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Unlocking and strengthening the social capital of Religious Leaders to promote AGYW sexual and reproductive health and rights for the elimination of child marriages and sexual and gender-based violence in Dedza district in Malawi.

The project on unlocking the social capital of religious leaders to promote AGYW SRHR for the elimination of child marriages and SGBV is a one-year project that is being implemented by MANERELA+ in Traditional Authority Tambala, Dedza District in Malawi. The project targets religious leaders, adolescent girls, and young women as well as adolescent boys and young men. The project was informed by data that highlights that the country has one of the highest rate of child marriages with approximately 1 in 2 girls married by the age of 18 years according to UNICEF. The data also indicates a history of low contraceptive use among the young population resulting in a high number of adolescent pregnancies with 22% of the girls giving birth by age 15 and 65% giving birth by age 20 due to scanty knowledge on SRHR issues coupled with harmful cultural norms and practices, religious beliefs and gender based violence. The objective of the project is to harness the social capital of faith leaders to promote SRHR for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in addressing child marriages and gender-based violence in faith communities. The project trained religious leaders as change agents on SRHR where a total of 30 (19 male and 11 female) religious leaders from different faith communities (Moslems, Presbyterians, Catholics, Pentecostals, Lutherans etc) were trained on comprehensive sexuality education for them to cascade it to their faith communities. The project also trained 30 young women aged 15-24 years as peer educators on SRHR. The training aimed at empowering the young women to make informed choices and to educate their peers on issues of SRHR and sexual and gender-based violence. The increased knowledge on SRHR is bearing fruits as health facilities are acknowledging an increase in the number of AGYW going to the facilities in the area to access information and SRHR services.



Solidarity march against sexual and gender-based violence trailing the rape and death of Vera Uwaila Omozuwa, Nigeria.

The incidence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Nigeria is rising daily. According to the Nigeria demographic health survey conducted in 2013, 3 in every 10 Nigerian women have experienced physical violence by the age 15. The girl-child, teenage girls, young ladies, women and older women have reported being raped and this is quite worrisome because it shows that women are longer safe in the society and need to be protected against perpetrators of violence at all times. The story of Vera is saddening in that she never lived to tell the story of what happened to her nor achieve her dreams of being a microbiologist. Vera Uwaila Omozuwa (22 years old) who was a 100-level student of the department of microbiology at the University of Benin, Edo State Nigeria was raped at the Redeemed Christian Church of God while reading her books. In the past, Uwa Vera (who was also a chorister in the same church) has used the church as her library due to the quiet nature of the area. Like any other day, she visited the church on 27th May 2020 to study but unfortunately, she was raped and injured on the head with a fire extinguisher and left to die not until the security personnel found her bleeding body. With the help of the church authorities, she was rushed to the hospital in an unconscious state but died 3 days later. It was quite an unfortunate incident to have occurred in the church where one could think is the safest place to visit at any time of the day but it turns out to be where evil is being perpetrated without reference to God.



Banner showing CSOs coalition for Justice for Uwavera.

In an expression of dismay to the ugly incident, the Civil Society Organizations (including INERELA+ Nigeria) embarked on a solidarity march against SGBV to fight for justice for survivors of violence by advocating for severe legal actions on the perpetrators. During the rally at the deceased compound and later at the palace of the traditional ruler of the community, INERELA+ Nigeria as an interfaith organization stated that this case of rape and murder is not just a crime against humanity but a sin against God. There is an increasing trend of rape in Ohovbe Quarters and spiritual catharsis is needed in the community. The rally stated that Civil Society must all speak out against rape and all forms of violence and ensure that the perpetrators of this gruesome act face the law of the land. INERELA+ Nigeria (Edo State chapter) in collaboration with other Civil Society Organizations organized a protest/solidarity walk against rape and other forms of gender-based violence and advocating for justice in the case of Uwa Vera and other survivors of SGBV. The protesters (dressed in black clothing) converged at Agbor Park, Agbor Road, Benin and marched towards the Uwaila' father's compound at Ohovbe Quarters, Benin, Edo state. There were presentations made by the representatives of each CSOs and in company of the victim's siblings and course

mates, all walked to the palace of the Enogie of Ohovbe Quarters to speak against SGBV and demand for prosecution of the perpetrators. The protest was conducted in a peaceful manner and at the end, the CSOs successfully inaugurated a “Coalition on Justice for Uwa and all survivors of rape and sexual and gender-based violence”. The challenges noted include lack of time management which failed the protesters the opportunity to meet with the traditional ruler of the community and poor organisation skills. The achievements noted were that the solidarity walk was a success because people came out in large numbers (about 150 people including men, women, and children) to voice out against SGBV. A coalition for justice against rape, child battering, and gender violence was inaugurated at the Enogie of Ohovbe’s Palace. There would now be legal support and intensified exposure for victims in the community. The best practices were the collaboration between the CSOs to seek for justice for Uwa and survivors of sexual and gender - based violence. One of the protesters said, “Any perpetrator of rape, child battering and gender violence should not be bailed from custody and should receive the maximum punishment prescribed by law”.

NINERELA+ commemorates the World Menstrual Hygiene Day in the Lungu Community, Gwarinpa Abuja.

The World Menstrual Hygiene Day (WMHD) is an annual event celebrated all over the world to promote high level of hygiene practices during menstruation among girls and young women through interventions that can enlighten people more about menstruation and support participants with sanitary pads. This project was supported by Robert Carr Foundation through INERELA+ Secretariat. As part of the commemorations, NINERELA+ visited Lungu, a rural community in the suburb of Gwarinpa, Abuja on the 28th of May 2020 with adolescent girls and women of child-bearing age to enlighten them on safe practices during menstruation. There was an interactive session between the facilitator Ms Amber Erimwinhe and participants on menstruation which was trailed by the distribution of sanitary pads. Participants stated that some of them use sanitary pads while others use piece of clothing during menstruation because they cannot afford sanitary pads. Participants shared various means of disposing their sanitary pads. Some women who complained of rashes in their genital area while using a particular product of sanitary pad were advised to consult a doctor for proper diagnosis and medical advice. The facilitator shared more information around menstruation and also demonstrated how the sanitary pad can be used and disposed properly. The total number of persons reached were 322 (299 females and 23 males). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the social distance policy, only few people were reached on WMHD hence the recommendations made were that; menstrual hygiene interventions should be scaled up in rural communities across Nigeria and that sanitary pads should be made affordable.

INERELA+ Ghana conducts a webinar dialogue session on the 27th of May themed, "Menstrual Hygiene Management: COVID-19 Challenges and Responses."

Menstrual Hygiene Day is an annual global event commemorated on the 28th of May that brings together non-profit organisations, government agencies, private sector, the media and individuals to highlight the importance of good menstrual hygiene management, engage in awareness and advocacy, help break myths associated to menstruation and share knowledge around the importance of Menstrual Hygiene management. This day aims to halt the continued discrimination and shame associated with menstruation by breaking taboos and raising awareness among individuals, communities, organizations, women, and young people. INERELA+ Ghana with support from INERELA+ Secretariat joined other organizations around the world to observe this year’s Menstrual Hygiene Day under the theme ‘*Periods in Pandemics*’. The theme was meant to highlight the worsened nature of challenges faced by women during menstruation due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic. On 27th May, INERELA+ Ghana held a dialogue webinar session with various stakeholders where discussions evolved around the theme, "Menstrual Hygiene Management: COVID-19 Challenges and Responses". Discussions zoomed in on the following thematic areas; the issues, evidence and gaps of menstrual hygiene management experienced by girls and solutions to improve knowledge, attitudes, and

practices during the pandemic. During the discussions, participants identified three major problems that most women and girls encounter as a result of the pandemic which include inadequate supply of sanitary pads due to the COVID-19 nationwide lockdown which resulted in economic hardships and limited access to sanitary facilities due to restrictions imposed on movement.

INERELA+ Ghana Commemorates Menstrual Hygiene Day on the 28th of May 2020.

On the 28th of May, INERELA+ Ghana organized a community outreach to present 4000 sanitary pads to 2000 less privileged women and girls as part of activities scheduled to observe the sixth Menstrual Hygiene Day celebration since its inception in 2014. The community outreach took place in Agbogbloshie and Old Fadama in the Greater Accra Region. These communities were purposively selected due to two main reasons: the first being the standard of living of the people and type of settlement found there. The target of the community outreach was to reach out to less privileged adolescents, women, and head porters in the society. The exercise kicked-off at the residence of the Assemblyman where a batch of three hundred adolescents and women received two packs of sanitary pads and a bottle of hand sanitizer each. Mercy educated the beneficiaries on menstrual hygiene management and appealed to parents especially mothers to show concern towards the needs of their children. Adding that it is imperative for parents to provide basic needs such as sanitary pads for their children. The latter part of the day was used to embark on door-to-door sensitization of women and adolescents living within the vicinity. During the exercise, the team used the opportunity to dispel myths and taboos associated with menstruation and answered questions from beneficiaries. A demonstration of the usage of sanitary pad preparation was done to in a bid to give more participant more information on menstrual hygiene management. Over 2000 people benefited through this community outreach.



Mrs. Mercy Acquah-Hayford educating on menstrual hygiene

INERELA+ Kenya commemorates the Menstrual Health Day(WMHD) by engaging young people in SRHR from the month of May-June 2020.

INERELA+ Kenya in collaboration with its partners joined the world in raising awareness on the challenges young girls and women face due to menstruation, especially during the covid-19 pandemic. As a drive towards the main event, INERELA+ Kenya led major online campaigns via social media where key stakeholders and youth champions participated by contributing to the key topics in addressing issues faced with young girls and

women during menstruation. Youth dialogues on proper menstrual hygiene, eradication of period poverty, stigma and shame were held via WhatsApp platform where 20 youth advocates were engaged. The platform acted as a safe space to discuss issues and challenges affecting women during menstruation. During the current covid-19 pandemic it was noted that there was a rise in numbers on teenage pregnancies. In view of this, platforms like Facebook, tweeter, WhatsApp, and Instagram were utilized for the dissemination of messages to educate ladies on abstinence. During the campaign, INERELA+ Kenya highlighted the need to equip more girls with accurate information on menstruation and proper sanitation, waste management and hygiene in schools and communities. The campaign further acted as a channel to urge the government to ensure that schools are properly equipped with menstrual-friendly toilets. In Kenya statistics of March-May show a large number of teenage pregnancy country wide, with Nairobi county leading with 11,734, the increase in these figures was partial as a result of the national lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, which saw most of these young people engage in early sex due to peer pressure, poverty among other issues.



Adolescent girls showing off sanitary pads trailing MHD commemorations in Nairobi, Kenya.

Facilitating conversations on let's talk Early Unwanted Pregnancy with Religious Leaders: The role Religious Leaders can play in the prevention of EUP and supporting the continuation of girls who fall pregnant-A zoom dialogue by Takuwani Riime, SANERELA+ and UNESCO on the 3rd of July 2020.

The online dialogue that was conducted on the 3rd of July brought together UNESCO, South African Pentecostal Bishops Council (SAPBC), SANERELA+; National Family Foundation of SA; Save The Children International; INERELA+; Life Community Foundation; Heartlines; Takuwani Rime Men's Movement; Church Leaders Council of South Africa; Young Men's Guild (Amadodana AseWesile) and Faith-Based Child Protection Movement and House of Traditional Leaders. The online dialogue was chaired by Let's Talk Early Unwanted Pregnancy (EUP) Champion, Professor Mbulelo Dyasi and Rev Nokuthula Dhladhla from SANERELA+. A panel of speakers presented on the various topics covering the status and magnitude of EUP in South Africa and the role that religious leaders can play in supporting efforts of prevention of EUP in communities. The online dialogue addressed the status and magnitude of EUP in South Africa. It also touched on the role religious leaders can play in preventing EUP, new HIV infections and sexual and gender-based violence. Religious leaders gave their commitment that they will be part of this work as most churches are not a haven for young people. Dr Hlengiwe Mhlaba a gospel singer was part of the conversation, she also committed as a champion. RLs also agreed to changing language they use about how we see the church to create safe spaces and to encourage changing language about how we see church as a place that builds life

without ignoring the challenges some leaders are found. RL pledged that they will make sure that cultural practices need to be viewed so that there is a way forward and action take place. Creating the safe spaces is what this work will do for young people. Rev Phumzile Mabizela the INERELA+ Executive Director who was one of the participants noted that, “One of the challenge in the RL is that we do not have a positive language when we talk about sex and sexuality. That needs to change. To Religious leaders’ life is sexually transmission condition, if we cannot talk about sex, we don’t have the right to talk about life.”

Let's Talk!
Pregnancy at the right time

CONVERSATIONS
WITH RELIGIOUS/FAITH LEADERS ON

TAKUWANI RIIME!
INSTITUTIONALISING A RESPONSIVE MEN'S MOVEMENT

LET'S TALK PREGNANCY AT THE RIGHT TIME.

DATE: 03 JULY 2020 (TOMORROW) | TIME: 09H30 FOR 10H00

ENDORSEMENTS

Rev Nkosinathi Gaja (YMG SADC President)
Dr. Hlangwe Mhlaba (Gospel Singer)
Dr. Mariska Helm (National Family Foundation SA)

ID: 496 550 7277
PASSWORD: AZALI6

LIVE

zoom

SPEAKERS

Rev Phumzile Mabizela (INERELA+ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)
Mr. Rikomo Yoka (SANAC MEN'S SECTOR CHAIRPERSON)
Ms. Rutsowe Nene (UNESCO PROGRAMME OFFICER)

Rev. Phisoaniso Mokoena (FAITH BASED CHILD PROTECTION MOVEMENT)
Apostle Dr. Mpho Mokoena (LET'S COMMUNITY FOUNDATION)
Metsiso Shingwerianga (SIBI SAYS THE CHILDREN FIRST AND SADC)

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PARTNERS

Save the Children
SANERELA
National Family Foundation SA
TIME TO ACT NOW
SIBI SAYS THE CHILDREN FIRST AND SADC

A poster showing the guest speakers of the Let's Talk Campaign.

INERELA+ Madagascar (OMASAVE) successfully translates the SAVE Toolkit into a Malagasy version.

The SAVE translation project commenced in the year 2014 but was hampered by lack of funding. Through this activity INERELA+ had to translate the SAVE Toolkit English version into the SAVE Malagasy version in order to supply Malagasy religious leaders and people living with HIV/AIDS, with a SAVE toolkit available in the local language, for a better understanding. From 2014 to 2018, courtesy of the financial support from the INERELA+ Secretariat, the OMASAVE project of translating the SAVE Toolkit into Malagasy version has now materialized. The SAVE toolkit Malagasy version is now available in two forms which are the black and white SAVE Toolkit and the coloured SAVE Toolkit. The translation team was made up of religious leaders, people who are infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, Malagasy academy members, OMASAVE organization members and INERELA+ Country Network Madagascar Antananarivo. This is the same team that translated the English version into a French version of the SAVE Toolkit which enabled the INERELA+ Secretariat to come up with the French version. The translation took place in three stages which include the gathering for a global reading of the original text to be translated, the second stage in which each member brought a draft of the first translation, and the third stage in which the team members came up with the final translation after considering the remarks given in the second meeting. The SAVE Toolkit translation into Malagasy version brought changes into the church history in Madagascar in that currently religious leaders can openly discuss the sexuality within their faith communities with the aid of the Toolkit. Academics specializing in the Malagasy language feel happy that the SAVE Toolkit now exists in a Malagasy version, and that the people are benefiting from it. It is a great success for Malagasy churches and for all Madagascar

to have the SAVE Manual in Malagasy version available in the fight against the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.



A picture showing the SAVE Toolkit versions.

Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) Training Workshop for Religious in Zimbabwe, New Ambassador Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe, 22-24 July 2020.

INERELA+ Zimbabwe conducted a workshop for religious leaders from across Harare on ASRHR with support from INERELA+ Secretariat funded by Church of Sweden. The workshop was held at New Ambassador Hotel in Harare, Zimbabwe from the 22nd to the 24th of July 2020 and was attended by 10 participants. The workshop was conducted to equip, empower, and support religious leaders in their mission to get comprehensive sexuality education that is age appropriate, culturally relevant, and scientifically accurate to adolescents. The main goal for the workshop was to help generate safe spaces for talks and conversations on issues of sexuality between religious leaders and adolescents, as well as increase religious leaders' knowledge on comprehensive sexuality education. Religious leaders have been appointed as influential stakeholders in community and can thus play a crucial role in mitigating the impact of challenges affecting adolescents in line with adolescent's reproductive health and rights. Insufficient awareness, limited to no communication between religious leaders and the adolescents in their congregations, as well as limited to no communication between children and parents were cited as some of the challenges exacerbating unhealthy sexual tendencies amongst the adolescents. The training established that by getting the buy-in and collaboration of the three layers of the community; the congregations, home, and places of worship, it is possible to reach children and youth with holistic and streamlined SRHR information. Workshop participants also reviewed the handbook on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Religious Leaders and approved it. As a way forward, participants concluded that the training received perfected prevailing knowledge and that further networking can build towards greater involvement.



Participants posing for a group photo at the ASRHR training in Harare.

Partners meeting on how to collaborate in the fight against SGBV/GBV and to promote HIV and Covid-19 prevention.

INERELA+ Sierra Leone in partnership with Sierra Leone Social Marketing and Development Agency (SLaDA) engaged with other partners (Network of HIV Positives in Sierra Leone (NETHIPS), National HIV and AIDS Secretariate (NAS), Praise Foundation, Family Support Unit (FSU), The Door Christian Fellowship, Voice of Women, Victorious Youth and Women of Grace) to enhance collaboration to fight SGBV/GBV and to promote HIV and Covid-19 prevention in Sierra Leone during the month of July. During the meeting, partners agreed to form community peer educators to promote HIV and covid-19 awareness raising in communities. Partners also agreed to include SGBV/GBV in their activities planned and to engage in community policing in their operational areas to immediately report GBV matters to the police. During the discussion, some partners noted that they had already been committed in the work to fight SGBV. The Family support unit manager of SLaDA highlighted on how so many men are still not able to maintain decent relationship with women and promised to work with all partners to ensure that all perpetrators of SGBV will face the full force of the law. Partners further agreed to strengthen collaboration to fight SGBV in Sierra Leone. The achievements that were noted include; collaboration and partnership to fight SGBV strengthen among partners, family support unit police own institution's commitment to work with all partners to bring perpetrators of SGBV to justice, ten peer educators from INERELA+ Sierra Leone committed to do house to house sensitization on how to fight SBGV and to promote HIV and Covid-19 prevention.



A picture showing participants at the meeting held at the National HIV and AIDS Secretariat in Sierra Leone

Chief Madzimawe Bemoans the Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic to Young People in Zambia.



Chief Madzimawe of Zambia

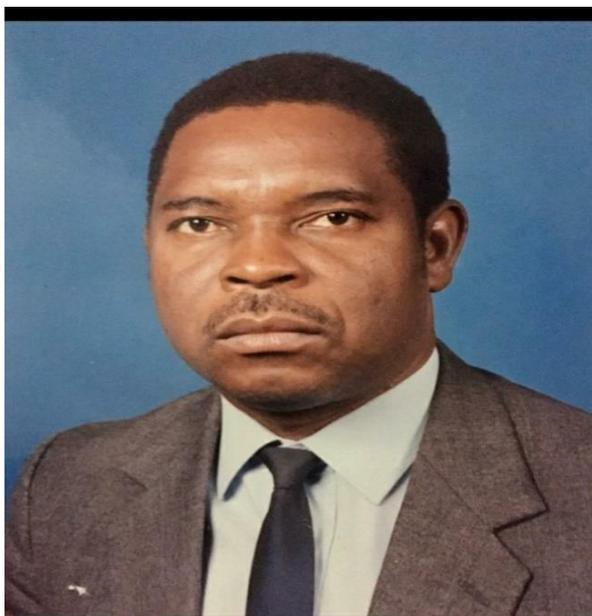
Chief Madzimawe of the Ngoni people in the Kasenengwa district of Zambia says his chieftom has recorded a sharp increase in cases of child marriages and defilement. The traditional leader says the fight against teenage pregnancy has taken a new twist because victims are the ones running without being subjected to medical check-ups. He explains that perpetrators of such vices are being left roaming in the streets and have continued defiling more girls because victims are not there to give evidence especially in cases where the matter is taken to court. The traditional leader who is a gender activist, noted that his efforts of reducing the teenage pregnancy are being frustrated because law enforcers are not helping in enforcing the law. The chief told Breeze FM News that he once dealt with a case involving a 13-year-old girl who was defiled, but when the matter was handed over to the law enforcers and no positive action was taken and the culprit was left free. He further handled another case involving two minors aged 8 and 12 years suspected to have been raped by an old man which is pending in the courts because their parents ran away. The chief added that the closure of schools due to covid-19 and lockdown measures has greatly contributed to a sharp increase in cases of early marriages and teenage pregnancies.

INERELA+ Appoints Deputy Director – Programmes -Munya Mandipaza.



Munya Mandipaza is the newly appointed Deputy Director for INERELA+ effective from the 1st of September 2020. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this position, having devoted her career to issues of Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, inclusiveness, equality, and social justice with International Development organisations. In that capacity she will) provide leadership, decision-making and coordination on programmatic issues, including the development of quality proposals and overseeing the effective implementation of INERELA+ programs through Country Networks. Communications, advocacy, and representation of the INERELA+ network will also be part of her focus in coordination with the Executive Director. She will also actively contribute and strive for a coherent and accountable international network by participating in debates and sharing of information with like-minded organisations. Munya started her tenure with the Secretariat as the INERELA+ Programmes Manager in April 2019 where she has been in charge of leading the network's programme development, overseeing implementation across continents and a wide range of faith constituencies. In that role Munya prioritised the identification of funding opportunities via

grant writing and partnerships building to expand existing projects and establishment of new projects with a special focus on consolidating the growth of INERELA+ dormant country networks. Her expertise spans the areas of operational strategy, financial management, provision of technical assistance to various programmes; donor reporting, ensuring compliance with all contractual matters related to various donors. Being a long-time champion of youth work and women's rights she is affiliated with several organizations devoted to education, gender equality, youth, and women's empowerment. She has also sought to be a bridge-builder who always gave voice and expand support to the world's marginalised and most vulnerable people. During her career she has held a number of leadership positions with International Development organisation like Christian Aid, Dorcas Aid International among others where she was responsible for overseeing partners implementing Projects which capacitated Religious Leaders to become God's generals who in turn touched on the lives of the needy through their respective congregations and communities. Munya has a background in development studies from her native country.



Obituary Jeremias Langa-01 January 1951- 14 July 2020.

Jeremias Langa was born on 1 January 1951 and he worked for various non-governmental organisations. He helped establish the association of widows and single mothers, association of micro projects with the main objective to create sustainability to vulnerable women like single mothers and widows. Jeremias then founded MONERELA+ to increase awareness of Religious Leaders about the stigma and discrimination of HIV/AIDS. He is also a founding member of MATRAM (Mozambique Treatment Access Movement) where he served as the chairperson of the board. Mr. Jeremias died on the 14th of July 2020 and was buried on the 16th of July at Lhanguene cemetery. Due to the covid-19 regulations, only 10 people were allowed to witness his burial. The INERELA+ family will forever miss Jeremias Langa.