

# Championing Adolescent SRH in Zambia

## - A picture essay

Adolescence (10-19 years old) is a unique period of physical, psychological, emotional, and social maturation from childhood to adulthood, with unique challenges and risks. These risks include early pregnancies, high maternal mortality rates, unsafe abortions, and high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

The Solutions for Supporting Healthy Adolescents and Rights Protection (SHARP) programme, funded by the [European Union](#), is dedicated to improving adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and address their high unmet need for family planning. SHARP does this by tackling the obstacles faced by young people in accessing essential SRH commodities and services, and increasing demand for these services through religious and socio-cultural interventions.

In Zambia, SHARP implementing partner Medicines Research and Access Platform (MedRAP) works closely with a range of Champions, including youth representatives, religious leaders and other pillars of the community. In this photo essay, we shine a spotlight on the tireless efforts of three of these Champions and their work to improve the health and lives of adolescents in Zambia's Southern Province.

**Pastor Joyce Samba**



Pastor Joyce - A faith-leader taking a unique approach to advancing adolescent SRH

Pastor Joyce is a religious leader and single mother with 10 dependents ranging from primary school to university age. What she learns from SHARP trainings and workshops provided by MedRAP (e.g., the use of social media and faith-based toolkits) she then passes on to her children and other young people in her Parish, who in turn act as peer educators.

I share with my children on issues of SRHR to break the cultural myth of it being taboo for parents and children to discuss. This is a myth that I grew up with. I want to create a platform where my children are free to talk to me. It is their right to have the accurate information. Today, I can spread the knowledge I've acquired through MedRap to the adolescents at Church, in my community and to other family members.

**- Pastor Joyce Samba**



Pastor Joyce speaks to a group of adolescents in Southern Province, Zambia

Pastor Joyce also hosts a Women's Club, in which lessons on SRH are shared. One such lesson has been that hunger and poverty are drivers of teenage pregnancies. In response, the Women's Club holds a weekly collection of money to be used to buy groceries in bulk to share among the group. In doing so, they not only help fight the effects of poverty on the lives of young people in the local community but also reduce the risk of teenage pregnancies.



A women's club collectively buys groceries to aid the local community

### **Funny Kayama**

Meanwhile, Funny Kayama, a youth champion from Livingstone, decided to not only take responsibility for his own SRH, but speak directly to his peers about what he has learned through SHARP training and workshops.



Funny Kayama - A young man dedicated to meaningful youth participation on the issue of SRH

It all began while waiting for the Pastor to arrive at his local Church, Funny took the initiative to speak to his peers about SRH. Having overheard what Funny had to say, the Pastor asked him to talk to other young people in the congregation on a regular basis.

I decided to share information on SRHR with my fellow youth because I believe it is essential for our well-being, empowerment, and future. Overall, my goal is to provide a safe, non-judgmental, and supportive space for young people to learn, ask questions, and discuss SRHR issues that matter to them.

**- Funny Kayama**



Funny addresses a group of youths in Livingstone, Zambia

By working with adolescent champions like Funny, SHARP ensures meaningful youth participation as a way to break down generational and power imbalances that may otherwise dissuade young people from accessing SRH services and commodities in the first place.



## **Jaqueline Mbaulo**

Elsewhere in Southern Province, teacher Jaqueline Mbaulo has taken the approach of setting up a youth friendly space in her school, and so directly reaches adolescents where they are.



Jaqueline Mbaulo - A teacher providing information directly to adolescents where they are

Jaqueline attended a SHARP organised community dialogue in February 2024, where some of the students from the school asked many pertinent questions about adolescent SRHR. This made her realise that there was a gap and a need that could be filled. After talking to the administration of the Christian school where she works, the go-ahead for a youth friendly space was given.

I am passionate about seeing adolescents become responsible, informed and hold high self-esteem. Adolescents should be guided with care and love without condemning them. I am looking forward to having many adolescents join the team and having materials to help the programme grow and reach many more in our communities.

**- Jaqueline Mbaulo**





Jaqueline teaching a class at a Christian Trust school in Kazungula, Zambia

Youth-friendly spaces are essential to increasing demand and use of family planning commodities by providing accessible, age appropriate, up to date and accurate information to adolescents in an environment that makes them feel safe and comfortable.

Champions, like Pastor Joyce, Funny and Jaqueline, are linchpins in the success of the SHARP project. With training and support from SHARP, their contributions make a real difference to the lives of adolescents in their communities. Coupled with the wider [research and advocacy](#) being carried out by the SHARP project, we can ensure the greatest sustainable impact for happier, healthier futures for adolescents not only in Zambia, but across Africa's Great Lakes Region.



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