact that polygamy is tolerated, but is not encouraged. This is supported by the tradition that a first wife can refuse her husband permission to marry a second wife. This reflects the power of the wife within the traditional marriage, contrary to the general perception that the decision lies with the man alone and that the woman is a hapless bystander. The traditional leaders were very clear that the pledging of girls in marriage is not the norm in traditional culture and practices. It is only done in cases of extreme poverty and lack. Another instance of misrepresented culture relates to the notion that a young man can refuse to marry a girl he has made pregnant, in that sex before marriage was so frowned upon that a boy was forced to marry the girl he would have impregnated.

Although a high number of the questionnaire respondents agreed that women who speak in the presence of men have no *hunhu/ubuntu*, the elders in the focus groups did not support this as their clarification was rather on the manner in which women were expected to speak, namely with respect and restraint. As far as dress was concerned, the general consensus was for both women and men to dress 'decently'. Although a large number of the respondents agreed that the woman's body belongs to her husband and she has no say on her sexuality (when and how to have sex), the elders clarified that this was a misconception as the sexual act was supposed to be consensual.

Most of the respondents correctly agreed with the statement that in African culture, a woman is supposed to be a virgin when she gets married. However, they incorrectly stated that a boy is not expected to keep himself a virgin before marriage, because he is 'a man'. The responses indicate that there is a higher expectation for the girls to be virgins before marriage than the boys,

which has a direct implication on the probability of young men who are HIV positive infecting several young women, including their future wives. A related inquiry stated that a boy cannot be said to have raped his girlfriend, and that a man cannot be said to have raped his wife. The responses indicate that there is a prevalent erroneous perception that a married woman loses her decision-making power regarding consensual sex, which increases her vulnerability to HIV and STI infection. A fairly high number agreed that it is right for a young woman to carry a condom and produce it if she is going to have sex, while a lesser number agreed that only a boy should carry and produce a condom if he is going to have sex. This indicates that there is higher empowerment and open-mindedness among the youths, which may be a result of previous DREAMS interventions regarding this issue. Most of the young people, (94%) were in agreement that young women should have access to sexual and reproductive health information. Of the reasons given by young people who thought young women should access sexual and reproductive health information, about 44% felt it is their right to know their sexuality. Another 24% of the young people felt they should access such services so that they get information on HIV and other STIs.

Only a very small percentage of young people felt that young women should not access sexual and reproductive health services mainly because they are still too young to be exposed to sexual issues (3%), it will encourage them to be sexually active (more than 1%) and it is a taboo in our culture (1%). The majority of young people, 80%, have accessed a health service provider, and women are more likely to access a health service provider than their male counterparts, 58% as compared to 42% of males. Most of the young people, (37%) who visited the health service provider were going to get an HIV test.

Among the young people who reported that they had never visited a health service provider, the greater percentage had no reason or needed nothing from the health centres. A noticeable percentage lower did not visit the health service provider because they did not know where the services are, and fewer others never accessed the health service provider because of religious restrictions.

Relatives have been shown to be the major group of people whom young people talk to about sexuality issues. Forty-seven percent of young people said they chose people to talk to based on how free they felt to talk to them. Young people reported that it was easy to access sexual and reproductive health services. This was mainly due to the accessibility of service providers who are free and ready to help them, closeness of services (18%), mobility of community health workers (11%) and presence of trained health providers.

The main reason why young women are not seeking sexual and reproductive health services is that they lack education on the importance of seeking such information as reported by 25%. 21% reported family and friends' judgment as a barrier to seeking services, 20% blamed community perception and belief and 15% were constrained by religion.

The major social penalty for accessing sexual and reproductive health service is humiliation and social stigma each accounting for 30% of the responses, with 22% noting being viewed as a prostitute.

Young adults reported that family and friends are more influential in blocking them from accessing reproductive health services. The most common cultural arguments used in communities to keep young women from going to service providers are that it promotes promiscuity (34%) and that it is culturally unacceptable (20%). The majority (66%) of young people obtain information on reproductive health issues from hospitals or clinics, followed by 15% who obtain such information from community health workers.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Culture Fund was approved by the United States of America State Department through PEPFAR to implement a DREAMS Innovation Challenge programme in October 2016. The overall DREAMS programme is working on reducing the HIV infection rates among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in 10 countries, including Zimbabwe. Within Zimbabwe, the DREAMS programme is targeting six districts. The Culture Fund intervention proposes a holistic approach that will debunk cultural taboos in Zimbabwean communities, challenging retrogressive norms and practices hindering access to health services among AGYW. The Creative Arts will be deployed to capacitate CBOs' capabilities to use the creative knowledge toolkit to engage AGYW on SRH and creatively mobilise communities on proposed HIV solutions. The overall objective of the Culture Fund programme is: Creating demand for SRH services among adolescent girls and young women as part of a global campaign to reduce HIV in this target group.

The solution starts with baseline benchmarking; exposing the norms, tradition and practices that trap AGYW, fuel HIV infections and hinder access to health delivery services. This will help in marking the lobby and advocacy positions within the communities. A creative knowledge toolkit compiling cultural arguments that undermine the capacity and ability of AGYW to be assertive and make autonomous decisions will be produced. It will contain reinterpretations and counter challenges that foster AGYW empowerment. In addition, it will identify repositories of stigma, taboos and cultural sensitivities that have traditionally hindered AGYW demanding health services.

Culture Fund will build the capacity of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to engage with cultural-based arguments. The partner CBOs will be equipped with a creative knowledge toolkit to use in engaging communities to break cultural barriers blocking AGYW from seeking health services. Creative sector actions and platforms are important taboo and barrier breakers. They foster free expression and provoke dialogue on the structural drivers, relations and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequalities and induce HIV infections within Zimbabwean communities.

The solution will innovatively use the Creative Arts (a field that includes the arts, culture, media and new ICT expressions). The creative activities will be mainstreamed into the lobby and advocacy platforms such as clubs, exchange platforms and other outreach activities. The innovative creative components will motivate and attract more people to engage on a sustainable basis with the SRH issues. With more engagement, referrals will be made for SRH services. The programme will work within the DREAMS Core referral systems, as well as the recently launched national Ministry of Health and Child Welfare referral protocol. Effective servicing of the AGYW is possible when they receive as many complementary services as possible and hence the layering of services with DREAMS Core and other entities will be mainstreamed in Culture Fund work planning. The varied

district and national DREAMS co-ordinating mechanism will enable synchronisation and rationalisation of efforts for effective SRHS demand creation among AGYW. Ultimately, the Culture Fund will be able to make a contribution to the overall target of reducing HIV prevalence among AGYW as envisaged by the DREAMS programme.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Zimbabwean social value system is deeply-rooted in culture and tradition, more so in the rural areas where about 70% of the population resides. This value system has some retrogressive elements. Of concern, are arguments that are falsely peddled as culture which undermine the capacity and ability of girls and young women to assert themselves and make autonomous decisions. There is a limitation on the availability and access to exciting and stimulating sexual reproductive health (SRH) information to the target adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). Evidence shows reduced uptake of SRH services by AGYW including prevention, resulting in higher incidences of HIV infection.

## 1.3 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The Overall Objective of the Study, whose results shall inform the project implementation entry points, is to debunk (expose falsehoods of a myth, idea or belief) retrogressive traditional cultural practices that inhibit full access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and other SRH. This is to be achieved through the following specific objectives;

- i. Establishing common and pervasive cultural values, belief systems, taboos and practices that restrict young women and female adolescents from knowing about and seeking sexual and reproductive health services, and expose them to HIV infection.
- ii. Establishing the veracity of identified restrictive cultural values, belief systems, taboos and practices and identifying counter arguments that can be used to challenge patriarchal falsehoods and negative interpretations that are used keep young women and female adolescents from seeking sexual and reproductive health services and sexually vulnerable.
- iii. Developing a compilation of positive and correct gender sensitive cultural values, belief systems, taboos and practices that value women and empower young women to gain confidence to analyse, decode and act on the information to seek sexual and reproductive health services and be safer from HIV and STI infections.
- iv. Identifying community/district specific entry points and appropriate CKT tools for lobbying and advocacy in exposing the negative norms, and catalyze action against restrictive traditions and practices that hinder AGYW from accessing sexual and reproductive health and services and make them vulnerable to STI and HIV infection

## 1.4 CONTEXTUALISING STUDY OBJECTIVES

This Baseline Study seeks to establish the existing misrepresentations and misinterpretations of culture and tradition that are used to deny AGYW the right to bodily integrity and limit their choices in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. It will inform one aspect of the intervention that involves the development of IEC materials which will be designed to debunk these falsehoods and empower AGYW to access sexual and reproductive health services, resulting in less incidence of new infections among the target group.

Some of the problematic and often contentious characteristics of 'culture and/or tradition' relate to its mutability in accordance with time and location, and its subjectivity in translation within personal relationships, families, totem clans, language groups and larger geopolitical groups of people in modern day nations. It is tempting to argue that culture within such a contradictory understanding is therefore, what any given individual interprets it to be at any given time within the broad parameters of what constitutes an 'issue' in a given society.

In her study of survivors of gender-based violence in Zimbabwe, Alice Armstrong noted that "throughout the book, it is the contradictions which are most evident. Culture is both a cause and an excuse for domestic violence, battered women are both victims and actors, the family is both supportive and oppressive, protective and exploitative. Women use both the traditional law and the modern law. Women never say 'yes' but always mean 'yes' to sex. Women are socialized and sometimes controlled by 'culture' but at the same time [have choice]."<sup>1</sup> She points out that women themselves are 'not one-dimensional, easily categorised stereotypes, but complicated, multi-dimensional, often confused and confusing'.

Although daunting, the effort of this baseline and the intervention that it shall shape aims at shining a bright x-ray light onto this terrain of confusion so that the clarifications can empower the young woman to have agency in defining and owning her culture, and not just be a subject of it, while developing the 'savvy and street smarts' to challenge negative patriarchal interpretations of it.

The clarifications and new insights will become her stick and machete (tsvmbo nechiteza) to clear her path through the restrictions of a cultural jungle she is a slave of, into empowered decision-making and action in knowing and claiming her sexual and reproductive health rights as an active citizen of a culture that can, and should provide for and protect her personhood and agency to act in ways that keep her safe and healthy.

<sup>1</sup> Armstrong Alice, *Culture and Choice, Lessons from Survivors of Gender Based Violence in Zimbabwe*, AKA, Chapel Hill, U.S.A, 1998, p.4

### How will this x-ray work?

Where contradictions are apparent, it becomes useful to glean the core aspect of any norm and tradition and use it for extrapolation of the 'real position' devoid of personal or subjective interest in interpretation. This provides the sharp surgical tool with which to scrape off the layers of misinterpretations and justifications for deviance and expose the true and authentic culture and tradition, which the protagonist is, therefore, faced with accepting or denying in its empowering or disempowering aspects. Should they prefer it to be modified, then this should be openly discussed without brow beating of any member of the society affected by the norm or tradition.

A poignant example is with regards to violence between spouses. The average indigenous Zimbabwean male will tell you that culturally, beating your wife is condoned. Some will qualify it in terms of the 'level' of beating, where minor chastisement is expected but causing injury is crossing the line. Of course, the judgment of what constitutes 'acceptable levels' again becomes subjective to the man. On the other hand, there is the procedure of reporting an abusive man to the uncle (the husband's sister's husband), which causes a family council to be called and the matter to be presented to the family for discussion. A man found guilty of beating and otherwise abusing his wife is fined a goat from his herd, which becomes the property of the wife. In this case, the 'level' of unacceptability is actually assessed by the woman when she decides to report.

In situations like these, the real position is extrapolated by asking;

- a) *Why is a man who beats his wife fined a goat payable to his wife?*
- b) *At which point is a report of abuse in the home made to the uncle?*

The response to these two questions is,

- a) *Because in our culture beating your wife is frowned upon, given that her tears, injury or death can raise the spirit of Ngozi (avenging spirit) from her ancestor matriarchs against the family.*
- b) *When the wife has 'had enough' and feels it is now too much.*

This study seeks to expose the misinterpretation, contradictions and outright falsehoods in cultural arguments used to justify the oppression of women and patriarchal control of their bodies in ways that result in young women being vulnerable to higher risks of contracting HIV, also compounded by their inability to freely seek reproductive health information and services. It does not seek to argue that there are no genuine cultural norms and traditions that oppress women generally, and in particular restricts their sexual and reproductive health and choices and rights, for these do exist.

A case in point of such negative cultural beliefs and practices is the fact that the children born of any woman are legally considered as primarily belonging to the man who has primary guardianship rights over them. This has posed often insurmountable challenges for women when the father of the child refuses to 'give' his name to the child or sign off the necessary papers, resulting in such children not having birth certificates.

This is an example of a patriarchal law that belongs in the dustbins of social history. A woman knows what offspring she brought into the world and her word alone should be enough to obtain a birth certificate for her child, even with the section of the father left blank. We all know children are not born by Immaculate Conception. There is a father somewhere who never grew up enough to face the responsibilities of adulthood and sex. Other laws and procedures can be put into effect to deal with the avoidance of maintenance payments, which is the main reason why such men refuse to have their names on the birth certificates of their children. For instance, the law could stipulate a mandatory minimum maintenance fee payable and calculated for the entire period that a man avoided responsibility, which *become due and payable whenever* he decides to acknowledge paternity of the child.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 WHICH AND WHOSE 'CULTURE'?

Women, gender and feminism are intertwined concepts that speak to the bodies of women, their relationships in the power structures of society where the family is the core unit of survival, and their political struggles to have autonomy, freedom and choice. Tsikata<sup>2</sup> defines feminism simply as “the recognition of the systematic discrimination against women on grounds of gender and a commitment to work towards change.” Women studies on the other hand, is defined as the branch of social science discipline devoted to the study of women’s condition in the society.<sup>3</sup>

In gender analysis, ‘condition’ refers to the physical and material status of need or contentment, and ‘position’ refers to the ability to access the means with which to meet one’s needs. There has been what can be termed a ‘male capture’ of culture in modern Zimbabwe. Men in our society have made it their prerogative to define what constitutes culture, and they have placed themselves as the supreme rulers over women. By appealing to ‘tradition’, cultural practices which reinforce the power of men in our societies are venerated unquestioningly<sup>4</sup>, and ‘frozen’ in particular times and contexts that suit the patriarchs in a given situation. The notion of the ideal woman rests on the need, within a patriarchal society, to enforce women’s chastity outside marriage, and fidelity within. Women’s modesty and sexual continence is thus critical to the survival of the family.<sup>5</sup>

Women are not full citizens in this cultural world, and are only allowed voice and agency as long as they act in ways approved of by men, meaning that sometimes they are expected to act and coerce other women to act to their own detriment. If they elect to use agency, they are reviled and ridiculed and often violated as a reminder to other women to stay in line and not challenge this hate-filled, narcissistic and masochistic interpretation of culture. Sarah Longwe aptly sums it up thus, “obviously, if women are very oppressed and suppressed, they are also very silent.”

Inherent in feminist scholarly and activist discourse is the discussion of women’s reproductive rights. Nonetheless, Ilumoka (2003) argued that the “rights discourse” requires scrutiny and that the field of reproductive rights (and human rights and women’s rights) is an arena of struggle for African women to define their own agendas devoid of (ethnocentric) assumptions about the backwardness of African customs.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Tsikata E. (1991) “Conceptualising the post-colonial state : The experience of gender analysis”, Paper presented at CODESRIA Workshop on Gender Analysis and Social Science, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Sweetman Caroline, *Women and Culture*, Oxfam Focus on Gender, Gender and Development Vol.3, No. 1, February 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Ibi p2.

<sup>6</sup> Ampofo, Akosua Adomako, Josephine Beoku-Betts, Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and Mary Osirim.

“Women’s and Gender Studies in English-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Research in the Social Sciences.” *Gender & Society* 18 (2004): 685-714.

*“Over the past three decades an entire genre of feminist development literature has emerged, reflecting lively discussions and contestations over the location of women in relation to the state and their access to the most critical material and social resources within such societies. This discourse has centred on the association of women as a social category with development as a process through which old colonial relationships of power between the North and Africa had begun to be restructured. An array of players positioned themselves strategically in this debate—Black men (within the state and on its margins); white men (usually as former settlers, shareholders in multinational corporations and as donors); white women (who usually formulated the theoretical expressions of what they thought African and Caribbean women should expect/where we could be positioned within this restructuring); and more recently, black women, who have either accepted the approaches which came with the funding for ‘development’ activities (WID/WAD/GAD), or have challenged the assumptions and prescriptions of such approaches, exposing the underlying liberal paternalism and its function in maintaining the very colonial relationships it claims to be transforming. This latter group espouses Audre Lorde’s wisdom that the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house.*

*From a radical African feminist perspective, it is quite obvious that WID/WAD and GAD are basically different versions of a fundamentally conservative discourse, which essentially de-politicizes women in terms of the public while it entrenches the private construction of women as peripheral to the real sites of power within our societies.”<sup>7</sup> Sweetman concludes that “The concept of development is laden with the cultural values of post-colonialism, of northern countries, and of economists.”<sup>8</sup>*

According to African feminism, the African male was given total rule over the African woman as compensation for his emasculation by colonialism, a concept well-captured by Rudo Gaidzanwa’s remarks,

*“Could it be that, despite our common bitter heritage of racist violation and humiliation, we are now ultimately faced with the imperative of coming to terms with the fact that Black men of all classes have always been privileged by the very same patriarchy that facilitated and institutionalised racist privilege for white men? That at the end of the day, it is the fear of a loss of male patriarchal claims; claims that are reproduced and naturalized through basically outdated notions and practices of masculinity and heterosexism, which constitutes the sub-text of this still barely theorized but passionately articulated discourse of male endangerment?”<sup>9</sup>*

This trade off was facilitated by the Victorian era missionaries, who taught about creation as involving the creation of Woman off the rib of, and as an appendage to Man.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Supra*

<sup>8</sup> Sweetman Caroline, *Women and Culture, Oxfam Focus on Gender, Gender and Development Vol.3, No. 1, February 1995.*

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.world.org/programs/regions/africa/patricia\\_mcfadden4](http://www.world.org/programs/regions/africa/patricia_mcfadden4)

<sup>10</sup> *Genesis Chapter 2, Bible*

They also introduced the concept of body shame and told the natives to cover themselves up lest God deemed them sinful and they burn in eternal hell. The African woman was clothed in the garb of the 'sinning wicked woman that tempted Adam', a concept that had hitherto not existed in the African psyche.

While in traditional society Black women could be held as pawns and captives in war, under colonialism their situation worsened as they were downgraded to minors. Women were considered intellectually and morally weak, but sexually dangerous (Schmidt 1992).<sup>11</sup> The African man then joined forces with the colonial value system to cover the woman up and keep her tamed from further 'tempting man to sin'.

This created a 'negative mindset regarding body, dress and what constitutes a 'good' woman. The free spirited virgin- maid dancing in healthy and expressive femininity during the *Jenaguru* full moon dance was made to be ashamed of her body and her self-expression. Knowledge about the body, menstrual cycles that 'follow the moon', how to have satisfying sex and experience sexual pleasure, that was passed from the crones to the mothers to maidens during various initiation rites, was suppressed. Young women that had been knowledgeable virgins were transformed into ignorant virgins, whose definition of the self and how she related to her body had to be interpreted for her by the narrow confines of a re-defined patriarchy.

The study of women in general and African women in particular contributed to the breadth and depth of knowledge and theorizing of African realities in a number of ways. It has demonstrated the importance of women not simply as passive breeders but also as economic agents, as active in creating new developments, in resistance to and in collusion with oppression also. It has fuelled the questioning of assumptions about the beneficial nature of the colonial experience and the development of capitalism and 'modernisation' in Africa, by demonstrating that for many women, these processes have frequently meant a decrease in economic autonomy, access to resources, status and security. It has contributed to the demythologizing of both the 'golden age of pre-colonial Africa' and the 'backward, uncivilized primitive Africa' theses through investigations as to women's positions in pre-colonial Africa — which turn out to have been neither a happy complementarity with men's roles nor the dumb beast of burden remarked upon by the early (white) anthropologists. (1997)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Vambe T. Morris, <http://www.literator.org.za/index.php/literator/article/viewFile/20/1326>

<sup>12</sup> *Supra*, citing Ayesha Imam

In arguing for the support of male academics on the African continent, MacFadden vehemently postulates that *“it is clearly time for these brothers and their counterparts to move on and begin the more radical work on masculinity and issues of power, control, violation and the consequences of patriarchal privilege for them as men. To continue drawing their male identity from practices and notions of culture which are essentially pre-capitalist and largely constructed through the prisms of white patriarchal notions of manhood is surely deeply problematic.”*<sup>13</sup> This is because such notions grossly misrepresented the position of the African woman and undermined her status in ways that negatively impacted on her sense of self, sexuality and bodily integrity. As a result today she bears the greater burden of HIV infection.

## 2.2 THE MULTI - FACETED NATURE OF ‘CULTURE’

**a) Evolution:** This study does not presume a ‘static’ culture. The modern version of what is considered local culture must be understood within the context of its Bantu origins, and recognizing ways in which ‘culture’ has been influenced by internal migrations and inter-tribal mixing. For instance, the original Chewa initiation rite of *Chinamwali* has been adopted by some communities that were influenced by the Chewa-dominated mining and farming communities and has been incorporated into the local Shona customs; as was disclosed in the focus group discussions in Mazowe and Gweru.

**b) Spirituality:** One fundamental and crucial aspect in this analysis is the way in which some modern scholars have sought to dissociate indigenous spirituality from local culture, and the consequences that this has had on the interpretation of cultural social values and systems regarding the roles of women and their place in the family and society.

**c) Impact of Colonialisation:** The impact of colonialisation on the ‘modern’ culture: The colonial administrators knew more about the local cultures than do the post independent governments because they knew the importance of knowing the culture of a people if they were to effectively rule them. The simultaneous denigration of the said culture was a deliberate strategy to dissociate the native for an independent identity and foster the desire to be ‘integrated’ into the white- normed social value system and way of life. A modern version of this approach can be found among modern scholars who still position themselves to view the indigenous person as ‘them’, as the educated modern person identifies themselves more with the ‘white ways of thinking’ and views ‘native’ values and social systems as inherently inferior. This results in a failure to identify that which is profoundly empowering and constructive in this largely oral knowledge repository. The lack of any deliberate documentation of this knowledge becomes the inevitable outcome, which is used to argue for its non-viability as a body of knowledge worthy of real scholarly analysis except to find fault.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.wworld.org/programs/regions/africa/patricia\\_mcfadden4.htm](http://www.wworld.org/programs/regions/africa/patricia_mcfadden4.htm)

**d) Religious Influences:** It is an undeniable fact that Christianity and the Victorian values brought in by the missionaries influenced and redefined culture and women's position in African society, where viewing sexuality as sin led to silencing of all talk of sex and sexual activity, and the lowering of women's agency and autonomy in bodily integrity and sexual autonomy. Overall, we are dealing with modern interpretations of 'traditions and culture' as localisation of religious arguments and beliefs, and the mutability of 'modern culture' depending on issues under debate; e.g. *culture is dynamic vs we cannot change culture.*

This overlay is sharply demonstrated by the inconsistency and contradiction in the 'tradition/culture' of covering of women's bodies as a good cultural practice so as not to invite rape. This study confirmed that pre-colonial natives of the land wore loin skins and body exposure was normal, did not carry any sexual connotations, and most certainly did not result in rape.

## 2.3 CONCEPTUALISING HUNHU/UBUNTU

While the discourse on hunhu/ubuntu has, to a larger extent, gathered momentum in Southern Africa in the last couple of years, most of the issues raised have centred on the distinctive nature of African ethics when compared to Western ethics. Issues of community, collectivism, reconciliation and restoration of relationships have dominated most academic discourses and very little has been written about African women's place and relevance in hunhu /ubuntu ethics. What is even more worrying is the fact that it is still men who are driving the hunhu/ ubuntu initiative and women are passive recipients. It is this kind of background which prompted the research question: Can 'hunhu/ ubuntu' as an organizing principle of Southern Africa, be used to formulate a feminist ethic that is uniquely African or more specifically that is uniquely Southern African?<sup>14</sup>

*The idea of hunhu (in Shona), ubuntu (in Ndebele or Nguni) and botho (in Sotho) is central to the understanding of morality and ethics in African philosophy (Mkhize, 2008: 35). In particular, this idea is important if we are to succeed in our struggle to search for an African feminist ethic. Ubuntu determines both the norms of conduct and criteria for success, and it is characterized by a deep sense of corporate life, which expresses itself in an intricate network of social and kinship relationships. In this intricate social network, the individual finds him or herself related almost to everybody else in the community as father, mother, uncle, cousin, niece, aunt etc. Their well-being is supposed to be his or her well-being as well.*

<sup>14</sup> Mangena, Fainos (2009). *The Search for an African Feminist Ethic: A Zimbabwean Perspective*. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(2), 18-30. Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol11/iss2/2>

While hunhu /ubuntu promotes masculine values, it also gives women the opportunity to show men that apart from being able to initiate and influence things in the home and in the larger community, women organise and sustain society. There is no better way of putting it than this; the success of African womanism derives from the discovered awareness by women of their indispensability to the male. This is the bedrock of their actions; this gives the anchor and the voice. Thus, the myth of male superiority disappears, for the woman looks inward for a fresh appreciation of self. This fresh appreciation of self by women should be viewed as authority that men cannot lay claim to.

## 2.4 LAWS AND POLICIES ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The sexuality of any person, male and female, goes to the very core of their personhood. It touches on the integrity of their physical body, and influences their emotional and psychological well-being. Depriving someone of the knowledge and decision-making power necessary to know and make informed choices about their sexuality and reproduction is a violation of basic human and personal rights. When this lack of information and power to make decisions about ones' body makes one vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted infections that include HIV, it becomes a core human rights issue that should not be condoned under any social or political mask in the form of religious values or culture and traditions.

### ***Defining Reproductive and Sexual Rights as Human Rights***<sup>15</sup>

"The human rights system is premised on fundamental and universal values of human dignity and social justice. These are articulated as principles of inter alia, 'life, liberty, and security of the person,' equality or non –discrimination; and freedom of opinion and expression." Such values and principles are the foundations on which to build an understanding of women's reproductive and sexual rights as human rights.

*Reproductive and sexual rights are constellations of legal and ethical principles that relate to an individual woman's ability to control what happens to her body and her person by protecting and respecting her ability to make and implement decisions about her reproduction and sexuality.*

This means a woman and the choices that she makes, her ability to make and carry out those choices, and her ability to control what happens to her physical body and spiritual/emotional personhood are her prerogative. In other words, she must not leave these to be defined for her by other persons and have her body and sexuality used as an instrument for serving and or fulfilling other people's interests and agendas."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *The Right to Know, Human Rights and Access to Reproductive Health Information, University of Pennsylvania Press, Article 19, 1995, p5*

<sup>16</sup> *supra*

## 2.4.1 INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights recognises the right of freedom of expression and information, which has been interpreted to include the right to information necessary for the protection of health, and to be properly informed about such matters.<sup>17</sup> The right to equality is interpreted to mean, among other things, equal access to health care and services, and the requirement for women of any age to seek consent from spouses or guardians to access such services when such a requirement does not apply to their male counterparts constitutes a violation of this right. Restricted access to information and services has a direct impact on the right to life and health when critical information on HIV transmission patterns and the services to methods of keeping one safe are not readily available.<sup>18</sup> Other rights recognised by international law are those to dignity, liberty and security of the person, and the right to privacy and family life. These two rights protect the right to access contraception, to be free from sexual violence outside of and within intimate relationships, and protection from early and or coerced marriage.

## 2.4.2 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT TARGETS

SGD Target 5.2 speaks to the elimination of all forms of violence against women in the public and private spheres, including sexual and other types of exploitation. Goal 5.3 addresses the need to ensure that there is elimination of all harmful practices, such as early, child and forced marriages. Of interest is how the global wording of women's rights no longer specifically targets culture or cultural practices, because it is now understood that culture in itself is not the entire problem. It is the individuals who interpret and apply that culture whose behaviours must be curtailed, regardless of what justification they use or hide behind.

## 2.4.3 CONSTITUTION OF ZIMBABWE

Part 3 of Chapter 4 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, namely Elaboration of Certain Rights, Section 80 'The rights of women', provides that "Every woman has full equality and dignity of the person with men..."<sup>19</sup> Section 3 states that "All laws, customs, traditions, and cultural practices that infringe the rights of women conferred by this Constitution are void to the extent of the infringement."

This Baseline study seeks to establish, not just that there are customs, traditions and cultural practices that infringe on women's enjoyment of their rights, but to discredit some of them as not being based in culture and tradition, and thereby remove the veracity of their use in arguments that seek to curtail the reproductive rights of AGYW.

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<sup>17</sup> *Supra p.47*

<sup>18</sup> *Supra p.49*

<sup>19</sup> *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013*

## **2.4.4 SECTOR POLICY: ZIMBABWE NATIONAL HIV AND AIDS STRATEGIC PLAN (ZNASP: 2015 – 2018)**

One of the three impact results is to reduce HIV incidence by 50% among children, and by 75% for adolescents and adults by 2018. One of the three outcome results is “All adults and children have increased access to effective HIV prevention services and are empowered to participate in inclusive and equitable social mobilisation to address drivers of the epidemic.”

The key strategies include ensuring implementation of comprehensive HIV prevention programmes for sex workers, adolescent and young people, discordant couples; regulate and rapidly scale-up innovative community HIV testing initiatives; integrate social norm and behaviour change interventions into the delivery of social and HIV-related services. strengthening community systems and investment in case approach to the national response.



# 3. BASELINE METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 EPISTEMOLOGY

The Baseline Study is premised on a Third World Feminist epistemology<sup>20</sup>. This is because Zimbabwe is one of the least developed countries, previously known as the Third World. Third World feminism seeks to define Gender and Development from the viewpoint of countries in the Southern Hemisphere which share a similar pattern of colonisation and underdevelopment that argues that male centered approaches to understanding culture and tradition have contributed to a distortion of culture and tradition where African women are lumped into a single category of helpless and voiceless victims of a retrogressive indigenous patriarchal value system. This value system is interpreted to have a single rigid form of 'culture and traditions', which are understood and interpreted the same way by all men and women, regardless of individual gendered identities (class, location, social position, marital status) of men and women.

The Baseline underpinning epistemological positioning is that; patriarchy is not synonymous with culture, nor is modernity synonymous with women's emancipation. It focuses on identifying forms of feminist interpretation and resistance to patriarchy within culture and 'takes the battle to the cultural home-ground'.

*This means assuming a position of acknowledging how retrogressive certain cultural beliefs and practices are, while at the same time challenging the cultural authenticity of those values and practices. This is intended to 'kill' certain cultural arguments once and for all, so that when certain practices occur, the actors cannot hide behind 'culture', but can be understood for what they are, i.e. people behaving badly.*

## 3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Rarely does the development discourse subject itself to critique, assuming a position of knowledge of firstly what constitutes development, and secondly, who the development target is. "Indeed the poor in Africa have rarely been considered to be humans in their own right. They have always been the ones whom others would like to see changed, whether through Christianity, civilisation, research, or development projects. They are seldom thought to have a religion, a culture, or even a trading system of their own."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Mbilinyi M. *Research Methodologies in Gender Issues, Gender in Southern Africa, Conceptual and Theoretical Issues*, Meena Ruth Ed, SAPES Books Harare, 1992, p32.

<sup>21</sup> Anacleto Odhiambo, *Research into local culture: Implications for participatory development, Development and Culture*, Deborah Eade Editor, Oxfam GB in association with World Faiths Development Dialogue, David Philip, 2002, p168.

Odhiambo proceeds to argue that it must be acknowledged that 70% of Africa's population is rural and semi-literate. "Their knowledge will continue to be parochial, but specific to the realities of their daily lives. Most of this knowledge will continue to be transmitted through tradition from one generation to another. The tradition will continue to be guided mainly by cultural principles and values."<sup>22</sup>

Women and their social standing has been defined from the standpoint of cultural 'outsiders' and not 'insiders' who live and nuance their culture through complex familial and community webs of relationship and power. Women are acknowledged to be the transmitters of culture and traditional values, but they play no part in shaping the culture.

*External focus has been on portraying African culture as one dimensional rigid set of values and rules whose sole purpose is to oppress women. Women are, therefore, perceived as needing to be saved from their culture as victims, and not engaged with to interrogate culture as a source of wisdom. The main objective has been to obliterate anything deemed to be based on culture and traditions. However, when it comes to sexual and reproductive health, there are lot of positive and empowering aspects in cultural beliefs and traditions that can be used to advance women's rights, while at the same time there are retrogressive beliefs that have been claimed to have their basis in culture when they do not*

This has proved to be an insurmountable task in most instances where even the liberal feminist approaches of changing laws have failed to reduce domestic and gender-based violence. The emphasis on the total power of men and the utter powerlessness of women has fuelled oppressive and discriminatory practices as it provides presumed cultural justification for such behaviour.

In such a context, women's empowerment is better advanced through not just arguing the retrogressive nature of such values and practices, **but also challenging the very authenticity of some of these values and practices.**

The results of this baseline shall expose the simple fact that in a lot of cases, the violations of women's bodies and restrictions placed on their choices are not even culturally justifiable at all. They are in fact based on erroneous interpretations of culture and tradition, which interpretations are influenced by the desire by a patriarchal agent to control women in the family, community or nation at a given time. This explains the inconsistencies and contradictions within these traditions and cultural beliefs.

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<sup>22</sup> Odhiambo p.169

### 3.3 BASELINE STUDY PARAMETERS IN LINE WITH SCOPE OF WORKS IN THE CULTURE FUND PROJECT DOCUMENT

The proposed Culture Fund solution is targeting 6 000 adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged between 15 -24 years in the 6 DREAMS Zimbabwean districts of Mazowe, Gweru, Bulawayo, Mutare, Chipinge and Makoni over a two-year period. The target beneficiaries are situated in communities with high HIV/ Aids prevalence according to the DREAMS assessment and confirmed by the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey 2010/11 (ZDHS) and the 2012 Zimbabwe Population Census. While there have been many HIV awareness campaigns in the communities, the information has not been accessible to the AGYW either because the packaging was not appealing or societal structures inhibited their access. There is limited comprehensive knowledge of HIV among the target AGYW population with only 46% being knowledgeable, according to ZDHS 2015.

The target communities have some deeply rooted retrogressive cultural value systems, traditions and practices. Early marriage and early sexual debut practices disempower young girls and women and puts them at higher risk of HIV. The unequal relations between men and women in a patriarchal society limit the negotiating power of AGYW to use protective measures. The aggregate effect is a society undermining the health seeking behaviour and access to health services by AGYW. Furthermore, the lack of access to economic opportunities increases their vulnerability to risky behaviour as they seek livelihood opportunities. Faced with an identity crisis and lack of self-belief to assert themselves, the AGYW tend to lose hope and options to better lives, and internalize fatalistic attitudes with regards what they perceive to be 'their culture'.

The intervention is cognisant of the fact that men have a role in the crafting of viable and sustainable solutions in the fight to reduce HIV among the 15 -24 years women category. The intervention thrust will see the engagement of boys and men in target communities to enhance their awareness on the negative elements they perpetuate and the alternative role conscious men can play in the fight against HIV.

The solution starts with the baseline as a benchmark; exposing the norms, traditions and practices that are considered part of 'culture' when in fact they are not, and that trap AGYW into passivity, fuel HIV infections and hinder access to health delivery services. This will help with marking the lobby and advocacy positions within the communities. The baseline process outputs are designed to facilitate AGYW introspection on value and identity in order for them to be empowered to become confident in whom they are as people in the cultural context they live in. This in turn will increase their sense of entitlement to information and services and will catalyse them into seeking these services and becoming assertive in protecting themselves from STI and HIV infection

### 3.3 THE RESEARCH TEAM

Culture Fund is responsible for overall project implementation. The deliverable of the Baseline Report is the responsibility of Ubuntu Way/ Nzira Yehunhu Trust. The lead researcher, Luta Shaba, is a lawyer, gender expert, women's rights advocate, and svikiro/ spirit medium. The Research Assistants were Tawanda Gudhlanga and Sikhangele Ngwenya. Both are journalists and producers with the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. They were chosen for their ability to engage adult audiences in interrogative discussions due to the nature of their work. They had also been involved in similar investigative work in different capacities and brought the open-minded approach that is essential to obtaining the qualitative information that was intended to come from the focus group discussions. Their involvement was also strategic because they were skilled to repackage the information for broadcast, which is already a component of the project intervention implementation activities.

Each researcher was supported with a rapporteur responsible for the capture and compilation of the data generated under the supervision of the lead researcher. Teams of enumerators were identified from the participating NGOs, and were oriented and charged with administering the questionnaire in the research sites. The structured nature of the questions prevented respondent influence and data distortion.

The Baseline results were intended to provide concrete insights, correct information and solid arguments for AGYW to use in debunking false oppressive arguments based on 'culture and tradition', reclaiming their right to their health and bodily integrity, and use their power to engage in appropriate sexual behaviour and act to access reproductive health services, especially those that protect them from HIV.

### 3.4 TARGET POPULATION AND STUDY AREA

The project has the following targets and intended outcomes:

- ❖ 8 participating CBOs equipped with enhanced toolkit to engage community cultural barriers blocking AGYW from seeking health services
- ❖ 3,200 AGYW visiting service health centres
- ❖ 6,000 AGYW equipped with insights regarding the falsehoods in some of the cultural arguments barring them from accessing reproductive health services
- ❖ 200 AGYW empowered with creative enterprise abilities to stimulate increased demand for SRH services
- ❖ 40,000 members of the community reached with knowledge toolkit
- ❖ 12,000 adolescent girls and boys in schools knowledgeable on HIV and retrogressive cultural practices and norms

The Individual Questionnaire targeted the 1,200 AGYW and ABYM, where the project is targeted at 6,000 AGYW. These were randomly administered in 6 wards in each of the 6 districts, namely Gweru, Bulawayo, Mazowe, Chipinge, Makoni and Mutare.

The focus was on the AGYW and their male counterparts as these are the target population among which a change in attitudes and behaviours is expected. The questionnaire for this group focused on 3 categories of questions; namely, the correct cultural position, the erroneous position, and the ambiguous position. A balance was struck between questions that capture cultural inhibitors and those that capture cultural enhancers of AGYW empowerment. The questions were designed to establish the extent to which respondents knew and identified with the correct cultural values and traditions, and the extent to which they agreed with traditions that are not grounded in authentic culture. It is posited that an authentic cultural position can be identified on a particular tradition and custom and this was done through the focus group discussions and the literature review.

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The Baseline was light in nature due to the existence of secondary data obtained from interventions by other projects working on the DREAMS Innovation Challenge. Other writings on gender, feminism and culture have been referenced for data analysis and the compilation of the accurate cultural positions that shall be the target of the IEC materials.

#### **a) Oral Tradition as Source:**

A unique aspect of this study is that it relies on oral tradition as a source of some of the information that shall be used in the compilation of the values traditions, norms, taboos and practices under scrutiny. These values and their various permutations are commonly held as knowledge among indigenous Zimbabweans. Key informants from the traditional leadership and traditional spiritual practice were interviewed for clarifications on local nuances and/ or interpretation. The study is, therefore, sequenced to proceed on the assumption that these commonly held values, beliefs and practices are generally accepted and are beyond argument. What the study focuses on is the differences in understanding and application, and questioning the validity of those that oppress women, based on other more empowering values and practices from the same pool of cultural values and attitudes.

#### **b) Structured Questionnaires:**

Target group focused surveys provided quantitative data on common trends in thinking patterns and cultural interpretations around women's autonomy, bodily integrity, and control over sexual and reproductive choices. The findings from the questionnaires were triangulated with the qualitative in-depth information from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The sampling for the structured questionnaire was based on the numbers of target beneficiaries as indicated in the scope of works.

**c) The Questioning Technique**

The overall objective of the baseline study was to debunk falsehoods of values attitudes and beliefs that relate to women’s bodily integrity and sexual and reproductive health, and which are peddled as culture. It was therefore necessary to “test” respondents on what they knew about culture. An instance of this is the belief that women are supposed to be sexually ignorant, when in fact in cultural traditions women were taught about sex and sexuality during initiation ceremonies.

The Individual Questionnaire was structured along 3 clusters of statements; those that reflected the correct position regarding culture and tradition, other statements that reflected an erroneous position, and a third group which was of ambiguous statements which could be interpreted broadly or narrowly depending on a respondent’s understanding and interpretation. Positions taken depended on whether one applied a rigid and narrow interpretation, or had a broad liberal take on the statement. Some statements were repeated in a different format to check consistency of interpretation, while others gave a contrary position, for the same reason of checking consistency of understanding and interpretation of cultural positions regarding specific matters relating to women’s bodily integrity and choice.

**d) Semi -Structured Questionnaires**

Heavy reliance was placed on qualitative data from individual and group interviews. The questioning line for this group was designed to compile a tabulation of the specific values, norms, taboos and practices that directly and indirectly pertain to the identities of young women with regards their concept of self in the family and community, their femininity, their sexuality and expectations from parents, extended family and husbands with regards to the exercising choice in their sexuality and reproductive health. Contradictions and inconsistencies were discussed with this group. The expertise of Ubuntu Way/ Nzira yeHunhu was used to robustly interrogate the focus groups. This interrogation was designed to probe initial responses so as to elicit the information that usually does not get shared on initial inquiry. However, respondents were not pushed to any particular conclusion so as to allow for their independent opinions.

The members of community were surveyed through purposive sampling using Focus Group Discussions focusing on the following social categories:

- ❖ Young women aged 16 – 25 from the community
- ❖ Young men aged 16 – 25 from the community
- ❖ Key Informants - NGO workers, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Youth personnel
- ❖ Traditional Leaders, Traditional healers – male and female
- ❖ Local Opinion Leaders (male and female politicians, male and female, church leaders, CBOs)

**e) Study Parameters****Quantitative Component of Study**

Out of a targeted 1 200, the study was able to sample 1 045, which translates to 87% of the targeted number. This translated to an average of 174 questionnaires administered in each district. More than half, 58.5% of respondents were females versus 41.55% males. A total of 52 Focus Group Discussions were held with community opinion leaders, traditional leaders, groups of adolescent girls and young women, and groups of adolescent boys and young men. The last two were sometimes engaged as single sex groups and sometimes in combination to allow a platform for boys and girls to interrogate each other and assert themselves in the discussions. Combining the two sexes dealt away with creating an artificial environment with single sex groupings. The predominant respondents, 72% were out of school, having completed their O'levels or other lower levels of education. The respondents that were still in school participated as part of the community youth groups in the urban centres.



# 4. BASELINE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

## 4.1 LEVELS OF CORRECT KNOWLEDGE OF CULTURE AND TRADITION

*(Agreement with correct statements on various cultural aspects)*

The first set of questions contained statements that are culturally correct as commonly accepted and substantiated in great detail through the focus group discussions. These statements laid out a cultural context as it relates to the social standing and sexuality of a woman. These are presented below:

1. In African culture children generally take on their father's surname
2. When a couple marries usually they both go to the husband's home or village
3. A woman is considered married only when lobola has been paid for her
4. In African culture a woman is supposed to be a virgin when she gets married
5. A well-raised woman knows that it is important to sexually satisfy her husband
6. A woman who is past the expected age of marriage (tsikombi), has the right to engage in a sexual relationship
7. A man has the right to marry another woman if his wife fails to give him a son
8. Culturally, a man can must consult his current wife before marrying another woman
9. I know what initiation rites are
10. Initiation rites are part of our culture
11. Culturally, young men and women are taught about sex and sexuality during initiation into adulthood
12. In the family, it is the aunt or mother's sister who must teach a girl about sex and sexuality
13. In the family, it is the uncle who must teach the young man about sex and sexuality
14. A wife can report a husband who is not sexually fulfilling her to the family elders
15. Brewing beer for the ancestor is part of cultural spiritual practice
16. The African God is a Spirit that is neither a male nor a female
17. Culturally, the mother is more revered than the father as she is considered sacred
18. In our culture, it is known that the woman/mother/wife is the one that keeps the family together and functioning well
19. If you beat or insult your mother, you will go mad or have great misfortune (kutanda botso)
20. In our culture, polygamy is tolerated but it is not encouraged
21. Masungiro is a ritual to celebrate the birth of a new child by giving gifts to the mother of the bride

The high level of responses in agreement with the correct set of questions, 91% reflect a strong knowledge of culture and tradition as it relates to the selected areas by the target age group.

Table 1: Responses to CR Module

Single Ages	CR Module		Total	% Agree
	Agree	Disagree		
15	44	12	56	78.6
16	47	7	54	87.0
17	59	8	67	88.1
18	228	16	244	93.4
19	130	10	140	92.9
20	122	15	137	89.1
21	83	10	93	89.3
22	61	4	65	93.9
23	72	5	77	93.5
24	94	8	102	92.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>90.91</b>

Most of the respondents constituting 90.9% correctly agreed with the statements, with the older groups aged above 18 years reflecting stronger opinion regarding the correct set of questions. The younger respondents seemed more hesitant and disagreed with some of the correct cultural positions. (Table 1) This could reflect a lower level of critical analysis among the younger age group, as younger people tend to accept most of what they hear from peers and the community without forming opinions of their own. Table 1, shows that there is a sharp rise in knowledge of the correct cultural positions at age 18 years, the age at which most leave formal schooling. This can be attributed to their sense of independence to critique knowledge. Most rural girls get married at this age and this could add to the confidence, as marriage in African culture denotes a higher level of maturity and independence.

The most disagreed with statements (*more than 20% of respondents disagreeing*) were as follows:

- ❖ That a man is entitled to marry another wife when the first one fails to bear sons
- ❖ That a wife can report a husband who fails to satisfy her sexually to the family elders
- ❖ Knowledge of what initiation rites are
- ❖ That the African God is neither male nor female
- ❖ That the African mother is revered more than the father as she is considered sacred
- ❖ That a girl past the marriageable age (Tsikombi) has the right to engage in sexual relationships (which reflects an acceptance of the fact that an unmarried woman who has aged beyond marriageable age (30 years and above) gains sexual 'liberation' from the strictures of abstinence)

The first set of statements coded CR contained basic cultural values and practices. The higher incidence of disagreement with them demonstrates ignorance of culture and suggests that the correct selection was based more on opinion than real knowledge of culture. This raises a fundamental conceptual problem. Where the dominant opinions coincide with cultural values, the two reinforce each other for the betterment of women's status. On the other hand, when interpretations are wrong, they often serve to either remove a privilege that existed in culture or worsen an ambiguous position that could have been positively interpreted.

However, where there is conflict, it can serve women's empowerment well if the opinions are progressive, for instance the opinion that disagrees with the statement that the man is entitled to marry another wife when the first one fails to bear sons. Within cultural belief and practice this is correct. So within a gendered approach to social development, to disagree with this is progressive and should be encouraged with arguments from biological science. On the other hand, there are cultural beliefs and practices that empower women. When the opinions proffered disagree with these cultural tenets this creates a problem, which is the main focus of this study. Apart from the first statement listed in the highlighted box above, all the rest are cultural beliefs and practices that are rooted in local culture and are tremendously empowering for women.

In this study it is posited that there is a 'traditional patriarchy' and a 'modern patriarchy'. The former is what is reflected in the responses to the above correct-of-culture statements, where gender roles and social positions are layered with different levels of sexual empowerment, relational transaction and spiritual/religious beliefs that give each sex their own power and leave the middle ground of interaction fairly flexible. In this 'sex-free zone' of interaction women could negotiate power and status, albeit within a system that was still predominantly patriarchal.<sup>23</sup> The modern patriarchy is the mindset that seeks to consolidate

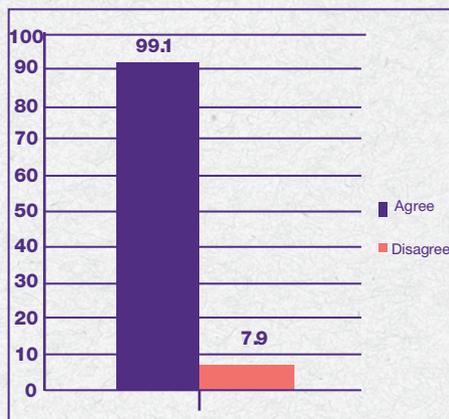
<sup>23</sup> Predominantly because patriarchy in local culture was not total, where for instance there was sometimes matrilocality 'kuvaka kwavatezvara', and children took on the maternal name and totem 'zita rekumadzisekuru'

male hegemony within the modern social economy by coming up with opinion-based rules for women and arguing that these are based on our culture so as to make them irrefutable in their presumed authenticity. It is not the purpose of this study to generate an argument regarding the source of this modern patriarchy, but the constant reference to the Bible when pressed for source of certain incorrect beliefs proffered as culture provides part of the explanation of this recent re-interpretation of culture.

## 4.2 ON THE SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN IN CULTURE

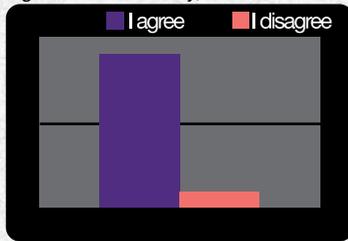
The social position of women in culture is an important element to discuss because it provides the anchor upon which the specific aspects relating to bodily integrity, sexuality and sexual rights revolve. Respondents were given different profiles/roles of a woman and were asked to rank them in order of importance. These were wife, aunt (tete/babakazi), chief's wife, mother-in-law, grandmother, spirit medium and wife in a polygamous marriage. In every district and every ward, the position of wife was deemed to be the most important. "The woman is the pillar of the family. She is the family itself, she is almost everything, as she is the strength that holds everything together."

Figure 1: In our culture it is known that the woman/mother/wife is the one who keeps the family together so it functions well



It was observed that although the aunt, tete /babakazi, also has power over the male members of the family, in the modern setting sometimes she becomes jealous of the success of her brother's daughters and can bewitch them out of spite. Clashes with the mother-in-law come from 'ownership' of the son and needing to control him even when he has married. In Mazowe the participants said "Zvamuri kutibvunza zvese izvo, vanhu vese ivavo munhu mumwe chete (one woman plays various roles depending on the situation at hand).

Figure 2: In the family, it is the aunt or mother's sister who must teach a girl about sex and sexuality



Respondents were unanimous in ranking lowest the woman in a polygamous marriage, i.e. the second and subsequent wives. They argued that polygamy brings disharmony to the family. This disproves that polygamy is allowed, but rather demonstrated that it is just tolerated but not encouraged. Some communities observed that the spirit medium is irrelevant since mediums are dead people who have no place in modern society. These reasons given were clearly Christian-based, and demonstrate an interesting “shopping basket” approach to culture.

Perceptions about the dress code for women, and the description of the African God, show that juxtaposing Christianity and culture brings on contestation, where the latter has been perceived to be inherently superior to ‘native’ ways of doing things. This perception, disguised as ‘modernity’ has facilitated a lot of the erosion of culture. As clarified, this report is not intended to create a religious debate, but rather to point out that some of the oppressive arguments against women that are placed within culture do not belong to culture, and are in fact based in the Christian religion.

Through the haste to be ‘modern’, some of the fundamental cultural beliefs and practices that empower women have been discarded like the proverbial baby with the bath water. For instance the feminine principle and the sacredness of the woman in ATR is fundamental in understanding the true status of the African woman, regardless of the extent to which individual women claimed and used this power to their advantage. What springs to mind is the mother who constantly reminds the children “*Ngozi yangu muchaiona!*” (You shall deal with my spirit of vengeance!) when the children are being disrespectful.

Although there was strong debate where some respondents argued that it is not possible to ‘go back’ to the old ways, it was also emphasized that cultural values are a part of what makes us people with hunhu/ubuntu, and the loss of these values has a lot to contribute to the high levels of family disintegration and dysfunction, where children now feel that they no longer need to listen to their parents because they ‘now have rights’.

The results from this question reflect a breakdown of culture and traditions to the extent that the role of the aunt has been watered down. She is the anchor for the women folk within a patriarchal family setting and has the power to step in as a representative of the male authority. She can chastise errant males, she tutors the young women into adulthood, and should provide support to the sisters-in- law. It is not clear what influence whittled down the power of the role of aunt, and it may be necessary to engage communities on discussion about this. The reason behind this suggestion is that when it comes to teaching about sexuality and providing sexual and reproductive information within the family, she is the main player. The same applies to the diminished role of the grandmother who serves a similar function within the family.

## 4.3 ON THE SEX OF GOD IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SPIRITUALITY

A fairly high 64.9% of the respondents correctly agreed with the statement that the African God is a Spirit that is neither male nor female. The responses from the focus group discussions on the concept of 'God' were a bit more confused than those from the individual questionnaire, with the elders especially from Chipinge, Makoni, and Mazowe erroneously declaring that the 'African' God is male.

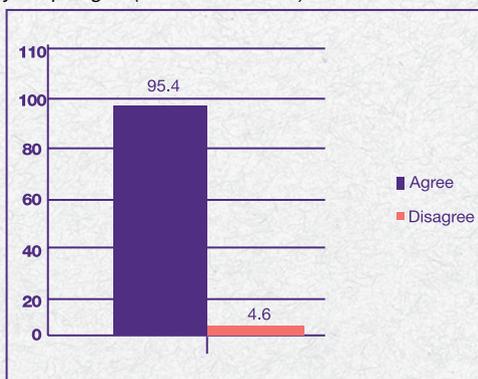
This question was deliberately included based on the premise that 'culture' includes a people's spiritual beliefs, and that one cannot claim to fully understand 'culture' without this understanding of the spiritual/religious beliefs because they underpin a lot of the values and practices, including what is considered taboo and what is applauded. The discussion of the spiritual/religious is important because most arguments around the oppression of women and their subordination are based on religious texts. The oppression and subordination is therefore understood as being 'god-given' or 'divinely ordained' and the 'natural order of things'. It is never posited what this means for people who do not subscribe to a particular religion that espouses these teachings. Further, it is not asked what this argument means in a context where these teachings were actually imported, in the sense of being of a colonial package of modernisation including Christianity.

The final question is that if our culture does not include this 'foreign' God, and if the teachings of women as having come off the rib of a man are not part of the traditional spiritual philosophy, does it not require the 'gender and development' sector to investigate the true cultural position of women in our culture and use it to advance women's rights? This would require less energy than has been spent trying to argue with a non-existent culture that has proved to be extremely amorphous, precisely because in most instances it is based on personal opinions of the dominant people in a group or family, and hence undefeatable.

The relevance of this aspect of the discussions in this study is that the control of women's sexuality and access to information on sexual and reproductive health has largely been based on beliefs and attitudes that are blamed on culture when in fact they are based on Christian values. By locating such values in a context of a male supreme being whose power is exercised through predominantly male functionaries, this value system replaces the religious beliefs system located in the African spirituality which recognizes the principle of the divine feminine, which espouses woman as a powerful creator who has bodily integrity and celebrates a femininity that includes an empowered sexuality.

Western spiritualism is espousing this as something new in spiritualism, and yet African Culture has always revered the 'Mother', and not just as the procreator, but as embodying the creative processes of the Supreme Deity and Mother Earth as Nurturer, "Nyika ndiMai" and therefore Sacred in her very being. Once she attained 'womanhood' with her first menstruation, her body became inviolable, so much that even her parents were no longer allowed to beat her in the act of disciplining. What is encouraging is that a large number are of the correct opinion as this provides an important basis for discussion regarding the empowerment of women and girls within the cultural discourse.

Figure 3: In our culture if you beat or insult your mother, you will go mad or have bad luck until you apologise (i.e. kutanda botsa)



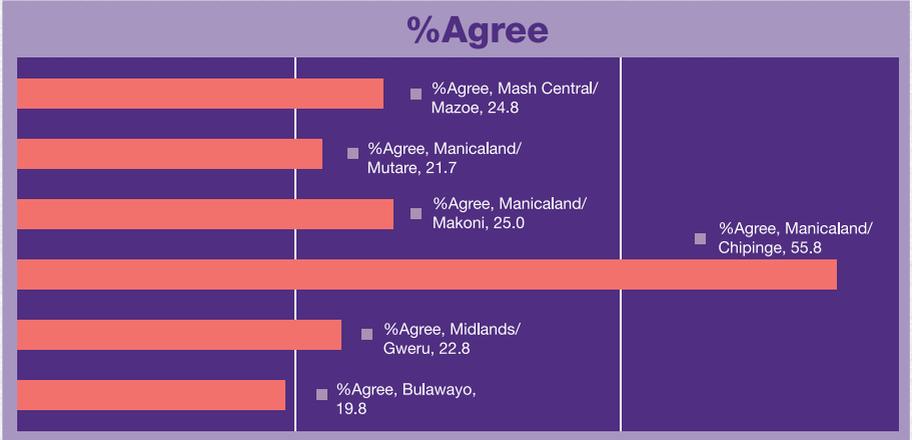
The above statement with which 95.4% of the respondents agreed with is based on the spiritual principle of reverence for the mother, and the involvement of the maternal ancestors in ensuring that the husband and in particular the children respect the mother. Laws and policies have made tremendous inroads into women’s empowerment, but as long as the underlying values underpinning people’s behaviours; *(the personal values and the ways in which these play out with regards choices in expressions of sexuality and sexual behaviour, as well as conduct in intimate and social relationships, family values and societal norms)* remain imbedded in false notions of what constitutes correct cultural behaviours, women will continue being victims of these norms and values.

## 4.4 ON INITIATION RITES:

Question CR9 was a factual statement capturing whether the respondents knew about initiation rites or not. Although 31.1 % professed not knowing what they are, 80.5% know that they are part of our culture. There was ignorance regarding what is taught during these rites, with 79.2% disagreeing that during these rites young men and women are taught about sex and sexuality. There is consistency in the inaccurate knowledge regarding women’s sexuality and culture as also reflected in the answers to ER 6 of the questionnaire where 53.9% of the respondents agreed that a well raised girl should not know about sex and sexuality, while this sentiment was echoed in the follow up ER12 question where 53.8% agreed that it is not culturally proper for a young girl to know about sex and sexuality. In question ER 13, a majority of 70% of the respondents agreed that young women must remain ignorant about all things sexual until they get married. This is in direct contrast to the response to question AM 7 where 91.8% agreed with the statement that a married woman is expected to know how to sexually please her husband.

### 4.4.1 LEVELS OF INCORRECT KNOWLEDGE OF CULTURE AND TRADITION

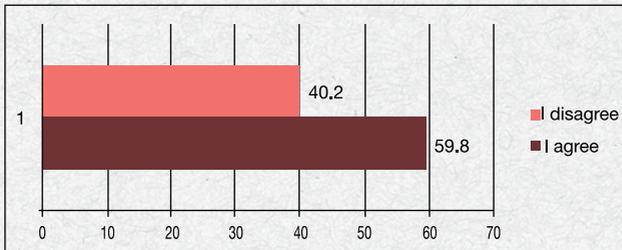
Figure 4: District by ER Module



The statements in this section were all incorrect pertaining to cultural values, beliefs and practices. The purpose was to check the prevalence of the acceptance of incorrect cultural beliefs among the target group. Only 27% of the respondents agreed with the incorrect statements about culture. Among those that agreed to the incorrect statements a bigger percentage was from Chipinge, about 56% as indicated in Fig 9 above.

### 4.4.2 ADOPTION OF THE HUSBAND’S TOTEM

Figure 5: A woman is supposed to adopt her husband’s totem (mutupo/isibongo) when she gets married



The first statement ER 1 had 59.8 respondents agreeing with it. This is another classic example of pervasive distortions being peddled as culture. This distortion is so pervasive that even some elders in the communities initially agreed with it until further probed. It was only after further probing that some retracted and explained the confusion, while others stuck to their positions even when it had been demonstrated that culturally this amounts to a taboo as it borders on the sacrilegious. The source of this confusion is the civil marriage whereupon the woman assumes the man's surname. The totem is a different matter altogether.

Regardless of one's surname, which is a colonial concept, the totem is a spiritual marker. It is that which is used to trace one's genealogy following the paternal line. In local culture, one's totem is the spiritual 'DNA' in that even when one adopts a different surname, a spirit medium/seer can identify that person's true totem animal. Any spiritual family debts follow this line, as do the blessings. So for instance, if there is an avenging spirit in the family, it will only target those of the lineage of the wrongdoer (sons) for compensation, and will not affect those of another totem (Ngozi will not target the children of girl children as they are considered *vana vemukuwasha*, i.e. *vatorwa* – the children of the son-in-law are not blood relatives).

In the event of mediumship, one can be chosen as a vessel for a spirit only in accordance with one's lineage as reflected in their totem. One cannot channel a spirit of another totem, except in rare circumstances of a spirit from the maternal side, as these are expected to go through offspring from their own's totem line. In *kusuma* for women for any purpose, be they single or married, the supplications must always be directed at her own paternal and maternal ancestors.

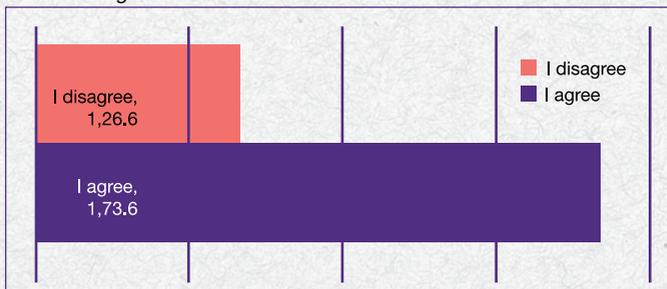
**To illustrate this;** Chipo is of the Mhofu (Eland) totem. Her Chidao/Isibongo is Chihera/ MaMpofu. She is not allowed to eat the meat of the eland or dress in its skin as people of her totem venerate the eland. They are not allowed to kill it and hold it sacred to them. When she sees it in the wild, she ululates for it and calls out its praise as in the praise poetry of the eland.

If she marries Tendai Toriro, of the Shumba (Lion) totem, her Chidao/Isibongo does not change to MaSibanda/UmaSibanda. This is for her sisters-in-law. She can adopt her husband's surname and call herself Mrs. Toriro; but in our culture, that is as far as it goes, she retains her identity, autonomy and power as a Chihera. When her husband wrongs her and wants to apologise, he knows to clap his hands and recite her Chidao /Isibongo and say Ngaisiye matambo Chihera/ Ngicela uxolo Mampofu. He dares not call her by his totem!

This was borne by the traditional leaders who were very clear that even though in some communities women were changing their totems, culturally this was not proper, even citing the relatives can perform the ritual of 'kutema rukarwa' which is marking and drawing out the burial place for the deceased woman.

### 4.4.3 CONTROL OF FERTILITY

Figure 6: The use of contraceptives (the means to avoid getting pregnant) by women is a modern Western thing



Although 78.4% of the respondents were of the opinion that the use of contraceptives (ways to prevent pregnancy) by women is a modern Western phenomenon, this was refuted by the focus group discussions with the traditional leaders, especially those from Makoni giving the following traditional ways:

The use of traditional medicine “*kukosa gavi*”; the act of tying knots representing planned number of children on a special bark”. This rope would be tied around the waist. Another method was “*gavi renhanzva*”; the soft strip from the bark of the *nhanzva* tree that a woman chews daily and stops only when she wants to conceive.

### 4.4.4 THE HEADSHIP OF THE FAMILY AND WOMEN’S SUBSERVIENCE

ER 2 and ER 3, in combination, stated that the man is the head of the household and the woman has no say in how the family is run, and that culturally, a woman must know her place as an inferior to the man. Only 54.6% agreed with the first part, but a large 84.3 % agreed with the latter part. The latter finding is more telling of the predominant value system. Although the perception of shared decision-making in the family has gained traction, the ‘cultural’ value of the women’s inferiority is deeply imbedded.

However, the adults had a different take on this question phrased differently in the focus group discussion. When asked about the roles of men and women within a family, what emerged was a clear pattern of shared responsibility. The task allocation weighs heavily on the woman in terms of domestic chores, as it does on the man in ensuring that family is provided for. Beyond this, the expectations for ensuring that the children are well raised to have good manners (kuve netsika nehunhu), that there is order in the home, and that there is sexual satisfaction, lies equally with both parties. This is illustrated by the table below.

Women's roles	Men's roles
❖ To establish the family, to make sure it becomes an establishment.	❖ Impregnating wives/ the wives bear children to grow the family.
❖ Carry the pregnancy and give birth to children for the family growth and continuity	❖ Making sure that the family is well provided for
❖ To build the family and make it stay together.	❖ Leads and ensures the family is stable.
❖ Providing sexual pleasure to the husband.	❖ Controls everything within the family.
❖ To make sure the family and home are stable.	❖ Takes care of all the maintenances within the home
❖ Training and teaching children is done by the mother.	❖ Keeps the family going
❖ Supporting the family	❖ Having sex with his wife because the woman will say 'handina kuvinga sadza pano'/ I did not come for food.
❖ Health and life come from the mother to children and the family.	

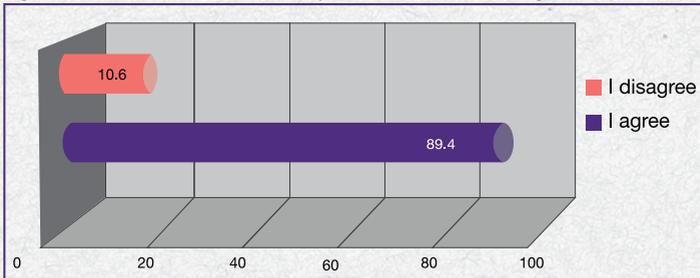
From these discussions, it emerged that culturally, women are expected to be respectful of their husbands, who in turn are expected to return the courtesy. Of course, the definition of 'respect' can be very subjective, but it also came out in the discussions that husbands were not supposed to be the source of terror in the home. This is when the family elders come in to smoothen things out in instances of tyrant husbands. The wife and family are not supposed to say 'kwauiwa' / 'the terror is back' when the father comes home after a day's outing.

From these responses, it is evident that providing for the family features highly on men's roles, where although the ability to sexually satisfy one's wife is of priority, it is acknowledged that failure to provide for the family will affect sex in the home. Although this was not directly asked, it appears that inadequacies in this area have a tremendous impact on family harmony and could partly explain the increase in domestic violence. Therefore, when these issues come up in dealing with domestic violence, they should not be treated as mere excuses, but real drivers of frustration. This insight can inform the way we conduct counselling for domestic violence.

### 4.4.5 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND THE BEATING OF WIVES

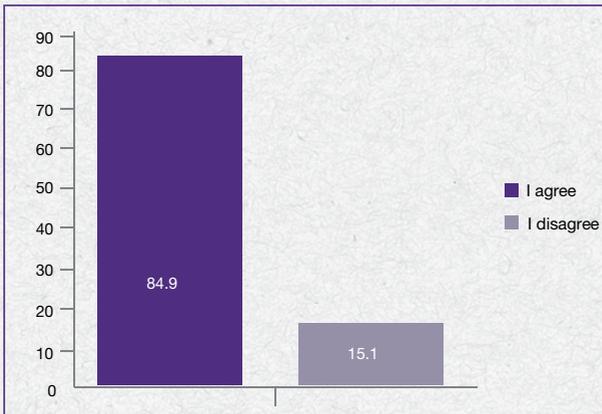
It was encouraging to note that in ER4 only 28.1% agreed with the statement that in our culture the man is allowed to beat his wife whenever she displeases him. This was supported by the responses to AM 2 and AM 3, where 89.4% agreed that a woman who is beaten by her husband has the right to report him to the family elders, and 72.4% agreed that a man whose wife reports him for beating can be made to give her a goat in compensation.

Figure 7: A woman who is beaten by her husband has the right to report him to the family elders



The young people were clear in their responses that it is not ‘macho’ to beat up your wife as reflected below.

Figure 8: Culturally, a ‘real man’ is never violent with a woman because he knows he is too strong for her



In the focus group discussions, this was explained as the difference between chastisement and beating. The traditional leaders were asked if in our culture the beating of wives is allowed. Most of the elders in the communities were of the same opinion that it is not allowed, and the reasons provided revolved around the status of the woman within the family, and the fact that marriage is primarily about building relationships, wherein violence becomes counter-productive.

*One key informant noted that, "Culture does not allow it. Fighting is a result of failure in communication. It is failure to think, and furthermore it does not solve anything." Chief Makope, KII, Mazowe*

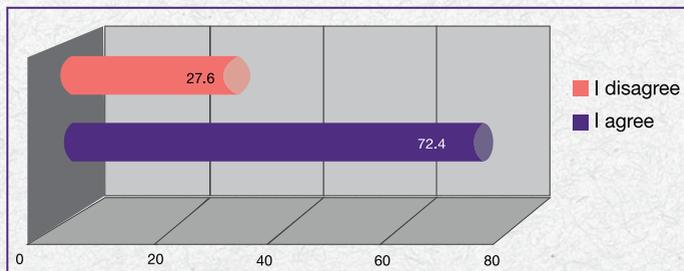
The few who said that a wife should be beaten based their arguments on the distinction between chastisement and outright beating where they were of the opinion that the former is light and acceptable. They said culturally this is allowed, although they could not explain why the man was made to pay a goat in apology if his wife reported him to the family elders. Of interest is the response to ER 18 where only 27% agreed that married women have no control over the money in the home. The pervasive perception is that women have no control over household finances/resources, which is incorrect. It is possible that the clash of the reality and the perception at couple level could be a contributory factor to the violence that is triggered by financial disagreements in the home.

A question was asked, "Under what circumstances is a man made to pay a goat to a wife that he has beaten?" The answer was that because the beating of wives is not allowed culturally, if she is beaten, the wife will go back to her parents' home. Getting her back means that a penalty will have to be paid. Being penalised/fined "kuripa" means that something that is not allowed in customary law happened. It is a breach and so it is punished. Offering a goat will be to "close the scars" of the beating the wife. A woman cannot just go back with her husband without the husband paying something to the parents.

Young people are of the opinion that gender based violence is wrong, as reflected in the response to the statement in AM18, which stated that culturally a 'real man' will never be violent to a woman because he knows he is too strong for her. 84.9% of the respondents agreed with this. This was echoed in the responses to AM 2 which stated that a woman who is beaten by her husband has the right to report him to the family elders, to which 89.4% agreed.

Although 89.4% knew that a beaten wife has the right to report the man to the family elders, a smaller percentage of 72.4% however agreed in AM 3 that culturally, a man whose wife reports him for beating her can be fined a goat as compensation. This reflects that although it is known that a report can be made, for some it is not clear that there is a penalty for the offense and what it is

Figure 9: Culturally, a man whose wife reports him for beating her can be fined a goat as compensation



Maybe if this was communicated, it could act as a deterrent, especially where someone feels that a report just ends as a complaint which can be ignored as there are no consequences.

The knowledge of this alternative route to handling domestic violence could be also useful in dealing with such cases because it keeps the family intact as it carries no jail term for the perpetrator, and it restores the women’s dignity in the family through the compensation of the goat which is paid to her at a family gathering where a violent husband asks for forgiveness. It also encourages women to open up because it is culturally acceptable.<sup>24</sup>

## 4.5 POLYGAMY

Statement CR 7 stated that in African culture, a man has the right to marry another woman if his wife fails to give him a son. Almost half, 49.3 %, agreed with this statement. This is another reflection of opinion because the fact is that this is correct even though the conscience of the modern person would bring in conscience. It could also be viewed as a reflection of the ambiguity regarding this matter.

In a different question almost half again, 49.6% in AM 6, agreed with the statement that in our culture all men are expected and allowed to have many wives. This is another question where what appears to be an opinion that does not fully support a position given as culture is in line with the facts. This is so because it is not an expectation as reflected with CR 20 which stated that in our culture polygamy is tolerated but it is not encouraged, and 81.8% agreed with this. Of interest was the stronger position in AM 5 where 72.6% of the respondents agreed that a first wife can refuse to have her husband marry a second wife.

The correct position is that culture and tradition allow men to marry more than one wife, which is different from having extra marital relationships. The same protocols apply, in that he is not supposed to have sex with the intended second bride until after he has officially married her, following the proper channels of consultations with the first wife (Vahosi), his uncles, and courtship of the woman who is brought into the household.

<sup>24</sup> It is acknowledged that some families are so poor that they do not have the goats for a man to offer, but the sentence given by family should be deterrent enough.

Promiscuity is not the same as marrying a second wife. With polygamy, the man marries the second wife, and can now have sexual relations with her and her only, in addition to the existing wife. Marrying a second wife did not absolve a man of responsibility towards the first wife in terms of security of shelter and a fending for her and her children.

This reflects the power of the wife within the traditional marriage, contrary to the general perception that the decision lies with the man alone and that the woman is a hapless victim. In Shona there is 'kuramba kuparikwa' where a woman can call in the reinforcement of the extended family to support her in blocking a second wife. This is why nurturing good relationships with the in-laws was so important because if a woman is not in good books with the in-laws, they could use this to spite her.

This disproves the justification by men to have many sexual relationships as this is considered to be acting as expected, namely acting like 'a bull' because culture allows a man to have many wives.

#### **4.5.1 PLEDGING OF YOUNG GIRLS IN MARRIAGE AND TO APPEASE AVENGING SPIRITS**

The question was asked whether pledging young girls was a normal practice in African culture. The traditional leaders were very clear that it is not the norm. It is only done in cases of extreme poverty and lack i.e. if a parent wants a cow to use as draught power, then he can pledge his daughter as payment. It was pointed out that it messes up the life of the girl who has been pledged. It also encourages laziness on the part of some parents because one will be planning that if they marry off the child then they access wealth without having to wait for her to grow up and be married properly.

Some explanations were proffered for this practice, for instance the desire to promote marriage within the same communities "Kuroorana vematongo" so as to build relations within families. The question was also asked whether it was always the case that an avenging spirit (Ngozi) had to be compensated with a virgin girl-child. This question was asked because this is an area where the position has been greatly misunderstood to the detriment of the girl child. It does not always follow that this be so because it all depends on the context of the murder that took place. A murdered woman's avenging spirit cannot demand a virgin girl. A man who had offspring cannot demand a girl either. The rationale behind the demand for a virgin girl is for the propagation of the murdered person's lineage. The argument here is that he was cut off from extending his line by the termination of his life by the murderer. Even in such cases, relatives of the murderer can negotiate for the payment of extra cows in place of a child. Yet, some people value their cattle more and would prefer to sacrifice a girl from a vulnerable family, usually where the father died, so as to preserve their herd.

## 4.5.2 WHETHER IN AFRICAN CULTURE WOMEN WHO SPEAK IN THE PRESENCE OF MEN HAVE HUNHU/UBUNTU

A very high 65.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement in AM 8 which stated that women who speak in the presence of men have no hunhu/ubuntu. In all the focus discussions that were conducted, not once did any person, male or female, mention that women who speak in the presence of men have no hunhu/ubuntu.

The focus group discussions provided a stark contrast to the commonly held belief that culturally women are not supposed to speak in the presence of men. One of the ways in which women did this was to use idioms and proverbs, *tsumo nemadimikira*, which was a philosophical way to present harsh truths in an objective manner and create distance between themselves and what they were saying. This form of speech enables women to articulate difficult issues, including those that relate to sensitive topics like the body, sex and sexuality.

What came out as the issue for women with hunhu/ubuntu was not that they were not supposed to speak, but that the manner in which a woman spoke and aired her opinions, was supposed to be with respect and in a manner that was structured to build relationships and harmony. She was supposed to be constructive, ‘*munhu anovaka*’, and not indulge in gossip or being rude. It was also stated that she had to use a modulated voice and not speak loudly and brashly ‘*kuvhangedzera*’.

This is bolstered by the role of the *tete/ubabakazi* in the family, because when people were asked what her role is the responses were that it is advising the family, making decisions, and even overturning decisions made by other family members. She is the mediator in disputes among family members, and her decisions stand.

The fact that young women have capitulated to the lie that women must not speak in the presence of men has generated some misconceptions now attributed to culture.

## 4.5.3 APPROPRIATE CLOTHING FOR WOMEN

The question of whether it is part of our culture for women to wear long dresses was put across in ER 5 and 82.1% of the respondents agreed that this was so. In the focus group discussions this matter was brought up with the traditional leaders. Even though their response to the same question corresponded to the responses in the questionnaires, insight emerged when the follow up question was asked as to how they explained the fact that before colonization we dressed in loin skins and *mbikiza*, and it was stated that indeed in the past women wore less, but we now have to adjust to modern fashions. The general consensus was for both women and men to dress ‘decently’.

*“Dressing is not a big issue. Many have been brainwashed because people have learnt to be ruled. People have chosen to just adopt foreign cultures. But we have to move with the times. Loin skins were worn back then because it was the fashion of that time. Just as well people do not wear “matererini” right now because fashion has changed.”*

*Community elder.*

This false portrayal of culture as meaning that women should have their bodies covered up is another example of the fallacies peddled by what this study is calling 'modern patriarchy.' The correct position is factually clear despite arguments to the contrary. It is beyond argument that before colonisation and the introduction of the concept of 'covering one's body' as introduced by missionaries under the heavy influence of the Catholic church and Victorian values, indigenous Africans wore scanty apparel that consisted mostly of loin skins for the common person and later on combinations of cloth and leather attire for royalty and the affluent (*nhembe, machira and chuma in the form of mhapa and mbikiza*).

The 'body' was a functional vehicle that was not sexualized beyond respecting the actual reproductive organs by covering them. Styles of wearing loincloths and beadwork conveyed messages of single status for women, and hence availability, or married and, hence, off-limits. Both sexes adorned themselves in a combination of skin, cloth, beads, bangles, earrings, feathers, necklaces, armbands and leg bands, as well as body painting and decorative tattoos. Admiration of the body and form of the opposite sex was as part of a composite appreciation, the same way one appreciates the form of the face and figure. A young maiden could appreciate a lad's muscular torso and strong arms as part of his masculinity and how he carried himself. A young man could appreciate a woman's breast size or the flare of her hips as part of her beauty. Any such appreciation was part of the overall attractiveness of the maiden, and most certainly not as an invitation to pounce on her in an act of rape. If he wanted to bed her, he married her. Body parts were called what they were for there was no shame or sexualisation attached to them.

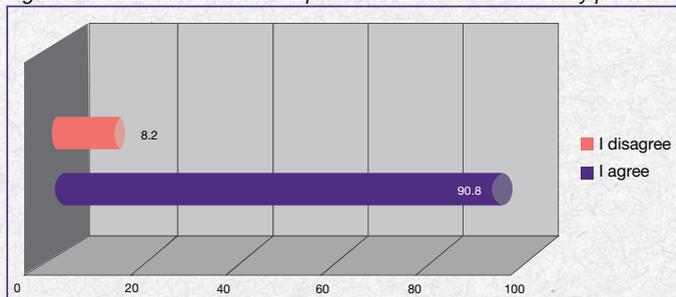
#### 4.5.4 GENDER, SEX AND PLEASURE

In ER 10, 52.5% of the respondents agreed that the woman's body belongs to her husband and she has no say on her sexuality (when and how to have sex). A small percentage, 34.4 % agreed with the statement that it is not important for a woman to orgasm or to experience pleasure during sex in ER 11.

It is interesting to compare this with the responses to CR 12, where 91% agreed that it is the aunt or mother's sister who must teach a girl about sex and sexuality, and in CR 13, 88.7 % agreed that it is the uncle who must teach the boy about sex and sexuality. The obvious question then becomes that if both the boy and the girl are being taught about sex and sexuality, does it not follow then that there is an expectation that both should enjoy this activity? The adults in the focus groups discussions made it very clear that both partners should enjoy sex and they are taught the techniques of how to pleasure each other.

Of concern is the pervasiveness of the opinion among the young people that the woman is not supposed to enjoy sex. This fuels spin off attitudes like that if she does, then she is of loose morals. It also means that young couple may not be talking about sex as much as they should in their relationships because of this perception. It is common knowledge that open sexual communication in intimate relationships is a factor in reducing the risk of passing on STIs between partners.

Figure 10: A married woman is expected to know how to sexually please her husband



The sexually docile and ignorant African woman does not belong to Shona or Ndebele culture. A woman is expected to know about her body and how it functions during the procreation stages, (from menstruation to childbirth) she must be technically competent to enjoy and give pleasure during sex, but must preserve her virginity for marriage. Culturally there is a clear difference between knowing about sex and doing it, where the latter is severely looked down upon and carries heavy social sanctions.

*It was made very clear that parents do not teach their children as the subject is too sensitive. The responsibility to teach young women about marriage and sex belongs to the grandmother and the aunt because they are the closest and are not feared. The teaching involves showing the young girls the female genitalia and explaining its parts, something which a mother is strictly forbidden to do because a child must never look at where she came from. In every site there was a bemoaning of the loss of this traditional institution of vana tete and vana mbuya as it was considered very important. It is a challenge to the development sector to explore how the nhanga for girls and the dare for boys can be re instituted in the modern social setting.*

## SUMMARY OF WHAT BOYS AND GIRLS ARE TAUGHT DURING INITIATION

Girls were taught generally how to behave themselves as girls and as wives and how to ensure that their husbands and families are well taken care of. Girls would be taught to please their men in bed and general hygiene issues in the bedroom. Boys were taught to be respectable men and to lead and take care of their families through provision of basic needs. They were taught how to control their sexual desires and to be faithful. Circumcision was a ritual performed to boys who are transitioning to manhood.



# 5 CONCEPT OF BODY, FEMININITY/MASCULINITY AND CONTROL OF SEXUALITY

The high expectation that girls and women should be sexually ignorant amply demonstrates one of the main contradictions regarding the control of women's sexuality that is a part of the personal opinions of modern patriarchs. Unfortunately, these opinions have been clothed as, misrepresented, justified and accepted as 'culture'. Simply put, if a young woman is supposed to be ignorant about sex and sexuality she cannot simultaneously be expected to know how to sexually please her husband when she gets married because the teaching was not provided in the first place.

## i. THE FACTS:

The focus group discussions left no doubt that initiation rites are a part of both the local Shona and Ndebele culture, although the levels of retention of the knowledge about it differed among the various communities. Of note was the fact that the more rural communities, specifically in Chipinge and Makoni, had stronger memories and surviving practices as compared to the more urban communities like Bulawayo and Gweru. In Mutapa Ward in Gweru and Ceasar Mine in Mazowe a heavy influence of the Chewa immigrant culture has resulted in an incorporation of the Chinamwali practice into the local culture. In rural Chipinge, the practice is still traditional. In Bulawayo the respondents explained in detail that in Ndebele it is called Ukusoka. It is called Emhlangeni in Xhosa Culture. The Ukusoka/ Circumcision in Ndebele is the Inxwala Ceremony for the Xhosa. It was explained as follows:

Girls were taught to tell an elder when they first had their menstruation. Upon her first menstruation the girl would tell her aunt who would prepare a special "sadza" from millet flour, and inform the grandmother/mother that the girl has now grown and is not supposed to be punished by beating or made to do certain things. The Grandmothers slaughtered a chicken in honour of the girl as part of this rite of passage. Girls going through this rite would be taken into a forest 'camp' for their teachings. In Gweru, it was explained that prior to coming of age, boys and girls swam and bathed in the same rivers and pools. An example was given of when girls would float on their backs and provoke the boys by calling out "*Heri sadza mutekwe!*" "Here is your nourishment!" with reference to their womanhood, safe in the knowledge that none of the boys would dare touch them as it was strictly forbidden. This provocation was also done even when out gathering firewood by flicking the waist in the direction of the boys.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> It must be noted that in this setting girls always moved in groups when out gathering firewood, mitsvairo (broomsticks) or going to fetch water, and always had the safety of numbers.

At the onset of the initiation process the girls would be asked to go into the river to swim with boys. When they got out, they would be told this was the last time they were swimming with boys and the lessons would begin. They would be checked by the elders to see if they were still virgins. They were warned against having sex with boys until they got married because now they could make babies. A “coming out” ceremony was held after the initiation.

For the boys, there was circumcision, and the testing of their manhood. If they were weak they were given herbs to strengthen their libido and erections. If they were too virile, they would be ‘blunted’ so that they could control their sex drive. They were especially warned against sleeping with older women. They were told that if their blood got mixed with that of an older woman, they would get burnt or have boils on their private parts. This was used as a deterrent from sexual experimentation.

**Mr Pumlani Moyo** - Chief Lugwalo of Makepesi, had this to say; “There is the “ukusoka” rites whereby boys would be circumcised and taught how to fight. The training on how to use a spear is called “ukubhaqa insemu” whereby one would try to pierce a wheel in the middle. The training on hunting is called “ukuzingela”. A young man could reach 30 years before they got married. Sex education would involve lessons on how to handle a man or a woman and this was done by aunts and uncles. Girls would also be taught how to cook, farm, how to take care of children and pottery. There would be a ceremony at the end to signify that they are mature. A cow would be slaughtered.”

The findings from the discussions refuted the opinions of the young people, of whom 45.9% (almost half) in question ER 9 agreed that a boy is not expected to preserve virginity before marriage. The ‘syllabus’ of the initiation teachings also disproves the notion that it is part of our culture for young men to sexually experiment and be ‘the bulls’. They are supposed to be so with their wives and not in acts of promiscuity.

The adolescent girls from Cowdry Park and Mpopoma in Bulawayo were also asked; “*What rituals do we perform in our culture to show that a boy has graduated to being a man/ a girl has graduated to being a woman?*” They were largely ignorant of these rites. They spoke of the significance of menstrual cycles and the elongation/pulling of the labia minora which would be initiated by the grandmother, but the information was scattered, disjointed and tended to focus mainly on the requirement to remain virgins before they got married.

In Chipinge, Rimbi and Paidamoyo wards were very vocal and clear regarding initiation for young men and young women. The girls are taken by the elders to be trained by the grandmothers, where they are taught about bedroom styles e.g. “Komba”, which is mostly practiced by the “Zhou” totem. Those that are not part of the totem have to pay a goat to get the training.

They have the ‘Mahlengwe’ rituals as the Tshangana people. Mahlengwe is also known as “Rukomba” for girls and they would go during the month of June each year. The “komba” is for virgin girls only. For the boys it is called “murundu”. This is the Chinamwali equivalent in Shangani and Hlengwe. The oldest form of initiation was called “Ingomeni” where they

were trained for six months. When girls go for “*komba*”, they are not expected to have any boyfriend but are taught on how to handle a man. This is a preparatory stage, carried out before marriage. It takes place in June, over a period of 3 weeks whereby the girls are not supposed to take a bath. At the end, a ceremony is held where the girls tie a red cloth as a sign of them being successful. During the marriage/ wedding ceremony, there is what is known as “*kufoma*” whereby the elders would accompany the girl.

“*Mutimba*” is the pre-marriage process that was conducted in the homestead. Traditional beer would be brewed. The aunt would lead the process involving around ten people, and they would move in the evening. They would carry some traditional beer and mealie meal among other provisions. When they got to a boy’s homestead some money would be paid by the boy’s family for the party to enter and receive food, a process called “*kushonongora*”. Early in the morning the next day, the aunt and her team would wake up to sweep the yard and light the fire to heat the water for the ceremonial washing of the relatives.

In Gweru, even though out of 2 groups of 14 and 17 only one person and 2 people respectively indicated knowing about *Chinamwali*, once those who had said they know started speaking, the rest of the group opened up with detailed inputs regarding the local versions of this initiation rite.

## ii. THE SYLLABUS: WHAT THE BOYS AND GIRLS NEED TO KNOW AND ARE TAUGHT BEFORE MARRIAGE

Overall boys and girls are brought together and taught about life and their bodies.

In Chipinge, they called it going through a proper “*chikoro*”/school, where the tutors are the crones/ old women and the old men that know about culture and are able to teach about bedroom issues, hunhu and other life matters. In Gweru they shared information regarding the significance of waist beads. They indicated that in the past people wore loin skins. Women’s breasts were uncovered and girls (*mhandara*) wore a particular bead (*chuma*) which was then removed upon marriage and replaced by more elaborate waist beads. The waist beads were for the husband’s ‘entertainment’ and constituted part of the ‘erotic’. The playing with these beads by the man provided pleasure and arousal for both parties. A woman without them would be considered naked. Girls would be taught about pulling their labia, which was for both the man and the woman’s pleasure as the man would play with the enlarged labia as part of foreplay. The men sought guidance from the uncles (*sekurus*). In cases where there were problems (*erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation*) in the bedroom, there were medicines that the man would be given (*kusimbisa musana*). At Inyati Mine, the discussions got very detailed as they outlined the rationale for providing sex education to both young men and young women.

They were very specific as to the teachings given to young men *“Rudzidziso rwepabonde, kuti mukadzi anobatwa sei e.g. mazamu, magaro, matinji, therefore, it is necessary to do pillow talk kuti uzoziva kufamba nebhora. Inyaya yekunzwisisana. Musiyano uri pakati peane matinji neasina ndewekuti asina anogona kunonoka because magear akawanda ekuchinja pane uyo anawo.”*

*“The teaching focuses on how to touch a woman’s breasts, buttocks and labia so as to arouse her. It is important to talk and come to an understanding because if she does not have elongated labia he has to know that it is more work for him because she climaxes later compared to one who has.”*

The women in turn were very comfortable to discuss their expectations regarding the expected ‘normal size’ of men’s organs, indicating that even though men could take herbs to enlarge their manhood, the women felt if it got too big it could damage them. They indicated that the requirement for women to be virgins at marriage was to ensure that they did not have any comparisons for their husbands and would accept ‘what they got’ as their husband’s ‘tools’. The preparation for the girls included *“Chikapa”*, the women’s stylized motions in the sex act. To be passive during sex was looked down upon, i.e. a *‘danda’/log*, as it is a sign that one is not enjoying the act, or does not know what they should be doing. The women confessed that when their elongated labia was caressed it aroused them faster since generally they take longer compared to men.

Discussions ensued where some women said that they had been discouraged from pulling their labia for health reasons. Others felt that they had to defend not having the elongated labia (*number 11 as they are fondly called*) and argued that they were not necessary because if they were, women would have been created with long ones. It was clarified that the discussions were not intended to take a position in support or against this practice as this was an individual decision. The discussions were only to glean what the initiation processes entailed. There was concern by some that pulling of the labia is a catalyst of early marriage as girls would want to test the theory that elongated labia enhanced enjoyment of sex. This must be assessed within the context of understanding that the syllabus emphasises the value and importance of sexual abstinence.

*The most poignant finding of this part of the discussions was the fact that African women are very knowledgeable about sex and sexuality, and expect young women and men to know about their bodies and how to conduct themselves during the sex act, and that the subject of sex is not taboo at all among same sex social groups.*

## 5.1 EXPECTATIONS OF VIRGINITY BEFORE MARRIAGE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

CR 4 states that in African culture a woman is supposed to be a virgin when she gets married, and 88% agreed with this, which is correct. However, when in AM 11 the statement was that a boy is not expected to keep himself a virgin before marriage, 46.1% agreed. Although it is less than half, the responses indicate that there is a higher expectation for the girls to be virgins before marriage than the boys.

This is another aspect of 'modern patriarchy' where the men seem to have absolved themselves of this responsibility. They prescribe abstinence for the girl while adopting a false position that culturally boys are allowed to be 'the bulls' sexually. This, according to all the elders in the focus groups, is not true. *Culturally, both boys and girls are expected to be virgins before they get married.* This has a bearing on the subject of accessing contraceptives. The boy has been allowed some leeway to engage in sex before marriage, meaning that it is easier for him to access condoms if he wants. The girl on the other hand is still policed, making it harder for her to access any form of contraception should she so wish because the expectation remains high that she should not indulge.

It appears that society has accepted this falsehood where boys are allowed to experiment, but who are they experimenting with if they expect to marry virgins? This debate is not necessary, because it is based on a lie. According to cultural values and traditions, even the boys are not allowed to experiment with sex before marriage. There is pressure on girls to get married because if they stay single for long, questions are raised, and concerns that she may be possessed by an evil spirit. Still, other women can worry that she may attract their husbands. However if she has sex and has a child before she is married, she is considered as being of loose morals, someone who cannot keep a man. So even when the girl is failing to find a husband, she is still viewed in a better light than the one who goes on to have a child/children. What is less known is that a woman who is now considered '*tsikombi*' past the age of marrying (as opposed to '*mhandara*') the optimum age to marry, is considered liberated to engage in sexual activity.

## 5.2 A YOUNG MAN'S RIGHT TO REFUSE TO MARRY A GIRL HE HAS MADE PREGNANT

33.7% of the respondents agreed that a young man can refuse to marry the girl he has made pregnant. A higher number, 87.7% agreed that he must still pay some cows in compensation.

This is another example of opinions prevailing over the correct position within culture. Culturally, a boy is not allowed to disown a girl that he has made pregnant because of the strict code of no sex before marriage. The concept of paying 'damages' is modern, hence the English name for the practice. In local culture, the boy was asked one question only, 'do you know this girl?' and that meant have you been intimate with her. If his answer was in the affirmative, there was no further discussion, he had to marry her so as to restore her dignity and take responsibility for his actions. The reality of course was that such cases

were very rare because it was extremely difficult for young lovers to get to have sex due to the social arrangements where courtship was done openly and in group settings. Even when the lovers were ‘alone’ there would always be a chaperon in the form of a sibling or cousin or friend nearby!

### 5.3 BODILY INTEGRITY AND PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

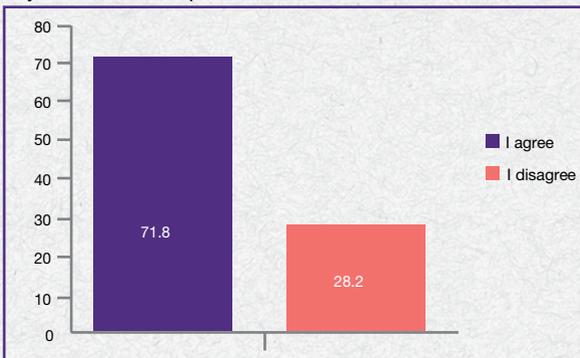
It is encouraging to note that only 37.6% of the responses agreed with the statement that a boy can always force himself on a girl because she will say no even when she means yes. Even though the percentage is small it is still worrying.

Figure 11: A man can force himself on a girl she will say No even when she means Yes



37.6% answered in the affirmative that a man must always force a girl to have sex with him because she will say No even when she means Yes. However, 71.8% were in agreement with a follow-up statement that ‘When a girl wants sex she must still pretend that she does not want it or else her boyfriend will not respect her’

Figure 12: When a girl wants sex she must still pretend that she does not want it, or else her boyfriend will not respect her



This high response in agreement with the above statement speaks to what could be date rape. These opinions are a result of the confusion between sexuality and abstinence where there has been serious distortion that a young man is allowed to have sex before marriage. The starting point in this matter is to establish that culturally, boys and girls should not be having sex in the first place. However, they are. Unfortunately, what is at play here could be the remnants of the cultural prohibition of sex before marriage remaining in place for the girl, hence placing the responsibility of chastity squarely upon her shoulders. As a result, she must act out the routine of having been coerced to do it against her will so that she can retain some shreds of dignity for having indulged, even with the very boyfriend who is demanding it from her. He remains blameless because responsibility has been shifted to the girl. This also plays out in the blame game in the larger society where if they are found out, it is the girls' conduct only that is considered shameful, and the boy is seen as something of a young maverick.

This is a catch-22 situation for the girl. If the girl is supposed to not want it, it follows that she is not supposed to carry condoms, as this would negate the 'charade', but this places her at great vulnerability and risk of contracting STIs. Her presumed sexual ignorance also means that she is not able to tell if her mate has an STI as she is not allowed to inspect her mate's organ as the entire sex act is supposed to carry a certain amount of coercion.

Separate studies have found that around 30% of young women's first sexual encounters are coerced. What has happened with this double standard is the institutionalisation of rape among young people. This is a false 'culture' that has burdened women only, with men being allowed to redefine it to suit their interests.

## 5.4 FORCED SEX BETWEEN INTIMATE PARTNERS

A related inquiry to the above discussion was contained in AM 13 and AM 14 which stated that a boy cannot be said to have raped his girlfriend, and that a man cannot be said to have raped his wife. The responses indicate that a married woman loses her decision-making power regarding consensual sex because while 58.1 % agreed with the first statement, a larger number of 64.9% agreed with the second statement.

Figure 13: A boy cannot be said to have raped his girlfriend

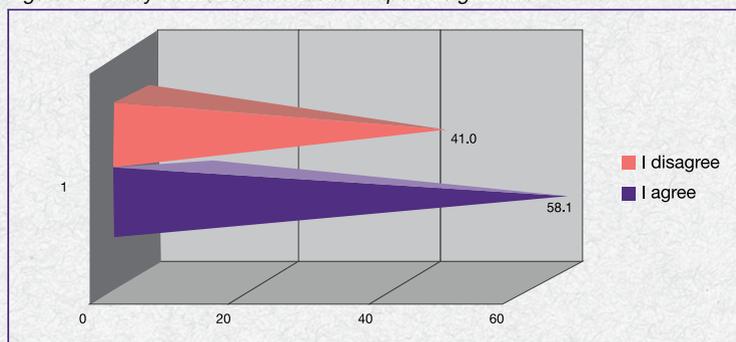
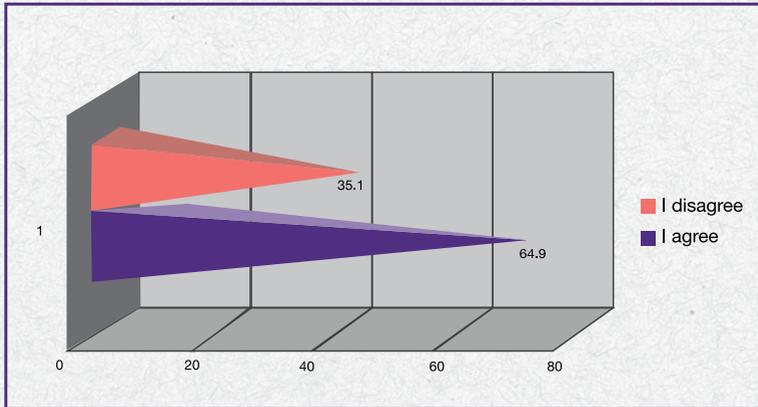


Figure 14: A man cannot be said to have raped his wife



Overall though, it is of concern that such high numbers agreed with both statements. This is of course culturally incorrect according to the explanations that emerged during the focus group discussions as elaborated on in the section on discussion of findings.

In the focus group discussions, although it was made clear that the woman must always be sexually available to her husband, it was also made very clear that sex has to be within a context of mutual pleasure, and that the man has a responsibility to arouse his wife. He is supposed to know the things that can make her lose interest, for instance if she is hungry and angry because he has not provided food for the family. Harmony between husband and wife was emphasized in a context where ‘bonde’ was a main aspect of the marriage, which must be nurtured and done to the satisfaction of both parties.

As to the raping of one’s girlfriend, we have to be reminded that sex before marriage is culturally taboo and a boy should never touch a maiden’s body, and therefore any sex with her can be interpreted as prima fasci rape within a strict cultural interpretation.

## 5.5 CARRYING OF CONDOMS

Statement AM 12 stated that it is right for a young woman to carry a condom and produce it if she is going to have sex, and 61.7% agreed with this.

AM 15 stated that only a boy should carry and produce a condom if he is going to have sex and 51.8% agreed with it. This indicates that there is higher empowerment and open mindedness among the youths.

Figure 15: Access of Reproductive health services by AGYW

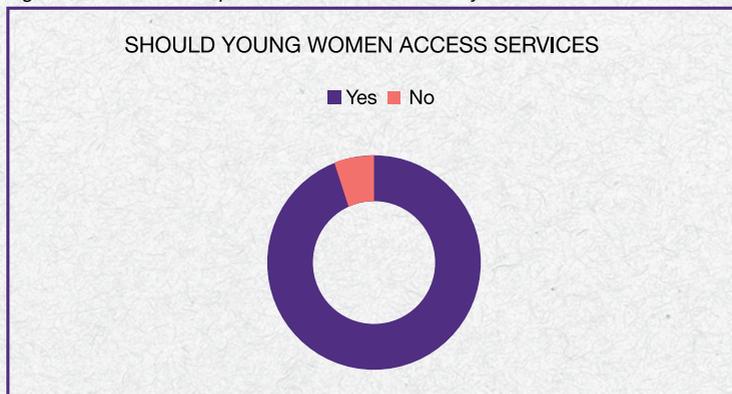
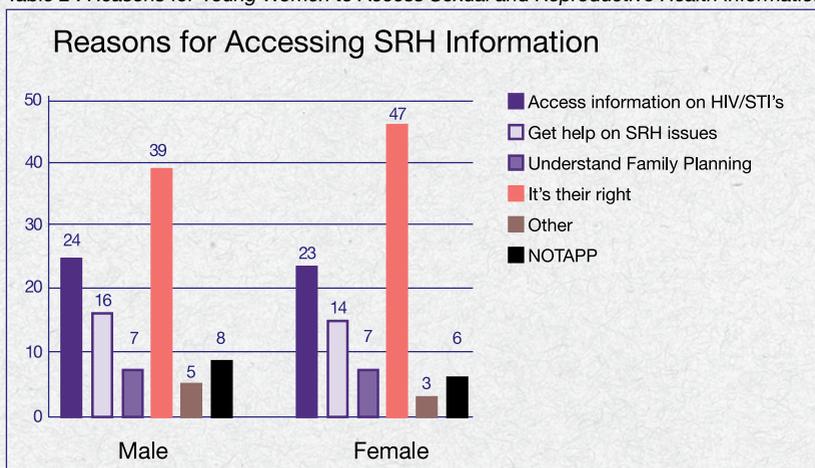


Figure 15 above shows that most of the young people, (94%) were in agreement that young women should have access to sexual and reproductive health information.

Table 2 : Reasons for Young Women to Access Sexual and Reproductive Health Information



Among the young people who thought young women should access sexual and reproductive health information, about 44% felt it is their right to know their sexuality. About 24% of the young people felt they should access such services so that they access information on HIV and other STIs. (Table 1)

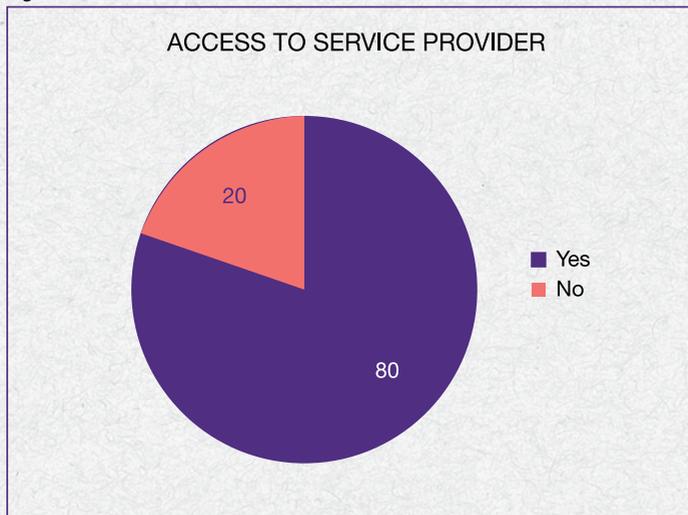
Some young people felt that young women should not access sexual and reproductive health services mainly because they are still young to be exposed to sexual issues (3%), because this will encourage them to be sexually active (more than 1%) and it is a taboo in our culture (1%). There were almost similar positions between male and female participants as to why young women should not access SRH information. The community elders were of extremely mixed opinions regarding the question of whether young women should access services as shown below.

## 5.6 WHETHER YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND WHY

The majority of study participants agreed that young women should have access to SRH information, raising various reasons including the fact that sexual debut for young people is at 16-17 years, this then poses risks of STIs including HIV infection and teenage pregnancies, hence they need the information. Young people need to know about the transition from childhood to adulthood, how to make informed decisions about their sexuality, therefore, it's a necessity for them to know about SRH and have information about what services are available and where. Participants noted that even if one finds themselves HIV positive, having access to SRH information helps them to keep their babies safe through Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT), to live positively and engage in protected sex in order to protect their partners.

Some communities were adamant that young people should not know about their sexuality because early introduction to contraceptives may affect fertility and promote promiscuity due to early sex debut. Faced with the fact that young people are engaging in sexual activities too early, some community members argued that use of condoms is a better option than contraceptives. Some participants felt that some young people lacked proper guidance from either their parents or grandparents whom they live with, hence they experiment with sex and become infected and spread HIV or STIs.

Figure 16: Access to Service Provider



The majority of young people, 80% have accessed a health service provider as shown in Figure 2 above. Women are more likely to access a health service provider than their male counterparts, 58% as compared to 42% of males.

Table 3: Ever accessed a health service provider

Reason for Access	Male	Female	Total
Get HIV test and results	36.9	37.2	37.0
To access family planning services	2.1	4.1	3.3
To get knowledge on STI and other diseases	23.3	18.8	20.7
To get knowledge affecting children and adults	5.3	4.3	4.7
To get cure for diseases or general checkup	8.3	9.7	9.1
Other	4.4	4.4	4.4
NOTAPP	19.8	21.6	20.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

It is shown in Table 4 that, most of the young people, (37%) who visited the health service provider were going to get HIV tests, followed by 21% who were going to get knowledge about STIs and other diseases.

Table 4 : Never accessed a health service provider

Reason for not Accessing	Male	Female	Total
I had no reason to	8.5	9.8	9.3
Source too far and no resources	0.9	1.5	1.2
Religion does not allow	0.9	1.8	1.4
Did not know where health service provider is	2.8	2.6	2.7
Other	6.2	5.1	5.6
NOTAPP	80.6	79.2	79.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

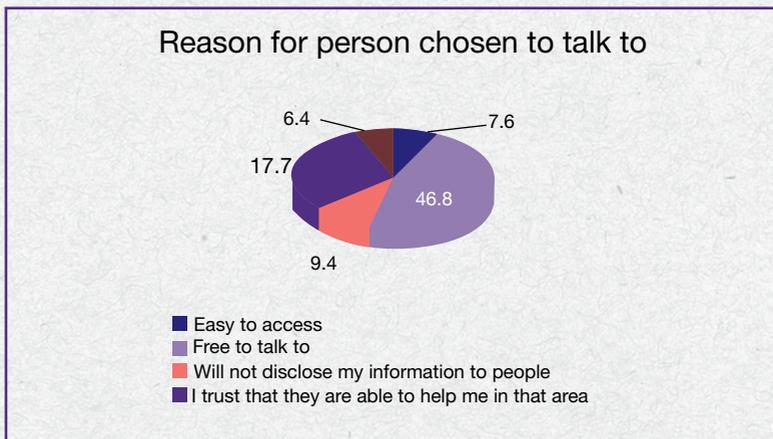
Among the young people who reported that they had never visited a health service provider, the greater percentage (9%) had no reason or needed nothing from the health centers. About 3% did not visit the health service provider because they did not know where the services are. More than one percent of the young people never accessed the health service provider because of religious restrictions. (Table 4)

Figure 17: People Discussed Sexuality With



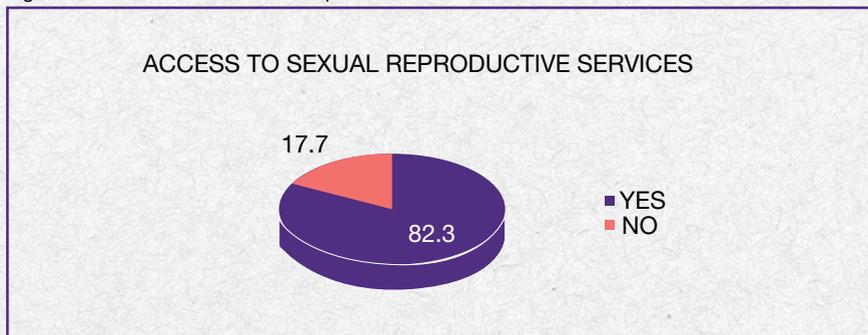
Relatives have shown to be the major group of people whom young people talk to about sexuality issues. Table 5, above shows that 51% of young people talk to their relatives, 15% to community health workers, 14% to other health professionals, while 13% talk to friends.

Figure 18: Reason for Person Chosen to Talk to



Young people were also asked why they talk to the various people they reported they talk to about sexuality issues. It was found that young people usually find it difficult to discuss sexuality issues with just anybody and they require someone who understands them. This has been supported by 47% of young people who said they chose people that they were free to talk to. Close to 30% of young people chose the people they usually talked to because they trusted that they were able to help them about sexuality issues. Some proportion (9%) of the young people talked to such people because they were sure they would not disclose their information to others. (Figure 18)

Figure 19: Access to Sexual and Reproductive Services



Young people were asked whether it was easy to access sexual and reproductive health services, and 82% reported it was easy as shown in Figure 4 above.

Table 5 : Ease of access to sexual and reproductive health services

Reason for easy access	Male	Female	Total
Services can be accessed near by	14.7	20.8	18.3
Service providers are free and ready to help	38.0	39.3	38.8
Trained health providers	9.7	7.9	8.6
Community Health workers are mobile and educate us	9.2	11.6	10.6
Other	5.8	4.9	5.3
NOTAPP	22.6	15.5	18.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

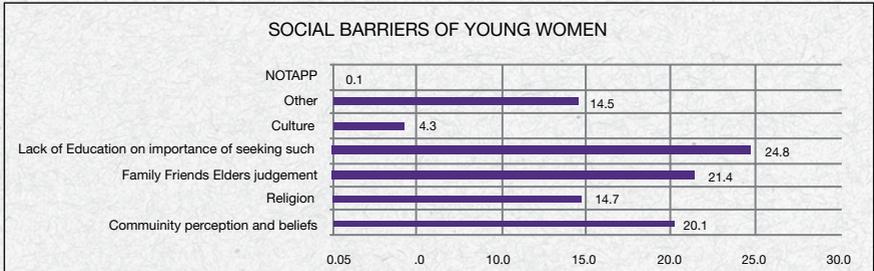
Young people who reported that they had easy access to sexual and reproductive health services were asked to give reasons. The majority, 39% reported that service providers are free and ready to help them. Services can be accessed near (18%), mobility of community health workers 11%, and presence of trained health providers were also among the major reasons mentioned by young people. (Table 6)

Table 6 : Reasons for not easily accessing reproductive health services.

Reason for no easy access	Male	Female	Total
Bad attitude of health service providers	5.1	3.8	4.3
Very few health personnel to attend	2.8	1.6	2.1
Services are very far not easily accessible	4.4	2.0	3.0
Not knowledgeable of where to get such services	1.8	1.5	1.6
Other X	7.6	6.2	6.8
NOTAPP	78.3	84.9	82.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Young people who had no easy access to health providers also gave their reasons. Table 7, shows that among the reasons of not accessing such services were the bad attitude of service providers (4%), long distance to the services (3%) and 2% few health personnel at service centres which meant waiting for long hours as health personnel attended critical issues first.

Figure 20: Social Barriers of Young Women



For young women, the major barrier from seeking sexual and reproductive health services is that they lack education on importance of seeking such information as reported by 25%. Above 21% of young people reported family and friends judgment as a barrier, 20% community perception and belief and 15% religion. (Figure 20)

Figure 21: Social Penalty for Accessing Sexual Reproductive Services

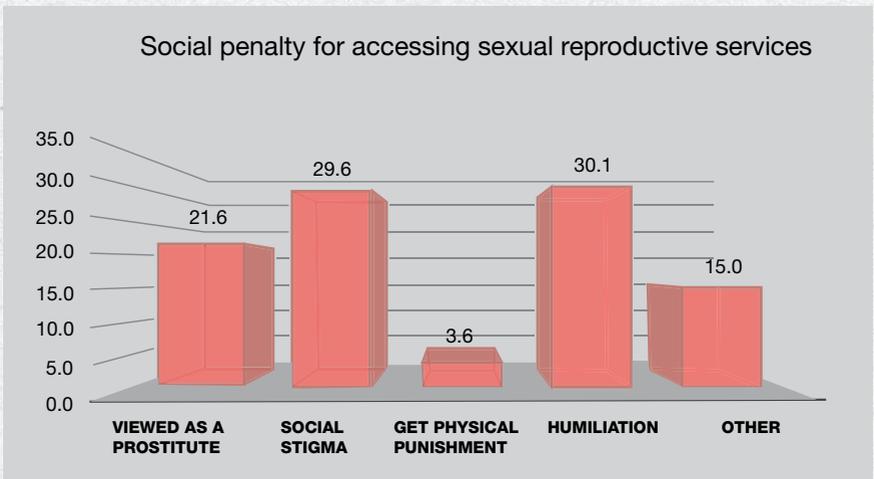


Figure 21 shows that the major social penalty for accessing sexual and reproductive health service is humiliation (30%), followed by slightly less than 30% social stigma and about 22% viewed as prostitute.

Table 7 : Community gatekeeper.

Community gatekeeper	Male	Female	Total
Church Leaders / Elders	21.2	12.1	15.9
Community Leader	19.8	18.7	19.1
Family Heads / Parents	29.7	33.2	31.8
Health Professionals	8.3	7.7	7.9
Other	20.7	28.3	25.2
NOTAPP	0.2	0.0	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Young adults reported that family and friends are more influential in blocking them from accessing reproductive health services. This is shown in the table above that 32% of young people reported family as the gatekeepers, 19% community leader and 16% church leaders. (Table 8)

Table 8 : Cultural Arguments

Cultural Arguments	Male	Female	Total
It is culturally unacceptable	18.4	21.3	20.1
It promotes promiscuity	35.0	32.4	33.5
There is no need to approach community leaders or church leaders for help	6.2	5.7	5.9
It is lack of respect for elders and community	9.4	8.3	8.8
Other	30.2	31.8	31.1
NOTAPP	0.7	0.5	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9 shows that the most common cultural arguments used in communities to keep young women from going to service providers are that it promotes promiscuity (34%) and culturally unacceptable (20%). Although these may seem different reasons, the perception of promoting promiscuity is based on notions of what is culturally appropriate, and these two reasons reinforce each other.

Table 9 : Place of Information

Place of information	Male	Female	Total
Community Health Workers	16.4	14.2	15.1
Clinic /Hospital	63.1	67.4	65.6
Schools /Youth Centers	11.8	12.3	12.1
Church	0.5	0.3	0.4
Other	8.3	5.7	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 10, above shows that the majority (66%) of young people obtain information on reproductive health issues from hospitals or clinics, followed by 15% who obtain such information from community health workers. Less than one percent of young people reported that they access reproductive health information from the church.

Table 10 : Sources of Sexual Reproductive Health Information

Source	Male	Female	Total
Posters	50.2	44.2	46.7
Pamphlets	12.7	24.1	19.3
Comics	4.6	8.0	6.6
Videos	14.3	9.8	11.7
Road shows	12.2	8.2	9.9
Plays/Drama	6.0	5.7	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Posters are playing a major role in disseminating reproductive health information to young people as reported by about 47% of the young people. Pamphlets and videos are also a noticeable sources of reproductive health information as reported by 19% and 12% respectively. A few, 6% of the young people access reproductive health information through drama or plays. (Table 11).



# 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Baseline Study sought to establish the existing misrepresentations and misinterpretations of culture and tradition that are used to deny AGYW the right to bodily integrity and limit their choices in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. It did not assume a position of arguing about how retrogressive certain cultural beliefs and practices are, but positioned itself to challenge if the values and practices are in fact culturally authentic. This was intended to debunk certain cultural arguments, so that when certain practices play out, the actors cannot hide their actions behind 'culture', but can be understood as people just behaving badly and oppressing women. In this study it was posited that there is a 'traditional patriarchy' and a 'modern patriarchy'. The former is where gender roles and social position were layered with different levels of sexual empowerment, relational transaction and spiritual/religious beliefs that gave each sex their own power and left the middle ground of interaction fairly flexible. In this 'sex-free zone' of interaction, women could negotiate power and status, albeit within a system that was still predominantly patriarchal.<sup>26</sup> The modern patriarchy is the mindset that seeks to consolidate male hegemony within the modern social economy by coming up with opinion-based rules for women, and arguing that these are based on our culture so as to make them irrefutable in their presumed authenticity. This report has proved the above stated hypothesis as detailed in the findings discussion section of the report.

## 6.1 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS ON THE SRHR OF AGYW

### 1) On the social value of Hunhu/Ubuntu:

Social values bind everybody in a society. Once other members are exempt from the rights and responsibilities, then the value system loses credibility because it is no longer value, but a system of oppression of one group by another. The values of good behaviour, sound morals, ethics, respect and social responsibility must apply to both men and women if we are to have a healthy balanced society. The narrow interpretation of culture that says to have hunhu/ubuntu is only about women dressing appropriately and behaving well is a manufactured opinion. It is a tragedy that must not be allowed to destroy the young males. If they are left without a grounding value system, they take upon themselves a life without responsibilities and become conditioned to blaming everything that goes wrong in relationships to their wives when they eventually marry. This has been evident in some families who are quick to send an HIV positive daughter-in-law who has succumbed to AIDS to her natal home.

This contributes to a misogynistic interpretation of relationships, which can only lead to gender-based violence and sexual irresponsibility on the part of the males. Unfortunately,

<sup>26</sup> Predominantly because patriarchy in local culture was not total, where for instance there was sometimes matrilocality 'kuvaka kwavatezvara', and children took on the maternal name and totem 'zita rekumadzisekuru'

this position has been proved by studies to negatively affect the girl child more as she is reduced to a victim whose body is subject to control by the males. She becomes a scapegoat for anything that goes wrong in a relationship. This is amply demonstrated in the response to wife beating that ‘she answered me back and I beat her for not having respect’, and yet the very act of violence is the ultimate lack of hunhu/ubuntu. Even when the male cheats, somehow the wife is blamed for not having been a good enough woman to satisfy him and hence his ‘going out’ to find another woman, when according to sound cultural values, a married man must respect his wife by being faithful and setting a good example to his children. Clarifying that hunhu/ubuntu applies to both sexes helps to promote good sexual behaviour for both, and reduces HIV infections.

## **2) Regarding religion and the concept of the ‘divine feminine:**

The divine feminine “Dzivaguru” in traditional spirituality negates the argument of a divinely ordained inferiority of the female, who also has ‘divine’ status. If young women are made to realize that they too, as women, are a reflection of ‘divinity’, it will empower them to claim their bodies and voice. They will not allow the ‘goddess’ in them to be abused sexually or in any other way. This can be potentially powerful in assisting AGYW to have boundaries regarding their bodies and sex which protect from HIV.

## **3) Regarding the role and social status of being a woman:**

From the responses, it is evident that providing for the family features highly on men’s roles. Although the ability to sexually satisfy one’s wife is of equal priority, it is acknowledged that failure to provide for the family will affect sex in the home. While this was not directly asked, it appears that inadequacies in this area have a tremendous impact on family harmony and could partly explain the increase in domestic violence. Therefore, when these issues come up in dealing with domestic violence, they are not mere excuses, but real causes of frustrated behavior. This insight can influence how counseling for domestic violence is conducted. Addressing causes of domestic violence is critical as there has been a direct co-relation established between violence and HIV infection. It must be noted that a woman is also expected to provide for her children. Part of the reason why some young women end up in exploitative relationships with older men is the desire to have someone to look after, and provide for them.

Young women need to be taught that a ‘good woman’ in culture is one who is able to ‘use her hands’ to support her family. She must, therefore, start practising while she is still in her mother’s home by being enterprising in whatever way she can, which is not through transactional sex. Such a young woman is according to culture, more attractive than a lazy one (simbe in Shona) This in turn will increase her chances of attracting a young male with whom to build a future together through hard work.

The young men must also be taught that it is culturally expected for young women to work. The only difference is that it is now wage labour as opposed to the fields, and that the notion that women who worked in the cities were of loose morals was a colonial strategy to separate families. This acknowledgement of mutually supportive financial roles can empower young men and women to have healthier relationships, which reduces the risks of extra marital relationships and /or resource related violence in the home. This marital harmony can go a long way in eliminating some of the contributing factors to infidelity violence and HIV transmission among young couples.

#### **4) The need for young women to own their voice:**

Girls must be empowered to speak within families and in relationships.

The fact that young women too have for some reason adopted the notion that women must not speak in the presence of men is extremely worrying as they seem to have generated some negative beliefs from somewhere and attributed them to culture.

This self-imposed 'gagging' of young women means that they are not supposed to question husbands on anything as they can be assaulted for 'asking' or 'answering back'. This serves to further fuel and erroneous position and encourages other young men to also demand silence from their wives. The fact that some parents have also internalised this is a further danger because it means that the young woman now has no one to turn to as the entire family conspires against 'loud mouthed' women.

If this is not corrected, young women will continue to be abused sexually, psychologically and physically in marital situations where they are expected to die in silence like lambs. If it is clarified that women ARE allowed to speak in public, it also empowers them to speak in private, and gives them a voice with their partners to question things that need to be probed, especially when these relate to their sexual health. It also boosts their confidence to bring up issues of a sexual nature with their partners without feeling that they will be judged for being wayward. This contributes to their safety from STI infections and the risk of HIV.

#### **5) Young women's knowledge and ownership of their sexuality:**

For young girls to be ignorant of their sexuality and sexual matters is a death sentence.

The danger does not end with getting married because sexual ignorance can also result in poor marriage choices, and the inability to handle sexual matters within marriage is one of the under-captured causes of infidelity and the breakup of many modern marriages. After all, according to the study, sex is the main reason why people get married! The strict code for people to get married was supposed to protect the girl from being sexually used and abandoned by opportunistic males, as the saying goes, 'why buy the cow if you can have the milk for free?'

Young girls were also taught to recognize sexual feelings and how to avoid 'going all the way' by making sure that they upheld the 'no -go' erogenous zone of their breasts, stomach and pubic area. They were also taught the value of group dating, where they always met their sweetheart in the presence of another person, be it friend or sibling. Any adult could chastise a boy and girl seen lurking about alone in high risk locations. Today's uncles and brothers now facilitate this sexual exploitation by providing access to houses/flats/cars!

This study does not seek to argue for a reinstatement of the rites of initiation, for these differed between ethnic groups and sub-tribes. The purpose was to establish that such rituals were, and in some parts still are, a part of our culture. It is a challenge to the development sector to explore how the nhangas for girls and the dare for boys can be re-instituted in the modern social setting. The focus is to argue that it is culturally appropriate for young people to learn about sex in controlled environments. To the extent that some parents have sought to argue that teaching the youths about sex and sexuality is culturally inappropriate, this has been proved to be untrue. Further, it is not correct to argue that

such teachings encourage promiscuity, because the correct 'syllabus' makes it very clear that to indulge in sex before marriage is an act of not having the self-respect that is part of hunhu/ubuntu. Sex education infact includes messages of the value of abstinence.

### **6) Gender, sex and pleasure issues for young women:**

It is very irresponsible for society to breed a young male who thinks that his wife is just for his own sexual pleasure, like some human sex toy. It is shameful that this attitude is blamed on culture by the very same people that have abandoned their culture because they are now 'modern' and do not believe in initiation ceremonies.

The implications of this are obviously an acceptance of forced and violent sex, because the young men do not know how to get the young wife into the mood. Studies have demonstrated that there is direct correlation between violent and dry sex and a higher risk of STI/HIV infection. The reasons are mainly twofold; firstly violent and dry sex causes cuts and abrasions in the vaginal wall which provide an opening for the HIV virus to enter. When a woman is sexually aroused, her body excretes a natural lubricant. Even the practice of drying the vagina using herbs is a result of untaught young men who blame their wives for being watery because they were never told what the function of this lubrication is. Secondly, without a woman's consent, her husband can force her to have sex even when she can see that he has an infection on his genitalia. In addition to the above, it means that a husband can fail to seek treatment and still insist on having unprotected sex, whereas if she can refuse, that will provide him with the incentive to seek treatment.

**f) Regarding violence between spouses:** A woman who is beaten by her husband has the right to report him to the family elders, and a man whose wife reports him for beating can be made to pay a goat in compensation.

It was explained that because the beating of wives is not allowed in our culture, if she is beaten, the wife will go back to her parents' home. Getting her back means the man must first pay a penalty. Being asked to pay a penalty/fine "kuripa" means the law would have been violated. It is a breach of acceptable conduct and so it is punished. Paying a goat will be to "close" the scars of the wife. A woman cannot just go back with her husband, without him paying something.

It is encouraging to note that the majority of the young people interviewed are of the opinion that gender-based violence is wrong, as reflected in the high responses agreeing with the statement which stated that culturally a 'real man' will never be violent to a woman because he knows he is too strong for her. This was echoed in the responses to the statement which stated that a woman who is beaten by her husband has the right to report him to the family elders. However there seems to be a lower appreciation of the fact that a penalty is payable for this offense. Knowledge of this fact can be useful in curbing violence among young couples, where the younger males seem to be of the opinion that they own women's bodies as reflected in the section on consent to sex. It also empowers the young women to challenge their parents and relatives to step in to protect them in cases of violence as dictated by culture. This also provides a more acceptable alternative to deter marital violence in comparison to the criminal procedures that involve the potential for incarceration of the offending person.

**7) Culture and identity as factors in women's empowerment:**

Identity is an integral part of empowerment. If the marriage institution is associated with total surrender of identity, it becomes a dangerous place for women. Loss of identity means loss of voice, and exacerbates the aspect of 'ownership' of another person, which translates into a total lack of decision-making by the woman within the family. Instead of 'my wife' being 'the woman that I am married to', it becomes 'the woman that I own'. An owned thing has no say in what is done to it. The retention of the woman's totem in cultural tradition means that she retains her individuality and her personality, which she can assert within the closed and extended family unit. Totem praising becomes a process of mutual reinforcement of each other's individuality, which in turn breeds respect, and in the end promotes marital behaviours which keep spouses safe from promiscuity and STIs.

**8) Control of fertility:**

The teaching of birth control is very much a part of cultural tradition for young women. It is not correct to argue that contraception is a modern thing. Pills are modern but birth control lies in the hands of the woman. Of course it must be remembered that culturally to have a lot of children was a badge of honor for women. The need to control the number of children arose out of the modern cash economy when feeding the children and sending them to school became an issue if the family did not have the means with which to support a large family. The hostility to pills emerged out of the early urbanization stages when cohabitation in the cities became a social reality and modern contraception was associated with city women who were of loose morals, hence the reluctance of men to have their wives use modern contraception. The women had abandoned their traditional methods of fertility control. By seeking SRH services the AGYW is only accessing the modern version of an intervention that she is culturally entitled to, albeit only after marriage.

**9) Culture and polygamy:**

Relationships that involve multiple sexual partners carry a higher risk of multiple infections of STI should one member of the group get infected. In the modern setting, young women are having to contend with 'small houses'. Even the modern aunt colludes by teaching a young woman to have forbearance and not ask the man about his infidelities, and this is supposed to be part of 'culturally appropriate behaviour' for a woman! Sadly, a young woman preserves her virginity only to get infected through her husband's condoned infidelity. Culture has been distorted to allow men to be promiscuous while teaching women to accept that promiscuity as cultural. Yet a man who has the requisite self-respect knows how to honour his wife. Young women must be empowered to unpack and debunk this notion that it is alright for young men be sexually irresponsible and to learn to rebuke them for such behavior. Young women should refuse to be part of it as cultural behavior that has no dignity (zvakafumuka). Young men must be re-schooled to know that a real man can and should control his sexual behaviour.

**10) The pledging of young girls:**

The approach to this problem needs to be clearly rooted in order for it to be understood. It appears that the underlying cause of the pledging and marrying off of young girls lies in poverty. It was made clear that affluent families never practiced this unless they were royalty, which calls for a different discussion altogether.

Therefore, just criticising this practice with no practical solutions will not yield much results as it is a survival strategy, which has also been adapted into various forms of transactional sex/marriage among urban dwellers. Advocacy to raise awareness does help, but to ensure that the practice does not just go underground or mutate into something more sophisticated, the development sector must take on the challenge of addressing practical needs among the most affected communities.

It is appreciated that there are some religious institutions that practice child marriage under the guise of the holy spirit's instruction. This study is focusing on culture based arguments, wherein it must be made very clear that even in culture this was a practice that was known to happen in dire need, but was not condoned or encouraged. Parents did not bear children with the expectation that one day they would pledge them young. They also had hopes that their children would get married when they had come of age.

### **11) The use of virgin girls to appease avenging spirits:**

To be given as compensation for an avenging spirit is the worst fate to befall a girl child. It is known that families can go for generations living with an avenging spirit and resist providing the requisite girl child because it traumatises her. Usually a child offered as compensation will be from a vulnerable family where the father would have died early and the surviving widow can be bullied into submission and giving away her daughter.

The spiritual ramifications of ngozi cannot be avoided, for among the local Shona speaking people the power of this spirit is real and when appeased there is a cessation of violent deaths in the families of the offending person. This is a good deterrent for would be murderers and upholds the spiritual sanctity of life in a very practical way. The message should focus on the possibility of negotiation and the availability of alternative methods of compensation for the affected families.

### **12) Young men refusing to marry girls they have made pregnant:**

The cultural position in the past sent a very strong message that premarital sex was forbidden and therefore the penalty for indulging was simply put as 'if you are grown up enough to have sex you are grown up enough to be responsible for the consequences'. It worked well.

However, although the rationale behind the decision is important, in the modern era this is a tradition that has evolved and now parents assess the best interest of the girl child, where if she is too young they will choose to wait until she has matured. Another reason why this tradition has been adjusted is also based on the understanding that there are instances when the sex act itself would have been forced, and therefore it does not make sense to force a girl to marry her abuser. As stated above, the value of this authentic cultural position is to communicate to the young men and women that in our culture, sex before marriage is forbidden for both of them, and to extort abstinence as a quality of having hunhu/ubuntu for the girl and the boy.

**13) Regarding appropriate dressing for women:**

There are too many cases where a man who has raped a woman argues that he did so because she was dressed in a provocative way. Instead of calling such men to order and instructing them to learn how to control their sexual urges, society has instead made it the woman's problem and ordered her to cover up her body so that she does not invite rape. The fact remains that, most women who get raped will not be scantily dressed. As alluded to elsewhere in this document, covering up women will not address our social ills. The desire to control women's bodies through the dress code must be called what it is, a male desire to control women, and which has nothing to do with culture, because according to our traditions all modern women are overdressed!

This desire to control is what leads to anger when a young woman decides to exercise her right to choose what to wear. This means that she does not own her body. She cannot express her femininity in how she dresses, and we all know that dress is one of the ways in which we express our individuality. Young people of both sexes must be free to enjoy their youth, including in the manner they dress and adorn themselves. Social etiquette requires that both men and women know how to dress appropriately for different occasions; a young man going to pay lobola will not put on shorts, because it is considered too casual. In the same token, a young girl will not go to visit her in-laws wearing shorts. Both young men and women must have the same freedom of choice in dressing within the parameters of what the modern fashion decrees to be appropriate dressing for different occasions. Ownership of one's body is a cornerstone of sexual boundaries and safety from sexual abuse, control and HIV.

**14) Expectations of abstinence:**

This has a bearing on the subject of accessing contraceptives. The boy has been allowed some leeway to engage in sex before marriage, meaning that it is easier for him to access condoms if he wants them, and the providers are more lenient. The girl on the other hand is still policed, making it harder for her to access any form of contraception should she so wish because the expectation remains high that she should not indulge. This places the AGYW at a higher risk of having unprotected sex and contracting HIV.

**15) Bodily integrity and protection from sexual violence:**

The starting point in this matter is to establish that culturally, unmarried boys and girls should not be having sex in the first place. However, nowadays they are.

Unfortunately, what is at play here could very well be the cultural prohibition of sex before marriage remaining in place for the girl, hence placing the responsibility of the appearances of chastity squarely upon her shoulders.

As a result, she must act out the routine of having been coerced to do it against her will so that she can retain some shred of dignity for having indulged, even with the very boyfriend who is demanding it of her. He remains blameless by virtue of being a boy. This also plays

out in the blame game in the larger society where if they are found out, it is mainly the girls' conduct that is considered shameful, and the boy is seen as something of a young maverick.

This is the catch 22 situation for the girl. If the girl is supposed not to want it, it follows that she is not supposed to carry condoms, as this would negate the 'charade', which of course places her at great vulnerability and risk of contracting STIs. Her presumed sexual ignorance also means that she is not able to tell if her mate has an STI since she is not allowed to inspect his organ as the entire sex act is supposed to carry a certain amount of coercion.

This brings the analysis to the real problem, which is that in separate studies it has been found that around 30% of young women's first sexual encounters are coerced. What has happened with this double standard is the modern institutionalisation of rape among young people, all in the name of a false 'culture' that is expected of women only. The men have created this fallacy to suit their interests.

The sexuality of any person, male and female, goes to the very core of their personhood. It touches on the integrity of their physical body, and influences their emotional and psychological well-being. Depriving someone of the decision-making power about their sexuality and reproduction is a violation of a basic aspect of what it means to be human and to have personal rights. When this lack of information and power to make decisions about ones' body makes one vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted infections that include HIV, it becomes a core human rights issue that should not be condoned under any social or political mask like religious values or culture and traditions.



# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

## i. THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Traditional leaders like village heads and chiefs are the custodians of culture in rural communities. They preside over community matters that relate to relationships among members, dispute resolution, family matters and other civil matters where they are expected to administer customary law. The knowledge of this customary law as it relates to culture and tradition is assumed on the leader by virtue of their office. It is important that they are in the frontlines of providing correct 'culture' instead of using their personal opinions to govern and adjudicate social and family matters in the name of culture. They must be included in the training sessions and community discussions as much as possible.

## ii. STRUCTURED INCORPORATION OF STUDY FINDINGS INTO IEC MATERIALS

One of the three outcome results is "All adults and children have increased access to effective HIV prevention services and are empowered to participate in inclusive and equitable social mobilisation to address drivers of the epidemic." The cultural insights obtained through this study must be incorporated into the IEC materials of the outreach programme so as to adequately equip AGYW with the arguments with which to claim their SRHR.

## iii. ENSURING GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS IN THE TRAINING MODULE

The training activities preceding the IEC materials development and subsequent outreach must be based on a clear feminist/GAD epistemological positioning that makes it clear that patriarchy is not synonymous with culture, nor is modernity synonymous with women's emancipation. It must focus on identifying forms of feminist interpretation and resistance to patriarchy within culture and 'take the battle to the cultural home-ground'. This means assuming a position, not of arguing about how retrogressive certain cultural beliefs and practices are, but challenging if the values and practices are in fact culturally authentic. This will debunk certain cultural arguments, so that when people engage in certain practices, the actors cannot hide their actions behind 'culture', but they are understood as people just behaving badly.

## iv. PROVIDING CONTENT ORIENTATION FOR CBOS

While communities appear to be clearer about the correct cultural positions, the development workers demonstrated greater difficulties in adjusting to the thinking of the project initiative, and demonstrated a higher propensity to fall into what we came to call the ‘default’ position with regards the interpretation of culture as being all negative and oppressive of women. The use of cultural arguments for empowerment still require re-orientation of the field staff. To avoid content distortion during implementation, there is need for subject saturation at the field operative level. The content orientation must target the staff of the selected CBO/NGO in the district, as well as the operatives at ward level.

## v. ENSURING THE INVOLVEMENT OF APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO LIAISE WITH SELECTED CBOS AT DISTRICT LEVEL

The table below captures the active institutions where young people get information on sexual reproductive health

Government Institutions	NGOs	IEC Materials
Counselors on HIV and AIDS Media School, particularly science lessons Youth friendly centres Clinics (however they fear stigma or being reported to parents) Local clinic assigned (UBH, Mpilo). Opportunistic Infection Clinic has peer counsellors Schools –FACT targets these places Village health workers The Ministry of Youth has a programme called Adult Reproductive Sexual Health (ARSH) where they work with village health workers	Through peer educator ProFam Matebeleland AIDS Council New Start Youth friendly centres Workshops and FGDs Dramas Community based organizations Mazowe: Grandparents ❖ Friends ❖ Community Elders ❖ Brothers ❖ Clinics ❖ Awareness campaigns ❖ Outreach/school programmes ❖ Aunts, grandmothers ❖ Clinics, for guidance and counselling ❖ Movies and radio programs ❖ Chinamwali (for girls) and Jano (for boys)	Posters at clinics, shops Pamphlets, sometimes delivered door to door Videos on television Road show – (a participant mentioned that there had been one on condomizing held by the shops in the rural areas) Social media e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter e.t.c.

The implementation strategy should deliberately engage these groups of people throughout the districts.

It is strongly recommended that these be the people to include in the district level materials orientation training.

## vi. APPROPRIATELY DECENTRALISED TRAINING

The training needs to be decentralised in a cascaded fashion. An initial centralised training will be conducted in Harare for the staff of the participating organisations from the districts. Training will then be decentralised to the districts, targeting larger numbers of relevant implementing personnel directly or indirectly involved. A target of 15 people per district can be trained in the second phase, with the sessions for each district taking place at cheaper local venues so as to ensure maximum content absorption and core message retention.

## vii. COMMUNITY ENTRY POINTS

- ❖ Schools are by far the most referred to as an appropriate entry point to reach a large number of AGYW.
- ❖ Information dissemination should include a strong component of active IEC strategies.
- ❖ Performances (drama and road shows) should be supported with written materials as reference. There is keen interest in video screenings, which should not just focus on SRH information, but provide other forms of documentaries around entrepreneurship development.

## viii. ENSURING THAT THE GIRLS ARE REACHED WHERE THEY ARE

- ❖ Youth centres – there are vocational training centres where they are taught to cook, sew, knit and other skills
- ❖ Sometimes they have parties called “vuzu parties”. However these make them vulnerable to those who want to take advantage of partying moods.
- ❖ Socializing by the water source (borehole)
- ❖ Entertainment by the shops
- ❖ Church programs
- ❖ Sports/ games/soccer, netball
- ❖ Clubs for pottery, hairdressing or church
- ❖ Social media such as Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and in groups
- ❖ Dramas
- ❖ Watching TVs for those with access

## ix. DELIVERY METHODS

The most common methods used to disseminate information in the districts were drama, plays and the distribution of posters and pamphlets. Road shows were intermittent and most communities complained that these sometimes became too frivolous as they were often not accompanied by structured message delivery or support reference materials on the subject matter. It also appeared that most road shows were staged in the lead up to general elections as part of civic education. Therefore as a delivery method, these concerns will need to be addressed. Road shows are most appropriate for young men and boys who have greater mobility and are found in larger numbers at town centers. As a community awareness catalyst road shows have great impact.

Videos and comic books have not been adequately invested in and have great appeal as new forms of information dissemination. Such a project relies on the use of creative arts and adequate investment should be made into the development of these kinds of materials.

The adult community prefers discursive forums where they can make their input into the discussions at hand. Care should be taken to have adequate time and patience in conducting such discussions because communities know a lot more than they let out and if they are rushed they close up and go into observation mode.

The CBOs also need to invest in building genuine rapport with the communities they service and ensure that their interaction methods do not lead them being perceived as opportunistic and exploitative.

As final recommendation, CBOs must invest time and effort into understanding this intervention because the communities appreciated the discussions that were part of this study and are eager to re-engage as they all bemoaned the loss of traditional values in the face of what they consider a 'development onslaught' that is failing to balance rights and culture.



# 8. ANNEX 1

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Culture** is a set of shared and enduring meaning, values, and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic, or other groups and orient their behaviour, (Mulholland 1991). Hofstede (1980, pp. 21-23) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another, which is passed from generation to generation, and is changing all the time because each generation adds something of its own before passing it on.<sup>27</sup>

**Custom** is a practice or set of practices followed by people of a particular group or region (Masalu, et al, 2010)<sup>28</sup>

**Sexuality** is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. It is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. It is also influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. (WHO 2004)<sup>29</sup>

**Norms** are what people in some group believe to be normal in the group, that is, believed to be typical actions, appropriate actions, or both (Paluck and Ball 2010). In this case they are generalisations about expected behaviours, e.g. in our culture a decent woman is not expected to like or enjoy sex. These are based on patterns of behaviour typical for a group, and what is considered 'right' behaviour for that group.<sup>30</sup> The major challenge with norms as cultural justifications emerge when faced with similar behaviours in societies that do not share the same culture. Does this bolster the argument or negate its basis as resting in culture?

<sup>27</sup> Frey, R. (1994). *Eye Juggling: Seeing the World Through a Looking Glass and a Glass Pane (A workbook for clarifying and interpreting values)*. University Press of America: Lanham, New York, London. 1994. pp. 19-24

<sup>28</sup> Graburn, N. (2001). *Museum Anthropology* 24(2/3):6-11. American Anthropological Association

<sup>29</sup> Ilkcaracan, P. and Jolly, S. (2007). *Gender and Sexuality Overview Report*. Institute of Development Studies

<sup>30</sup> Armstrong, B, citing Petersen, Hanne, *Home Knitted Law: Norms and Values in Gendered Rule Making*, UK, Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1996

**Taboo** is a prohibition, which can be on what one is not allowed to do, objects with which one must not come into contact, words which must not be uttered and places which must be avoided. (Masalu, et al, 2010)<sup>31</sup>. **Taboo** - is a vehement prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behavior is either too sacred or too accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake (Wikipedia.org). It is a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing. It is a practice that is prohibited or restricted by social or religious custom. (oxforddictionaries.com)<sup>32</sup>

**Tradition** – it is the name given to those cultural features which, in situations of change, were to be continued to be handed on, thought about, preserved and not lost. (Graburn, 2001)<sup>33</sup>

**Values** – these are learned, relatively enduring, emotionally charged, epistemologically grounded and represented moral conceptualizations that assist us in making judgements and in preparing us to act. In other words, the priorities we set and the choices we make are significantly based upon the values we hold. This usage of the concept is inclusive of the personal values of an individual as well as the collective values of a community. (Frey, 1994)<sup>34</sup>

**Debunk:** expose the falseness or hollowness of (an idea or belief). To show something as less true than has been made to appear.<sup>35</sup>

**Decode:** work out, sort out, piece together. To discover the meaning of information given in a secret or complicated way<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Masalu, D. C. P., Shalli, M. S. and Kitula, R. A. (2010). *Customs and Taboos: The role of indigenous knowledge in the management of fish stocks and coral reefs in Tanzania*. 64 pp.

<sup>32</sup> Mulholland, J., 1991. *The Language of Negotiation*. London: Routledge

<sup>33</sup> Paluck, Elizabeth Levy and Laurie Ball. 2010. *Social Norms Marketing Aimed at Gender Based Violence: A Literature Review and Critical Assessment*. International Rescue Committee, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taboo> accessed 06.03.17  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/taboo> accessed 06.03.17

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>35</sup> *Cambridge English Dictionary*

<sup>36</sup> *Supra*



# 9. ANNEX 2: THE CONCEPT OF HUNHU

The inquiry was intended to establish what communities consider the basic standard of acceptable behaviour by a 'human being'. Although the target was young people, the question was posed generically, with specific detail referring to males and females broadly. The expected standard of hunhu for women was asked first. Responses were quick to respond and there was confidence and emphasis on the qualities listed by the speakers. In almost all instances, the follow up question relating to the quality of hunhu as it relates to men was met with either total surprised silence, or in other cases, laughter as the group members realized that they had not consciously considered the standards as applying to men as well.

## A. THE CONCEPT OF HUNHU

### **Chinyadza Clinic, Nyazura Ward 16**

- ❖ Keeping one's body, not to be touched
- ❖ Women whose breasts are not fondled
- ❖ One who doesn't always laugh with everyone
- ❖ Self-respecting
- ❖ Not defiled by things of this world and being a good example to others
- ❖ Being humble and dignified
- ❖ A reflection of a person. Something that survives in a person either good or bad

### **Tsanzaguru**

- ❖ Maitiro akanaka
- ❖ Kugarisana kusina gakava
- ❖ Munhu anodzoreredza vamwe
- ❖ Kamuitiro nomatter zvakanaka or zvakashata
- ❖ Tsika nemagariro
- ❖ Kunzwisisana nevamwe
- ❖ Zviito mumaramiro (mbavha, muroyi, pfambi)
- ❖ Wakanaka/ wakashata
- ❖ Kuva munhu pane vanhu

**Inyati Mine, Arnaldine Primary (Ward 8)**

- ❖ Tsika
- ❖ Magariro akanaka
- ❖ Matauriro nevamwe munharaunda
- ❖ Zviito
- ❖ Mapfekero
- ❖ Kuita zvakanaka – rudo
- ❖ Mafambiro akanaka, munhu ane mafambiro ane hunhu – step
- ❖ Step yakanaka woita hunhu hwakashata
- ❖ Mumwe anochinja step aona vanhu achiti ndioneyi
- ❖ Kuzvininipisa
- ❖ Mazita anotaura hunhu hwemunhu especially emadunhurirwa e.g. ukanzi urimbwa
- ❖ Hunhu huri pakawanda
- ❖ Hunhu hwekuba hwechipfambi
- ❖ Mumwe anopfeka mini iye ari benzi mumwe opfeka zvakanaka asi riri benzi
- ❖ Hunhu huri mumunhu, mukati
- ❖ Mumwe anopfeka achiita kunge benzi asi iye asiri benzi

**Chitungwiza**

- ❖ Tsika dzakanaka dzinotarisirwa pamunhu e.g. Kumhoresa vakuru nekuvaremekedza
- ❖ Mafambiro munzira dzakanaka e.g. kuenda kucheche
- ❖ Maitiro
- ❖ Tsika dzinobva kuvabereki

**Chitenderano (Ward 30)**

- ❖ Ziso rinotaura
- ❖ Zviito zvakanaka/ zvakaipa
- ❖ Chechi mwoyo womunhu
- ❖ Mapfekero anoenderana nenzvimbo yauri

### **Rukweza**

- ❖ Hunhu hwakangorongeka
- ❖ Mabasa emunhu
- ❖ Mabasa akanaka
- ❖ Mafambiro akatsiga, kwete ekuzvikudza kana kuzhangandira
- ❖ Mapfekero kumwe hakuite kunorasa hunhu, hembe yakatsiga
- ❖ Kugarisana nevamwe muraini zvakanaka e.g. kuenda kuchechi nekuita maprojects zvinenge zvichitenderwa nenguva iyoyo, zvinenge zvichiitwa nevamwe
- ❖ Kugarisana muraini zvakanaka
- ❖ Kupfeka zvakanaka semukadzi wemunhu
- ❖ Kutaura zvakanaka nevakuru uchiti makadii
- ❖ Zviito nemagariro nevamwe, hapana anoda kuitirwa zvakaipa
- ❖ Kune hunhu hwakaipa
- ❖ Mudzimai anorarama nemunhu mumwechete, uye zimwechetewo zvichiitika kunana baba

## **B. WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HUNHU?**

### **Makoni: Rukweza Traditional Leaders and Healers FGD**

- ❖ Self-dignity, self-respect
- ❖ Way of doing things
- ❖ Culture - where one comes from which reflects the way in which one was brought up.
- ❖ Not doing things that are expected of a person.
- ❖ Not doing the bad\*

### **Makoni: INYATHI MINE (ANOLDINE) Traditional Leaders and healers**

- ❖ Self-respect
- ❖ Humble, loving and not arrogant
- ❖ A cultured person
- ❖ A person who relates well with other people
- ❖ One who does good to the next person.
- ❖ The way one does work
- ❖ One who is merciful
- ❖ One who so the accepted work.

## C. OVERALL QUALITIES OF HUNHU

### a) Deportment

- ❖ Humility
- ❖ Self-control (kuzvibata)
- ❖ The ability to speak well and communicate what you mean
- ❖ One's character (chimiro)
- ❖ The way one walks (mafambiro)
- ❖ Kuzvibata panyaya dzechipfambi

### b) Etiquette:

- ❖ Respecting others in your immediate family as well as those that one meets in other social spaces
- ❖ Speaking in a quiet voice that is not unnecessarily loud (shave neruzha) • Having good manners\*\*\* (tsika dzakanaka)
- ❖ Knowing the proper customs for different occasions
- ❖ Someone with respect – Kuve nerudo, nekutaura kunoremekedza sekuti makadii, tisvikewo

### c) Family Values

- ❖ Being able to discipline and reprimand (kutsiudza) a child
- ❖ Raising well behaved children

### d) Social Interaction

- ❖ Having good morals
- ❖ Ability to interact well with others without causing friction or antagonism • Understanding others
- ❖ Customs and way of life (tsika nemagariro)
- ❖ Good manners (tsika dzakanaka)
- ❖ A people's agreed way of life in a society
- ❖ How people live together in the community
- ❖ How people respond to other people
- ❖ How people welcome other people
- ❖ How people associate with other people (mawadzaniro)
- ❖ Knowing the proper channel to use when aggrieved and seeking redress
- ❖ Having an organised family (Mhuri yakarongeka)

### e) Dress

- ❖ Dressing in a decent manner

## D. AS IT RELATES TO WOMEN/ THE GIRL CHILD

- ❖ Grounded demeanor (chimiro chakatsiga pakati pevanhu)
- ❖ How she laughs, which must not be too loud when among elders
- ❖ Her dressing i.e. not wearing trousers or something that exposes the body\*\*\*\*
- ❖ Is loving
- ❖ The way she walks (mafambiro)
- ❖ The way she talks, with a lowered and controlled voice\*\*\*
- ❖ Her kindness
- ❖ The way she responds when spoken to, responding in a measured tone
- ❖ The way she looks at another person as she welcomes them, which must be friendly
- ❖ She is able to ask for forgiveness when she has done something wrong and can also forgive others who wrong her (mwoyo wekuregerera)
- ❖ Approachable and can be talked with
- ❖ Respects others
- ❖ Does not look down upon others
- ❖ Able to say when she has been wronged (asina pfundi pfundi)
- ❖ Gives constructive advice
- ❖ Knows God\*
- ❖ Can restrain herself
- ❖ One who conducts herself well in the community
- ❖ A woman who does not sleep around/who is promiscuous
- ❖ One who is understanding and empathetic
- ❖ Helpful, able to keep secrets and can notify authorities when needed
- ❖ Lives well with her family
- ❖ Humble
- ❖ Obedient to her husband
- ❖ Matauriro akanaka asingaputse kana kunyomba
- ❖ Kuzvityora
- ❖ Mukadzi akawanikwa should show tsika dzakanaka kune vose
- ❖ Kuchengeta mhuri yake
- ❖ Kupfugama nekutyora muzura
- ❖ Kuva nechiremera and be exemplary in role behaviour; playing my role as a grandparent / mother/ aunt and seeking God
- ❖ Respecting social boundaries (Kusakwana pose pose)

## E. AS IT RELATES TO THE MEN/ BOY CHILD

- ❖ Someone with humility and respect for others (kudzikama)
- ❖ One who can defer to elders (kuterama)
- ❖ How one walks, which must not be with pompous steps (kubhamba)
- ❖ Decent dressing without exposed underwear or layered trousers
- ❖ How he speaks among other people, which must be with respect and using proper language
- ❖ Giving way when passing elders (kutsaukira vakuru muchipesana)
- ❖ Good conduct i.e. saying (pamusoroi achisvika pane vanhu)
- ❖ Decent hair cut
- ❖ How he conducts and lives with his family
- ❖ One who is not feared by his family as a father (asinganzi kwauyiwa)
- ❖ Gets home on time
- ❖ Prays with his family
- ❖ Teaches his children to be organized
- ❖ Takes care of his family/shows love to his family
- ❖ Is supportive and works for his family/ has a thriving family
- ❖ One who does not cheat on his wife/ not have “small houses” and sticks to one wife (anonwa patsime rimwechete)/ Does not have a roving eye/ Ukangowona dress no ‘pss pss’ / Asingarare mumabhawa/pese pese/ Anonekwa pamba\*\*\*\*
- ❖ Is not a bother and a nuisance (asingashushe)
- ❖ Asingafambe achinyepa pose pose/ Kuita nekutaura zvine chokwadi \*\*\*
- ❖ Kugara nemhuri yake zvakanaka nemhuri yake nguva yose
- ❖ One that does not steal from others

## F. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WOMAN WITH HUNHU?

### **Makoni: Rukweza Traditional Leaders and Healers**

- ❖ She does things that are admired
- ❖ She does good and acceptable works
- ❖ She is able to take care of her family (children and the husband) and the extended family such as nephews and orphans.
- ❖ She is humble and values herself, she is not promiscuous
- ❖ She is not envious or is lustful.
- ❖ She doesn’t love fancy or flashy life?
- ❖ She exercises restraint and doesn’t behave like an unstable person.

### **Makoni: INYATHI MINE\_ (ANOLDINE) Traditional Leaders and healers**

- ❖ One who searches for a common ground

## G. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MAN WITH HUNHU?

### **Makoni: Rukweza Traditional Leaders and Healers**

- ❖ It's the same as explained under question 2.
- ❖ Does not behave like an unstable person
- ❖ One who does something that is not disgraceful\*.
- ❖ Does things in a good way.
- ❖ What applies to woman also applies to man\*.
- ❖ Is humble \*
- ❖ Dresses in a way that reflects maturity

### **Makoni: INYATHI MINE (ANOLDINE) Traditional Leaders and healers**

- ❖ One who is not a drunkard
- ❖ One who is responsible \*

## H. AS IT RELATES TO WOMEN/ THE GIRL CHILD

- ❖ Grounded demeanor (chimiro chakatsiga pakati pevanhu)
- ❖ How she laughs, which must not be too loud when among elders
- ❖ Her dressing i.e. not wearing trousers or something that exposes the body\*\*\*\*
- ❖ Is loving
- ❖ The way she walks (mafambiro)
- ❖ The way she talks, with a lowered and controlled voice\*\*\*
- ❖ Her kindness
- ❖ The way she responds when spoken to, responding in a measured tone
- ❖ The way she looks at another person as she welcomes them, which must be friendly
- ❖ She is able to ask for forgiveness when she has done something wrong and can also forgive others who wrong her (mwoyo wekuregerera)
- ❖ Approachable and can be talked with
- ❖ Respects others
- ❖ Does not look down upon others
- ❖ Able to say when she has been wronged (asina pfundi pfundi)
- ❖ Gives constructive advice
- ❖ Knows God\*
- ❖ Can restrain herself
- ❖ One who conducts herself well in the community
- ❖ A woman who does not sleep around/who is not promiscuous
- ❖ One who is understanding and empathetic

- ❖ Helpful, able to keep secrets and can notify authorities when needed
- ❖ Lives well with her family
- ❖ Humble
- ❖ Obedient to her husband
- ❖ Matauriro akanaka asingaputse kana kunyomba
- ❖ Kuzvityora
- ❖ Mukadzi akawanikwa should show tsika dzakanaka kune vose
- ❖ Kuchengeta mhuri yake
- ❖ Kupfugama nekutyora muzura
- ❖ Kuva nechiremera and be exemplary in role behaviour; playing my role as a grandparent / mother/ aunt and seeking God
- ❖ Respecting social boundaries (Kusakwana pose pose)

## I. AS IT RELATES TO THE MEN/ BOY CHILD

- ❖ Someone with humility and respect for others (kudzikama)
- ❖ One who can defer to elders (kuterama)
- ❖ How he walks, which must not be with pompous steps (kubhamba)
- ❖ Decent dressing without exposed underwear or layered trousers
- ❖ How he speaks among other people, which must be with respect and using proper language
- ❖ Giving way when passing elders (kutsaukira vakuru muchipesana)
- ❖ Good conduct i.e. saying (pamusoroi achisvika pane vanhu)
- ❖ Decent hair cut
- ❖ How he conducts and lives with his family
- ❖ One who is not feared by his family as a father (asinganzi kwauyiwa)
- ❖ Gets home on time
- ❖ Prays with his family
- ❖ Teaches his children to be organized
- ❖ Takes care and shows love to his family/ \*
- ❖ Is supportive and works for his family/ has a thriving family
- ❖ One who doesn't cheat on his wife/ sticks to one wife (anonwa patsime rimwe chete)/ Does not have a roving eye/ Ukangowona dress no 'pss pss' / Asingarare mumabhawa/ pese pese/ Anoonekwa pamba\*\*\*\*
- ❖ Is not a bother and a nuisance (asingashushe)
- ❖ Asingafambe achinyepa pose pose/ Kuita nekutaura zvine chokwadi \*\*\*
- ❖ Kugara nemhuri yake zvakanaka nguva yose
- ❖ One that does not steal from others



# 10. ANNEX 3: THE MARRIAGE RITUAL AND ATTENDANT VALUE AND PRACTICES

**MR TEKERE** (African Traditional Spirituality Practitioner)

**Question: In the past how were girls celebrated as they transitioned into adulthood?**

*Girls were treated differently from boys. They were considered to be the ones who will bring wealth, they were well taken care of. They were given easier chores though they were taught to be hardworking for a better future. They were closely guarded to maintain their virginity. If she was from an affluent family, expectations were that she would also marry into an affluent family*

**Question: Which were the different ways in which a girl could get married?**

*In the past, they encouraged that people marry those they were really familiar with (vematongo). Poverty was also there. The poor also wanted to get married to a boy from a rich family. There was “kutema ugariri” whereby the boy would go and work for the girl’s family for an agreed period of time and be given the girl as a wife afterwards. He would not be denied his wife. “Kugana” – whereby a girl would go and declare her love for a particular man. She was not chased away because they believed she had probably been sent by the gods (nematare). “Kuzvarira” – this was not forced. The aunts from both the girl and the boy’s sides would talk about this and come to an understanding.*

*Marriage was very important and considered sacred (kwaisunganidza matare). The act of gathering people together, cattle being given as tokens, communications being made i.e. a girl indicating that the man is the one she has decided to be with, all these were vows/oaths being made. Making the declaration “till death do us part” means that even if one is caught cheating the other would forgive and not chase them away.*

*After the marriage ceremony, the girl would be accompanied to the man’s family (kuperekwa). She would return to her family after 7 months because she would be pregnant. She would be accompanied by her husband and the husband’s parents. They would bring 2 goats for a process called “masungiro” (some slaughter a cow). The woman and her mother-in-law would get into the house through going over a cloth they would bring, which would then be given to the woman’s mother. Millet meal porridge (sadza rezviyo) would be prepared, which the woman’s father would feed the woman and her husband (kuvanokorera).*

*“Kusungira” is done for a first pregnancy which is usually difficult. Thus it is important that the woman gets to be taken care of by her own mother. It also allowed her to visit the clinic or traditional healers among her people. During this time she was also spoilt (kuyema). In the event of a mishap, there would be no fear of potential “ngozi” in future. There were also some herbs used for widening of the birth canal (masuwo) unlike nowadays where modern medicine has taken over.*

# ANNEX 3: CULTURE, FAMILY VALUES AND MODERN RIGHTS

**CHIEF SOGWALA** (*Madigane, Gweru*)

**Question: What do the family values in culture stipulate for adolescents and sex?**

*A child is advised that sex is for adults, there is no need to rush into it. Children are under the control of their parents who can discipline them. They learn from their parents whom they should emulate. There are some social values and issues that the state laws cannot legislate. They have to come from the family level/structure. Just as well, the HIV pandemic cannot be contained because the targeted people have no grounding/no values. The best way would be to have the family laws working together with the state laws. Condoms when used in isolation will not be effective, there is need to involve the family structure. Nowadays the youngsters feel empowered thus they can do as they please, even with regards to marriage. This brings problems in the future. In the past, they had restrictions which made it difficult to get pregnant out of wedlock. Even on getting married there were consultations that were made beforehand which enabled the aunts to vet the prospective suitor thereby eliminating potentially problematic partners.*

**Question: What used to happen when one wanted to marry?**

*There were procedures that were followed i.e. when a young man wanted to marry, they would advice their uncles who would send a “go between” (munyai) to the girl’s family to ask (kukumbira moto). The “munyai” would pay an amount/token to advice that they want to marry in that family. They would be asked which daughter they had identified in that family. Nowadays they just bring their partners from the city and inform their parents that they are now married.*

*The family institution has been rendered powerless in comparison to the other social institutions such as the church, schools and political parties. For example a church can demand that a child go for a week long retreat and the parents have no say. These institutions offer them a lot of freedom and rights in exchange for their loyalty and allegiance. The same applies to political parties when it is towards election time, they have more influence over the children. The influence of the family structure has been diminished. As long as the family structure and values are not considered, there will always be social ills, with the children being ungovernable.*

*The new marriage act is in tandem with our culture in that the children are only allowed to get married when they have matured, unlike what had now been transpiring whereby one would be allowed to marry if they got pregnant at a young age. In the past one had to be older and mature to marry. There should be enforcement of youth education on sexual health. There is no fear among them of the consequences e.g. whereas they see others being infected and suffering, instead of steering clear, they go on to repeat the same mistakes oblivious of the fact that they will also be affected.*

**Question: Can the old traditions of the past (chinyakare) and modernity co-exist?**

*They can. Old culture is necessary, it should not be done away with. It is only when it is embraced that progress can be made.*

# ANNEX 3: ADDITIONAL UNSTRUCTURED INFORMATION

- ❖ Those doing HIV testing and counselling, instead of coming and parking at the clinic, they could have the testing being done in schools. This is because the young people may fear coming to the clinics
- ❖ To reduce infections, there is need for health education encompassing the parents. If they are educated, they can then teach their children. There is need for education in the schools as well
- ❖ Young people are hooking up with older people. If the older people could be educated as well then they do not get to be so reckless.
- ❖ Women empowerment – women should have access to the means of production e.g. land for gardening/farming, so that they are not too dependent and desperate to be taken care of whilst putting their health at risk
- ❖ Women should be educated on their rights so that they are able to tell a man to wear a condom
- ❖ There are a few schools in this community. Travelling distances are too long for the students, which often involve going through forests and they can get taken advantage of along the way. 16-24 year olds have resorted to renting so that they are nearer to schools. This makes them vulnerable to abuse by those who are affluent, as they try to take care of themselves.
- ❖ Influence of cross borders commonly referred to as “majon-jon” who target the young girls and lure them with money. They are then made to drop out of school early
- ❖ Lack of money to pay school fees
- ❖ Prevalence of drop outs – there are more than 5 per year and this starts from primary school. They come from vulnerable and underprivileged backgrounds
- ❖ During the period of the tomato and beans harvest, there is an increase in promiscuity. In what they call “dollar power”, the young boys will be having cash to spare and they hook up with older women and commercial sex workers which exposes them to sexually transmitted infections
- ❖ Government policy should provide that those impregnating young girls must compensate for lost opportunities and resources e.g. sugar daddies.
- ❖ Perpetrators are arrested and released which does not serve as a deterrent.

- ❖ Separate the young mothers from those in conventional school as this is bad influence though government values these young mothers; the others may think its easy life.
- ❖ Laws make it difficult for parents to play their role as responsibilities are being taken over by police.
- ❖ The word 'abuse' is making it difficult. Mwana otya teacher nepolice than mubereki.
- ❖ Both parents and government are failing to protect children e.g. beating of a child by a teacher, the child can phone a helpline and children are taking advantage of that.
- ❖ Technology. Children have all sorts of smart phones where they access illicit materials.
- ❖ Vana mbuya and tete must assume back their responsibilities, charity begins at home.
- ❖ Children are not listening to parents and they use the generation gap as a trump card to resist reforming.
- ❖ Children are making going to school just a ritual to make time pass.
- ❖ BCFs are welcome as they are helping our children and those reluctant to be tested are tested.
- ❖ Be open on ARVs administration to children instead of lying that it's for headache
- ❖ Observe expiry dates for ARV medication when being issued.
- ❖ Get into primary school as well even grade zero.
- ❖ There is need for the elders and leaders to step in.
- ❖ It is important to teach children to report whenever they are touched inappropriately
- ❖ In the past, people would get married when they were mature/older (vakombodza)
- ❖ The young are now doing away with their culture which is causing them problems in future i.e. introducing their partners to their parents
- ❖ Greediness by the parents and loving the good life/groceries ("mathrow in") making them marry off their children whilst still young
- ❖ Some parents marry off their children after they get pregnant whilst still in school, and they have difficulties looking after them
- ❖ It would be beneficial to have boys and men being involved in such programs
- ❖ Organisations such as MASO are helping in taking the roles of aunts
- ❖ Sex education should start as early as 10 years since by then they are already exposed.
- ❖ There should be more education in schools especially with regards to abuse. This is because some of the kids have big bodies.

- ❖ It is important to keep lines of communication open between parents and children
- ❖ Sex education should start as young as 5 years
- ❖ The girls should report if there is anything amiss and they should desist from getting near or playing around male people/relatives
- ❖ In the past girls underwent virginity testing, which is now considered abuse as per children's rights. In the Zion sect, they do carry out the procedure whereby afterwards a girl is given a complete leaf to show they are still a virgin and those who are no longer virgins are given leaves with holes, which will be a source of embarrassment.
- ❖ It has become difficult to educate the young due to bad relations among families. There is need for people to come together as a community in raising the children and do away with the "handiroverwe mwana wangu nemumwe munhu" attitude.
- ❖ There is need for more programs that support our culture. Reference made to the West African movies as well as the local "Tiri parwendo" series that depicts life as it was in the past.



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Changing the Lives of Ordinary Zimbabweans