A transformed apostolic sect shrine: a case of Chitungwiza Ward 10

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Map guide

FAWEZI has representation in all the 10 provinces in Zimbabwe

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FAWEZI started the year 2022 with renewed energy boosted by lessons learnt from operating in an environment dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The coming in of the new year coincided with the wrapping up of the first phase of the Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all (TORCHES) project. We successfully implemented phase one of the TORCHES project in 2021 despite the shocks of the pandemic.

To take forward the gains made in 2021, FAWEZI also started the year by engaging UNESCO and Zimbabwe Health Interventions (ZHI). Additionally, the organisation was working on extending the Design For Change (DFC) to Midlands province.

The year 2022 found us taking stock of the successes and failures so as to be fully prepared. The need to address challenges associated with Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) made us renew our commitment. We continued fighting the VAWG scourge on two fronts that is, the pandemic and economic doldrums. Lessons learnt from the previous year helped us to come up with strategies that are feasible in the “new normal” environment.

FAWEZI hit the ground running because the TORCHES phase one wrap up process involved key activities that were meant to inform the effective implementation of the subsequent phase. Since the onset of 2022, we conducted regular support and monitoring visits to all the project sites in Chitungwiza and Shamva districts so as to improve our programming in a COVID-19 environment.

Though there is still a lot of ground to cover, we have recorded a significant positive impact in communities where we are working. The SASA! Together and Tuseme methodologies have impacted positively on power dynamics and this will go a long in reinforcing the fight against VAWG. We commend Community Champions and Leaders who worked relentlessly to raise awareness on the link between power relations and VAWG.

The monitoring and support visits to project communities and schools did not only mark our entrance into 2022 but it contributed to our mission. We continue to trace the road we have travelled in the quest for a nation where gender disparities in education are significantly reduced, with more girls having access to education, completing their studies and performing well at all levels.

FAWEZI remains committed to creating positive societal attitudes that reinforce and influence educational policies in order to promote gender equity in schools, at district, provincial and national levels through advocacy, lobbying and networking with all relevant stakeholders. 2022 is another opportunity for us to increase resources and expand our tentacles to cover a significant number of communities.

Together we can promote gender equity in schools and communities.

Lydia Madyirapanze
FAWEZI Executive Director
Over the years, the apostolic sect owing to its doctrine has been known for beliefs and practices that fuel occurrences of various forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

This has been worsened by the visible skewed balance of power between men and women in favour of men.

One Apostolic church leader under the Johanne Masowe sect in Chitungwiza Ward 10, Hitler Howera has taken a bold step to change the unpleasant story through conducting SASA! Together sessions at his shrine.

This comes after Howera had an encounter with the Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI) that introduced the SASA! Together methodology in the religious arena.

“My subsequent encounters with FAWEZI opened my eyes and made me realise that cases of Violence Against Women and Girls were being fuelled by harmful practices that we had normalised as religious groups,” said Mr Howera.

Mr Howera added that the encounter made him do an introspection so as to change his attitude before joining the raging battle.

“Personally, I was a perpetrator of Gender Based Violence in my own house and this made me fail to notice how rampant the scourge is in our sect. The lessons I got through the Power Poster transformed me into a new person and I managed to balance power in my marriage,” he said.

The change that took place in Howera’s life cascaded down to the congregation that he leads and he is determined to tackle harmful practices associated with religious groupings. “After my transformation, I made a bold decision to take the Power Poster into our sacred shrine and conducted a session that enlightened congregants.

Cases of child marriages were being normalised in our midst and I made a decision to bring that to an end,” said Mr Howera.

One of the congregants at the shrine Ms Loveness Chimeri confirmed that women and girls were exposed to child marriages as well as emotional and physical abuse.

“People were in the habit of marrying off young girls, emotional and physical abuse was common because most men were being influenced by harmful doctrines,” said Ms Chimeri.

Mr Howera explained that he started conducting SASA! Together sessions at his shrine to address the challenges.

“All congregants who worship at this place are now aware that cases of Violence Against Women and Girls as well as men cannot be tolerated at this place. This has attracted many followers to our church after noticing that we are doing things differently,” said Mr Howera.

SASA! Together is a community mobilisation approach to preventing VAWG and HIV. SASA! Is based on the analysis and understanding of power imbalance as the root cause of VAWG. It uses various methods and materials of community engagement including the use of Power Posters.

The Power Poster is a visualisation of different scenarios depicting negative and positive uses of power. These visuals are used to ignite impromptu community conversations leading to positive changes on the use of power by men and women.
Seke Mhuriimwe secondary school has taken ownership of the Tuseme/let us speak out club to ensure its sustainability. Located in Chitungwiza one of the urban settlements where cases of early pregnancies and child marriages were on an increase, the school adopted the club as a tool to tackle the root causes of early pregnancies, child marriages and suicide cases.

Speaking during an unannounced regular monitoring visit, Seke Mhuriimwe Guidance and Counselling (G&C) head of department, Mrs Ndaneta Chivaviro said the Tuseme club has proved to be an effective tool in addressing love relations amongst learners.

"Learners were involved in love relations that were resulting in early pregnancies and child marriages. School dropouts were on an increase and we effectively used the Tuseme club to address the situation through dramas and films," said Mrs Chivaviro.

She added that the use of films during Tuseme club activities made the sessions interesting and many students have joined the club.

"Before the introduction of films, very few learners were attending the Tuseme club because they were finding most of the activities boring and monotonous. Use of the television set to watch films on issues that affect children has proved to be the most preferred medium of communication amongst learners," she said.

To ensure the sustainability of the Tuseme club, school authorities introduced new resource mobilization strategies to fund the activities.

Seke Mhuriimwe school head, Mr Daniel Sundire said that he availed land to the club members after noticing their commitment in addressing challenges faced by learners.

“The club members grew maize and sweet potatoes on the piece of land that was availed to them. We have plans to invest the takings from sweet potatoes and fresh mealie cobs into poultry production so that we ensure the continuous existence of the Tuseme club.

Mr. Sundire added that Tuseme club is also into sewing uniforms to assist vulnerable children with uniforms and school fees. He said that the initiative is being implemented through two former learners who were identified and received mentoring on sewing.

Seke Mhuriimwe secondary school learners watching television during Tuseme session

Taking ownership of “Tuseme/let us speak out” clubs
For 42-year-old Memory*, what started off as a “happily ever after” marriage suddenly turned into a battleground for survival. She was exposed to emotional, physical and financial abuse but the love for her marriage and children made her endure the pain.

“I was living in hell. My husband was in the habit of physically assaulting me over simple misunderstandings. He was not providing for the family although he had the money to do so. Emotional abuse was the order of the day and he was always threatening to chase me and children from our home,” said Memory*.

Her tale of abuse took a twist when she attended the SASA! Together sessions with her husband at their local church in Chitungwiza district.

“The peak stage of violence in my home coincided with SASA! Together sessions at our church. The exercise enlightened me and my husband. I was surprised when my husband informed me that we must seek counselling so that we get assistance to balance power in our marriage,” said Memory*.

The counselling and SASA! Together sessions helped Memory* and her husband to adopt qualities of healthy relationships.

“The sessions rescued me from violence and I am now enjoying a violence free marriage. I am now assisting other women who are in abusive relationships to speak out so that they will not suffer in silence,” said Memory*.

SASA! Together sessions are facilitated under the Towards Resilient Communities for Health Equity and Safety for All (TORCHES) project. The Project is being implemented the forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI), Action Aid Zimbabwe (AAZ) Family Aids Counselling Trust (FACT) and Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe (LCDZ) in the districts of Shamva, Chitungwiza and Nyanga.

TORCHES aim to create communities where women and girls are free from violence and have amplified voices and agency. The consortium is using two best practices, the...
Action Aid Zimbabwe (AAZ) held a staff training on SASA! Together awareness phase in Nyanga district from the 21st to the 25th of February 2022.

The event drew participants from a consortium of organisations currently implementing the “Towards Resilience Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all” (TORCHES) project in Shamva, Chitungwiza and Nyanga districts.

The five-day training was aimed at providing a refresher on SASA! Together start phase and introduce the awareness phase.

Participants from the Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI), Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) and Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe (LCDZ) shared experiences and came up with new strategies from lessons learnt.

Key concepts that the training focused on include the space between females and males, root causes and contributing factors of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), power in couples and qualities of positive relationships.

Obstacles associated with everyday activism were also tackled and focus was placed on challenging questions and statements that always emerge during conversations with community members.

The training allowed participants to analyse awareness phase materials and role plays were conducted to test their appropriateness.

Participants were also equipped with skills to avert data collection challenges associated with the adapted programming.

The event was dovetailed by sharing experiences on lessons learnt on Tuseme/let us speak out, SASA! Together and disability inclusion.

A database session with Raising Voices as well as plans and budgets concluded the five-day training and participants were equipped to impart attained knowledge in communities.

The TORCHES project, through SASA! Together and Tuseme methodologies is aimed at creating communities where women and girls, including people with disabilities, are free from violence and have amplified voices as well as agency.
Learner representatives have pleaded for interventions that can solve the issues affecting their access to quality education.

The plea was made during an online high-level advocacy meeting with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee (PPC) on education organised by Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI).

Chief among the challenges highlighted include long distances to school, virginity testing, lack of ICT infrastructure and sexual exploitation among others.

The event was meant to draw the attention of policymakers to the challenges being faced by learners.

The learners, drawn from 10 project schools in Shamva, Chitungwiza and Nyanga districts highlighted that lack of birth certificates was hindering them to participate in sporting activities and examinations.

It emerged that children in rural areas remain marginalized and continue to lag behind in e-learning and their education due to several challenges including lack of electricity, Information Technology Communication tools, poor network coverage, lack of equipped laboratories and libraries.

Pouring their hearts out, the learners who were interacting with parliamentarians during national-level advocacy through a virtual meeting also highlighted that long distances to and from school are fueling school drop-outs and drug abuse.

They said, in most schools, a classroom has one textbook for the teacher and they are failing to do homework.

“Bush boarding, whereby learners rent accommodation in villages near their school, have emerged due to long distance to school. These have exposed the girl child to sexual exploitation, drug and substance abuse due to lack of parental guidance,” they said.

“Most rural schools are not electrified, there is poor network coverage and we don’t have ICT gadgets and data for e-learning. The digital divide with our counterparts in urban areas is wide.

“Poor infrastructure and bad road network has seen a massive exodus of teachers in rural schools and the end result is poor pass rate for us. We lose a lot of learning time while fetching water for household chores or travelling to school,” they added.

Girls in Shamva said they are traumatised by virginity tests still being done to them by elders and family members in their communities.

The event was held in line with clubs created in project schools under the TORCHES project that is aimed at creating communities where women and girls are free from violence and have amplified voices.

The event drew participants from 15 project schools, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education (MoPSE), the Department of Social Development and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on education and other organisations.
Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI) joined the world in commemorating International Women’s Day (IWD) 2022. The commemorations were held under the theme “Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow.”

The theme was anchored on recognizing the contribution of women and girls around the world, who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response, to build a more sustainable future for all.

The theme resonated well with the interventions implemented by FAWEZI and its partners in Shamva, Chitungwiza and Nyanga Districts.

The organisation has taken a giant step in empowering women and girls through Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all (TORCHES) project.

FAWEZI merged the IWD observance activity with the “#BreakTheBias Campaign” that was meant to break biases and achieve a world free of stereotypes, inequalities and discrimination.

The 2022 occasion of IWD came at a time when FAWEZI and partners were wrapping up the first phase of the SASA! Together whilst assessing achievements made in the previous year.

The work implemented by the consortium is serving as a soft-landing pad for women and girls who bear the most brunt of the impacts of climate change.

On this notable day, FAWEZI and its partners re-commit to continue implementing interventions that are meant to empower women and girls so that they can stand for themselves economically and socially.

FAWEZI envisions a world where women and girls, including those with disabilities, are free from all forms of violence and can thrive in all contexts.
As from the year 2000 when the Nickel mine close to Madziwa Mine Primary School shut down, the school was also robbed of running water. We have had dry taps until 2019 when we received a donation from organizations that we now call our friends.

These were the reflections by Mr Nathan Munemo the School Head at Madziwa Primary school during a project monitoring visit.

Mr Munemo said for more than 15 years the school struggled with water challenges leading to a drop in both teacher and learner retention. The water system and flash toilets were in place but water supply was cut as the district council could not maintain supplies at the school following the mine’s closure.

He indicated that when he joined the school in 2017 parents were taking turns to bring water for use by teachers and school children. “They would rotate village by village and sometimes the teachers purchased bulk water,” he said.

Madziwa Mine Primary is located in Shamva District, Mashonaland Central Province. It is located close to Madziwa Mine Teachers College. It is one of the 10 project schools (5 Shamva, 5 Chitungwiza) under the Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all (TORCHES) project which is being implemented by Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI) in partnership with Action Aid Zimbabwe (AAZ), Family Aids Counselling Trust (FACT) and Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe (LCDZ).

The consortium has in the first phase of its project which was titled “Empowered Adolescents for improved Quality of life”, donated a 5000-litre water tank to the school.

Upon receiving this donation, there was a ray of hope in terms of bringing back life to the dry and deserted taps at the school.

Through a girl led empowerment program called Tuseme (Let us speak out/ Taura unzwike), FAWEZI enabled learners to be drivers of change in their school.

The members and leaders of the club formed under Tuseme used theatre and other art performances to communicate their problems and also suggest possible solutions to them.

This initiative led to a dialogue with the local leadership, School Development Committee (SDC), school staff, parents and learners on the water crisis at the school.

Following continuous engagements with the community the school managed to get a donation of water pipes to compliment the 5000 litre water tank. One parent who is a miner donated water pipes to the school enabling it to connect to the water supply at Madziwa Mine teachers’ college.

This became the final link that brought back the precious liquid to the school. The school has since then been receiving running water through the pipes.
and also storing some in the tank as a reserve. In December 2021 FAWEZI visited the 10 project schools to assess whether donations made since 2019 were achieving the desired impact. The team was happy to hear the story at Madziwa Mine Primary school. The school head further indicated that the school is now attractive to teachers as there is water supply even for their domestic use. Learner enrolment was also said to be steadily rising as most parents had shunned the school because of its lack of water. “I am specifically happy for the girl child, who can now safely clean up during her menstrual period, during the dry years our girls where going through difficult times whenever it was that time of the month,” said Munemo. “The Tuseme club is indeed a good platform for the learners to identify challenges and issues that affect their academic life, whilst also leading the change.” Some of the donations received by Madziwa Primary School and nine other schools include Personal Protective Equipment, reusable and disposable sanitary pads, food hampers for vulnerable learners, TV and DVD sets to augment the teaching and learning of Guidance and Counselling.

The TORCHES project is aimed at creating communities where women and girls are free from violence and have amplified voices and agency. It is using a whole community approach to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and amplify girls’ voices.
The world commemorated the International Day of Education on the 24th of January 2022. The celebrations that ran under the theme “Changing the Course, Transforming Education” placed emphasis on the need to focus on the role of education on peace and development. The day offered countries of the world an opportunity to track and assess the gains made to date in the education sector. With the emergence of natural disasters like COVID-19, the need to change course and transform education to be abreast with the changing environment was given a higher priority. An introspection triggered by the commemorations revealed issues around unhindered access, effective participation and transformation of women and girls in the education sector currently threatened by natural disasters. The call for authorities to investigate how natural disasters disproportionately affect women and girls and the resulting impacts on education must be made to achieve resilience.

Education is a basic human right and several international, regional and local instruments as well as policies were put into place to ensure that every person enjoys the right to education so as to achieve sustainable development. The fact that education is very crucial for peace and development cannot be debated and this explains why most governments have prioritised education. Today many countries are celebrating a transformed education sector with verifiable indicators drawn from improved infrastructure, gender parity, high literacy rates, peace and development in general. To emphasise on high priority given to education, most constitutions have ratified education as a basic human right which must be enjoyed by all. The question that remains to be answered is, how resistant is the education sector to the shocks of the pandemics and how disproportional impacts can be effectively dealt with as a recovery strategy?

It is highly commendable that several governments, Zimbabwe included took up the task of delivering education to citizens. Non-state actors were not left behind because they cheeped in to complement government efforts in ensuring that the goal of educating people so as to achieve peace and development was achieved. The efforts made by stakeholders who are participating in the education sector produced positive results as evidenced by the quality of education, high literacy levels, the closing of gender gaps among others. The time to celebrate these achievements was cut short by the coming in of the COVID-19 pandemic and most of the gains were reversed. Yes! The strides made in the education sector were threatened by new challenges ushered in by the pandemic and new challenges continuously emerge alongside new variants.
To put the matter into context, an in-depth analysis of the education sector must be done while drawing comparisons from the pre-COVID-19 period. Pass rates, dropouts and literacy rates can be used to conduct a general evaluation that can shed more light on how the pandemic aborted the delivery of a transformed education sector. The urgency of the matter restricts us from focusing on infrastructure because Zimbabwe is a very good example of how infrastructure development was prioritised in the post-independence era. Verifiable indicators can be proudly displayed through statistical data that shows a steady increase in number of primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions.

On literacy rates, a simple criterion was used to consider a person literate that is, education attainment levels. Every person who had attained the age of 15 and had completed at least grade three of primary education was deemed literate. Evidence from ZIMSTATS shows that literacy rates decrease with an increase in age and lower for females than for males. With this empirical evidence in mind, is the unbalanced literacy rate strong enough to resist the shocks of the pandemic? Definitely not! And the evidence will pop out in form of increased gender gaps in the education sector. The literacy rate debate as a pointer to the impact of pandemics on the education sector might sound far fetched until we start witnessing them in the near future. To draw an iota of sense from the argument, one cannot ignore the pass rates. Statistics from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2019) shows that pass rates at primary education level were increasing steadily since 2014 until they hit a low of 37 in 2020. We do not need a rocket scientist to explain the contributing factors. The role that was played by COVID-19 is clear for everyone to notice and there is overwhelming evidence to prove the pandemic guilt. The period after 2020 will show unpleasant statistics but what is more worrisome is the fact that more girls will not be part of the statistics. They will be missing out in action because their access and full participation is continuously threatened by the prevailing situation. The signs are already showing.

One cannot go beyond a steady increase in school dropouts to see the signs. Data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education shows that over the years there was a general decrease in the proportion of learners that repeat or dropout of school. The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a heavy blow on the schooling system’s internal efficiency and decreased the survival rate that is the number of learners who reach the completion target. The situation is becoming more real and the reality impacts girls more due to the after effects of the pandemic. The general belief is that people experience the impact of disasters in the same way but reality shows that disasters affect women, men, girls and boys differently. The situation is caused...
by gender inequalities, cultural beliefs and harmful traditional practices which have put women and girls at a disadvantage. The roles ascribed to women and girls by society as well as the norms and values determine how women and girls prepare, respond and recover in disaster situations. The pandemic has created hindrances that are set to prevent women and girls from enjoying the right to education. The evidence is there in school dropout cases.

Women and girls are subject to indirect impacts associated with disasters. Reports shows that during the COVID-19 induced lockdowns there was an increase in cases of sexual violence, early and forced marriages, loss of livelihood and restricted access to education, deterioration in sexual reproductive health and increased workload. Reports shows that at least 415 school going girls dropped out of exam classes in Manicaland province during the lockdown period compared to only 5 boys who dropped out of school during the same period. The dropouts were reported to have been caused by early marriages and pregnancy. It is convincingly clear that the lockdown forced children to spend more time in uncontrolled school environments and they fell victim to the cases mentioned above.

This year’s commemorations must produce mechanisms that deals with issues of marginalisation. Over the years, women and girls have been marginalised and their participation in the disaster management cycle that is preparedness, response and recovery was negatively affected and they became more vulnerable to natural disasters. The International Day of Education was here, we commemorated and there is need to “walk the talk” through dealing with marginalisation and ensure that all girls who dropped out of school due to marriage or pregnancy are assisted to enroll back to school. 24th of January 2023 must be a day to celebrate a steady increase in number of women and girls enrolling back to school.
To open schools or not?

Q: Dr Gora, would you kindly shed light on the work/mandate of FAWEZI and the areas that you are working in.

RBG: The Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI) is a non-governmental organisation established in 1998 and registered as a private voluntary organisation in 1999. FAWEZI is an affiliate of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), a Pan-African Non-Governmental organization based in Nairobi, Kenya. FAWE has 33 national Chapters in different African countries.

FAWEZI is a membership organisation, drawing members from female and male educationists. FAWEZI has a secretariat which does the day to day work and has a board- the National Executive Committee (NEC) and I am currently the Chairperson.

FAWEZI’s vision is that of a nation where gender disparities in education are eliminated and all girls access education, remain in school and complete their studies at all levels.

Our mission is to work at provincial, district and school levels, together with partners, to create positive societal attitudes, policies and practices that promote equity for girls in terms of access, retention, performance and quality of education.

Our work influences government policy, builds public awareness, demonstrates best educational practice through effective models and encourages the adoption of these models by governments and institutions of education.

We have a national presence, having established 10 provincial chapters who work to identify key issues in each province. However our interventions are in the following districts: Bulilima, Shamva, Matopo, Beitbridge, Chitungwiza, Muzarabani and Rushinga. In Bulilima, Muzarabani and Rushinga we are working to address Sexual and Gender Based Violence targeting communities, teaching and non-teaching staff and the learners under the Spotlight Initiative. In Beitbridge and Matopo we are tracking out of school girls and boys and providing them with alternative learning.
opportunities in community learning centres. In Shamva and Chitungwiza we are setting up and supporting school clubs, addressing violence against children, addressing violence against women including providing water and sanitation facilities, menstrual hygiene management amongst other things.

Q: COVID-19 came and shook the world, and has turned upside down, new normals have become a reality, and alongside strategies of coping with the spread of the disease, is prolonged school closure – how are students in general – both boys and girls impacted by the non-opening of schools?

RBG: Both boys and girls were spending most of their time in controlled school environments and the closure of these environments exposed them to serious challenges. Children are now spending time at home or on the streets and in an effort to maintain learning they are now involved in backyard lessons where safety is not guaranteed.

The situation robbed both girls and boys of their right to education. Their performance was adversely affected by the failure to maintain learning and by the time we are going to open schools we are going to be faced by serious challenges associated with idleness.

Girls are the most vulnerable because spending most of their time outside controlled school environments exposed them to sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and forced marriages. We are definitely going to witness an increase in school dropouts. The strides we have made to date towards achieving gender equality in education are going to be faced with new challenges that are going to disproportionately affect girls and entrench gender gaps.

Both girls and boys were exposed to adolescent delinquencies like drug and substance abuse, violence, stealing, sexual abuse and other serious crimes. Most children were out of controlled school environments and they were spending time with some adults who were modeling serious crimes like drug and substance abuse. These children ended up committing serious crimes through observation and imitation.

Q: There are always reports of women and girls being disproportionately negatively impacted by disasters – has this been the case for our girls?

RBG: The general belief is that people experience the impact of disasters in the same way but reality shows that disasters affect women, men, girls and boys differently. The situation is caused by gender inequalities, cultural beliefs and harmful traditional practices which have put women and girls at a disadvantage.

The roles ascribed to women and girls by society as well as the norms and values determine how women and girls prepare, respond and recover in disaster situations. Women and girls are also subject to indirect impacts associated with disasters like sexual violence, early and forced marriages, loss of livelihood and restricted access to education, deterioration in sexual reproductive health and increased workload.

This has been the case with our girls in the face of COVID-19. For instance, at least 415 school going girls dropped out of exam classes in Manicaland province alone during the COVID-19 lockdown period mainly due to marriage and pregnancy as reported in the Herald Newspaper. Only five boys dropped out of school for marital reasons in the...
These statistics are only for one province but it reflects the countrywide picture. We also witnessed firsthand cases in communities where we are implementing our projects.

Q: Marginalization always comes to the fore in discussions such as the one we are having tonight, and the reality of girls being particularly affected by the secondary effects of the pandemic – would you care to comment on this?

RBG: Yes, by denying girls access and participation in the disaster management cycle that is, preparation, response and recovery we are further exposing them and making them more vulnerable to challenges associated with disasters. Marginalization of girls further exposes them to socio-economic challenges associated with disasters hence making them vulnerable to all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Q: Around this time last year were reports of 5000 teenage girls having fallen pregnant – did girls really fall pregnant in the communities?

RBG: This has been also our focus, whereby we targeted vulnerable out of school Adolescent Girls and boys with specific focus on girls who are out of school due to pregnancies. The intervention that we are implementing in Matebeleland South province is focusing on 60% girls and 40% boys. Therefore, girls who are out of school due to pregnancies are our direct beneficiaries, so girls really fall pregnant and the numbers were amplified by the COVID-19 disaster and its associated challenges.

Q: Have we really seen an increase in early marriages?

RBG: Yes, reports show that at least 415 school going girls dropped out of exam classes in Manicaland province alone during the COVID-19 lockdown period mainly due to marriage and pregnancy as reported in the Herald Newspaper. Only five boys dropped out of school for marital reasons in the province.

At the moment it is difficult to come up with countrywide statistics but Manicaland province can be used as a sample that reflects the situation in other provinces.

With these reports and cases that we are addressing in communities where we are working there is a sharp increase in cases of early marriages.

Q: What would you recommend as a way forward Dr Gora?

RBG: There is need for a multi-stakeholder approach so that more research will be conducted on the impacts of disasters on women and girls so as to come up with sustainable solutions.

There is need to strengthen disaster preparedness mechanisms with special focus on the special needs of women and girls.

All girls who are out of school or who are going to be out of school due to natural disasters like the recent COVID-19 pandemic must be assisted to get back to school.
FAWEZI held its Annual General Meeting on the 30th of October 2021 and a new National Executive Committee was appointed. The NEC is comprised of women from all the 10 provinces of the country and as a norm they are selected every two year by the country provincial chapters. The NEC is carrying the mandate of governing the affairs of FAWEZI upon its shoulders.

**Chairperson: Dr Ruth Babra Gora**

Dr Ruth Babra. Gora is the Chairperson of the FAWEZI National Executive Committee. She holds a PhD (Language-in-Education Policy), Master of Education (Language), Bachelor of Education (Language) and Certificate in Education (Secondary). She taught in secondary schools for 14 years, lectured at teachers’ college level for 2 years and has lectured at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) for the past 16 years. Dr Gora has been Acting Deputy Dean, Chairperson of the Department of Curriculum and Arts Education and Proctor, all at UZ. She participated in the SADC - Internal Quality Assurance 2020/2021 training programme with the University of Potsdam (Germany). From 2016 to 2018, she also participated in and tutored course design and assessment of curriculum-based education in higher and tertiary education in the Tuning Africa II project with Deusto University (Spain). She was also involved in capacity development for Agenda 2030 for universities in Zambia and Zimbabwe, with SWEDESD, as well as the refinement of the Assessment Framework for the competence-based curriculum in Zimbabwe, with Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, both in 2019. Dr Gora has been a visiting lecturer at North East Normal University (China), Stellenbosch University (RSA), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (RSA), Midlands State University (Zimbabwe) and Africa University (Zimbabwe). Ruth has been a FAWE since 2007 and worked with FAWEZI on a TVET Education, Gender and Climate Change research work in 2015. She has published on curriculum and language issues in education, gender, indigenous knowledge and language rights. Dr Gora believes in equity and equality to enhance girl child opportunities in education.

**Vice Chairperson:**

Professor Sunungurai Chingarande is a professor of Sociology who holds a PhD in Sociology, a Master of Science in Sociology and Social Anthropology and a BSc Honours in Sociology. She is a gender expert with over 20 years of experience in gender equality, women empowerment and social inclusion programming in Africa. She has done gender and social exclusion assessments and evaluations for many international agencies in various sectors that include Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Health, Education, Disaster, Risk and Resilience, Livelihoods and Food Security, Agriculture, Governance and Human Rights across Africa. As a gender expert, Sunungurai is well experienced in gender research methodologies, gender analysis, gender scorecard tools, gender responsive budgeting, development of gender policies, mainstreaming strategies and action plans as well as gender training manuals. She is a gender resource person, facilitator and expert for the African Group of Negotiators, a think tank of experts and practitioners that provides evidence based technical support to African governments for effective engagement in the international and national climate change policy formulation. Sunungurai was a lecturer and chairperson of the Sociology department at the University of Zimbabwe, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University and now Vice Chancellor of Women’s University in Africa.

Vice Secretary: Caroline Dimingu

Caroline Dimingu is a lecturer in the department of Humanities and Social Science at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University. She holds a Master of Arts in Religious Studies (UZ, 2013), BA Hons in Religious Studies (UZ, 2011) and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (LSU, 2015). In addition to her teaching experience she has maintained membership in various professional organisations. She is the current vice secretary of Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe (Fawezi). She is also a member of European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (Glopent) and Zimbabwe Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association (ZANA Bindura Chapter). Her research interest is contemporary issues in Systematic Theology, Transformative Feminist liberation theology, Religion, gender sensitivity and women’s rights. The study of theology brings her passion for justice and dignity. She received an award of the researcher of the year from Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University in 2017. She has published several book chapters and research articles in high impact journals.

Treasurer: Dr. Varaidzo Denhere

Dr. Varaidzo Denhere is a holder of a PhD in Auditing, MCom Accounting, BCom Accounting Honours, BSc Geography and Environmental Studies, and a Diploma in Education (Secondary). She has worked as a secondary school teacher for 13 years in Zimbabwe and 2 years in South Africa. She also worked as an Assistant Internal Auditor at Great Zimbabwe University for a year and joined Bindura University of Science Education as a Quality Assurance Auditor for 4 years. Currently she is doing a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship.

“In my career to date, I have worked with a lot of girl learners in secondary schools and female university students from different backgrounds. From interacting with them, I got first-hand experience about their social and academic challenges. As a FAWEZI NEC Member, I am committed to make my contribution towards the achievement of gender equity and equality in education through targeted programs as well as adding my voice to influence government policy on these matters. I strongly believe in the old African proverb, “If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family/nation”. 
Eng. Prudence Kadebu is the Chairperson of the Computer Engineering Department at the University of Zimbabwe. Currently, she is pursuing PhD studies in Computer Science and Engineering, researching in Software Security Engineering and Machine Learning. Prudence is a well-rounded academic with vast experience in Lecturing, Management and Mentorship of young innovators. She is a 2018 Techwomen Fellow and also a 2018 STEMFem Network award winner for ‘Women leading in advancing ICT education’ which inspired the founding of ICT, Sustainable Energy and Education Zimbabwe Trust, which aims to bring solar to the remote schools in Zimbabwe to allow equal access to ICT education and to offer solar training within the schools. She is also a Trustee in Vheneka/Khanyisa involved in training girls to make re-usable sanitary wear to eradicate period poverty in Zimbabwe. Prudence is involved in the establishment of the Zimbabwe Conference of ICT serving in the ZICT a division of the Zimbabwe Institution of Engineers. She aspires to be a philanthropist advancing education for the betterment of humanity.

Abigail Mupinga is a Senior School Head in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). She is currently Head in Charge of Public Speaking and Quiz under the National Association of Primary Heads (NAPH), representing Matebeleland North Province. Abigail is also a member of the Provincial Science Exhibitions Committee where she is a charger and facilitator. Further to that, she sits in the Matebeleland North Provincial Examinations Item Writers Committee as a representative of Lupane District. At district level she is Zonal Chairperson of Daluka zone where she is responsible for nine primary and three secondary schools. She holds the post of Matebeleland North Deputy Provincial Marking Supervisor in the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), Grade Seven Level-English Language. She is an active environmentalist being a member of SCOPE Zimbabwe and Foundations for Farming which are both environmental organisations. Her other areas where she is very active are authorship of primary school textbooks, having written Grades three to six Science learners and teachers’ books. A commissioned National Netball umpire for both school and senior national netball teams. She is into serious entrepreneurship having started a very viable cross-boarder buying and selling business. Her market cuts across all classes of people hence her desire to study business management.

Aleta L. Makomeke is a holder of a Master of Education (M.Ed.), Technical Education in Human Nutrition from the University of Zimbabwe, Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) - Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences from Solusi University and a Diploma in Secondary Education (Home Economics) from Mutare Teachers’ College. Makomeke is currently a Schools Inspector (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education) in the Masvingo Province. She is also a part time lecturer at the Great Zimbabwe University. She is also a member of the Zimbabwe Home Economics Teachers Association (ZHETA) and Masvingo Youth Games (MAYOGA).

Mrs Lydia S. Dube has been a Fawezi member since 2000. She hold an M.Ed, B.Ed and a certificate in education. She has worked at the Midlands Provincial office. As a BSPZ-BEST coordinator. She is currently Head of Budiriro Primary School.

Mrs Shuvai Tsiga is a teacher by profession stationed at Godfrey Huggins in the Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe. She is also a prominent Girl Guider.
The following projects currently implemented by FAWEZI will feature in the next issue:

- Re-Ignite Sustain and Empower (RISE) In Beitbridge and Matobo districts. Facilitation of community learning for out of school girls and boys 9 to 14 years.

Alumni: FAWEZI alumni is an association of young women and men who have benefited from the actions of FAWEZI. They run their own programs parallel with the FAWEZI secretariat with the following aims: - Advocating for change - Curating professional interaction - Motivating new graduates - Providing social networking - Creating youth-led opportunities.
ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE FORUM FOR AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATIONALISTS ZIMBABWE CHAPTER (FAWEZI)

The National Executive Committee of FAWEZI has appointed Ms Lydia Madyirapanze to the position of Executive Director with effect from the 1st of January 2022. Lydia Madyirapanze has been with the National Chapter since 2008 and has made a lot of contributions to the growth and current status of the organization.

VISION

A nation where gender disparities in education are significantly reduced, with more girls having access to education, completing their studies and performing well at all levels.

MISSION

FAWEZI is committed to creating positive societal attitudes that reinforce and influence educational policies in order to promote gender equity in schools, at district, provincial and national levels through advocacy, lobbying and networking with all relevant stakeholders.

FAWEZI ...is affiliated to the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) which is based in Nairobi, Kenya. FAWE was founded in 1992 by five African women ministers of education Hon. Simone de Comarmond of Seychelles, Hon. Paulette Missambo of Gabon, Hon. Dr Fay Chung of Zimbabwe, Hon. Alice Tiendrebéogo of Burkina Faso, and the late Hon. Vida Yeboa of Ghana. The forum was formalized and launched in September 1992.

FAWE ...is a Pan African Non-Governmental organization (NGO) whose goal is to increase access, improve retention and enhance the quality of education for girls and women in Africa. FAWE has facilitated the establishment of National Chapters in 33 countries across the continent. FAWEZI was launched in March 1998 and registered as a Private Voluntary Organization in 1999, Registration No: W/O: PVO: 11/99, founding members included: Dr Fay Chung, the former Minister of Education, Ednah Madzongwe, a Deputy Speaker, Dr Hope Sadza, a Public Service Commissioner, Mary Mubi, Zimbabwe’s High Commissioner in Namibia, Dr Tommie Samakange, a retired Educational Psychologist, the late Dr Sarah Kachingwe, Professor Rudo Gaidzanwa, the late Salome Nyoni who was then the Deputy Secretary of Women’s Affairs, and the former Principal of Belvedere Teachers College, Mrs Jane Makawa.
https://youtube.com/watch?v=HEm_IEfgnhl...