PZ
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# NEWSLETTER

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Connecting Communities, Transforming Lives




## CRACKING THE CODE ON STIS:

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# Editor's Note

Welcome to our April 2025 Newsletter Edition



In this edition, we take a moment to reflect on the progress made and the ongoing work that drives us forward. At Pangaea Zimbabwe, our commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality, client-centered healthcare remains steadfast.

Through collaboration with communities, partners, and advocates, we continue to deliver responsive, evidence-based services that empower individuals to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.
Thank you for walking this journey with us—together, we are creating lasting impact.

The Editorial Team

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# Cracking the Code on STIs:  Zimbabwe's Silent Epidemic

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have long lurked in the shadows of Zimbabwe's public health landscape, but a new national analysis is pushing them into the spotlight. From February 26 to 28, Pangaea Zimbabwe, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care and the National AIDS Council, hosted a series of powerful stakeholder dissemination meetings in Mutare, Goromonzi, and Gweru.

These meetings unpacked findings from a National Landscaping Analysis of Zimbabwe's STI response, sparking critical conversations on challenges, insights, and urgent calls for action.

Rising STI cases, paired with resource limitations, have made the response increasingly complex. Despite widespread awareness campaigns around HIV, many Zimbabweans remain unaware that HIV prevention tools such as PrEP do not protect against other STIs. This knowledge gap fuels the epidemic, as communities navigate misinformation, stigma, and inconsistent access to treatment.



*Program Officer, Cleopatra Makura, unpacking the National Landscaping Analysis of STI Response in Zimbabwe*

One of the most startling revelations was the reliance on unregulated treatment channels. From black market drug vendors to traditional and religious healers, people are turning away from formal health systems—largely due to cost, stigma, or lack of trust.

*"We often find that the public lumps all sexual health risks under HIV, ignoring the broader STI spectrum," noted one health official during the Mutare meeting.*

"These informal routes are risky," warned a health stakeholder in Gweru. "*People may not get the right dosage or treatment, prolonging infections and increasing complications.*"




*Participants during the National Landscaping Analysis of STI Response in Gweru*

Compounding the issue is the inconsistent availability of treatment across public health facilities. While some clinics offer comprehensive STI care, others offer limited or no treatment—forcing patients to either pay out-of-pocket at private pharmacies or go untreated. In some shocking cases, reports surfaced of healthcare workers deliberately creating artificial shortages by diverting medication for personal gain. These practices erode public trust and highlight the urgent need for accountability within the health system.

Among the key recommendations was the expansion of data collection tools, particularly by integrating STI-related questions into HIV stigma surveys. Better data will help tailor interventions and target the most vulnerable populations. Equally important is the improvement of service quality. Long waiting times, discriminatory treatment, and breaches of confidentiality continue to drive people away from seeking help. Stakeholders stressed the value of Community-Led Monitoring to track patient experiences, support health worker training, and strengthen service delivery.

Pangaea Zimbabwe reaffirmed its commitment to advocating for a holistic, stigma-free, and data-driven response to STIs. By aligning STI services with existing HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health programs, the goal is to build an inclusive health system that leaves no one behind.

"*We can't afford to treat STIs as an afterthought*," emphasized Cleopatra Makura, PZ Project Officer. "*They are part of the bigger sexual health puzzle, and addressing them is essential for a healthier, more informed Zimbabwe. As Zimbabwe begins to act on these findings, the conversation is just beginning.*"



*Participants during the National Landscaping Analysis of STI Response in Mutare*



*Participants during the National Landscaping Analysis of STI Response in Goromonzi*

# Community Voices to Improve Health Services

In a step forward for community-led healthcare solutions, the ZIMACE project, supported by Pangaea Zimbabwe, has once again proven the power of collective voices in shaping health service delivery. On March 3, the District Consumer Advocacy Forum convened in Masvingo, uniting diverse stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Child Care, Masvingo City Health, NAC, and key local health organizations such as CESSHAR, BHASO, DAWA, Zvandiri, and My Age Zimbabwe. The aim was clear: to reflect on the findings of the recent Client Satisfaction Survey and ensure that community input remains at the forefront of healthcare improvements.

The survey, was conducted across six health facilities—two in urban settings and four in rural areas over two days.. It provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the district's healthcare system. From long waiting periods to the need for better equipment; the feedback gathered was a window into the everyday experiences of patients who rely on these services. One participant expressed the critical importance of such forums, sharing their gratitude in Shona:

*"USG funding yakamiswa yakaita affect mamwe mamembers eDistrict Consumer Advocacy Forum, tanga tisisiri sure kuti zvichafamba sei, so tinotenda Pangaea Zimbabwe vatibatsira neplatform yekuti tiite forum tichiita discuss mahealth issues ari kunetsa mumacommunities."*

Translation: *"When USG funding was suspended, some members of the District Consumer Advocacy Forum were uncertain about the way forward. We are grateful to Pangaea Zimbabwe for providing us with a platform to meet and discuss pressing health issues affecting our communities."*

This statement reflects the core mission of the ZIMACE project—giving communities the platform and resources they need to influence and improve their healthcare systems. By bringing together stakeholders at the forum, ZIMACE ensures that local health challenges are not only acknowledged but also addressed in a way that fosters ownership and sustainable solutions. Through such efforts, the ZIMACE project continues to build momentum in strengthening healthcare systems across Zimbabwe, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity and citizen-driven action. The project's focus on women and girls' health remains a priority, ensuring that these often-marginalized voices are heard and that their needs are addressed through responsive healthcare services.

By championing community voices, ZIMACE is proving that the best way to build a robust healthcare system is by working hand in hand with the very people it serves. As stakeholders continue to come together, the path forward is clearer: healthcare that listens, adapts, and thrives with the communities it aims to serve.



*The District Consumer Advocacy Forum members and the ZIMACE project team during the District Consumer Advocacy Forum at Bethany House SJI Sisters Conference Centre, Masvingo*

# Bringing Health Closer to Home

**Masvingo, Zimbabwe**



*At Mashava (Bere) Community Hall o during the DTT campaign. Acting DNO (Sr Manda) gave health awareness to the Residents of Bere area*

In a powerful demonstration of community-driven health promotion, the ZIMACE's District Task Team (DTT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), rolled out a 3-day comprehensive awareness campaign aimed at improving maternal and child health outcomes in Masvingo. Held from February 26 to 28, the campaign reached a total of 832 individuals, taking health information and services directly to the people who need them most.

The campaign focused on addressing key challenges affecting the district, including late antenatal care (ANC) booking, home deliveries, and the rising incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It was implemented across nine targeted hotspot areas —three in Masvingo urban and six in Masvingo rural —selected based on specific health concerns and community needs.

Of the 832 people reached, 677 were women and girls, reflecting strong participation from the primary target audience.

Additionally, 155 men engaged in the campaign activities, a promising sign of increased male involvement in supporting family and community health.

Through interactive community dialogues, educational sessions, and engaging activities, the campaign brought life-saving information closer to home—bridging the gap between health services and community members who often face barriers in accessing care.Mrs. Mumhure, the District Nursing Officer, praised the collective effort:

*"This campaign is a testament to our commitment to maternal and child health. By addressing these critical issues, we empower our communities to make informed health choices."*

Mr. Magwati, Acting District Development Coordinator, echoed the importance of community engagement:



*At Chisase Clinic oduring the DTT campaign. The DNO (S. Mumhure) gave health awareness to the Residents of Chisase area.*

*"Engaging with the community is vital. The conversations we had during this campaign are just the beginning of fostering a healthier future for everyone."*

The campaign's success is a result of collaboration among the three Work Improvement Teams, local leadership, health professionals, and the community itself. It showcased ow bringing health education to people's doorsteps can lead to increased awareness, positive behaviour change, and a stronger sense of ownership over community health.

Mrs. Chamboko, Health Promotions Officer, highlighted the campaign's impact:

*"It was inspiring to see so many individuals eager to learn about their health. Together, we can break barriers and improve health outcomes in our district."*

As feedback from participants continues to come in, the DTT is already planning the next phase—building on lessons learned to design even more responsive, community-centred campaigns.

Together, we are creating a future where every individual—regardless of where they live—has the knowledge and support to live a healthy, empowered life.



*DTT members facilitating the campaign, from the right is Mrs Chamboko (HPO), Nurse for Bere clinic, Mr Magwati (DDC) Mrs Maunge (Higher and Tertiary Education), Sr Ncube (Acting Matron) and Mrs Sinamai (Women Affairs) in Mashava*



# Collaboration, Reflection, and Action: Better Health for Masvingo

On March 3, the ZIMACE Project hosted an impactful *Pause and Reflect* meeting at the Bethany House SJI Sisters Conference Centre in Masvingo, drawing together community leaders, health professionals, and local stakeholders to discuss key health issues in the region. The event highlighted the power of collaboration and reflection as the community comes together to shape a better future for health access in Masvingo.

Attended by representatives from the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the National AIDS Council, the District Development Coordinator's office, local chiefs, councillors, and health workers, the meeting served as a platform for candid conversations about the project's progress, challenges, and future direction. The ZIMACE Project, which has been dedicated to improving health rights and access in the district, continues to gain momentum with the support of these diverse voices.



*The ward councillors, Nurses-in-Charge, HCC chairpersons during the Pause and Reflect meeting on the 3rd of March 2025 at Bethany House SJI Sisters Conference Centre.*

A major highlight of the meeting was the announcement of the Memorandum of Understanding between Pangaea Zimbabwe and the Masvingo Rural District Council. This formal agreement will help strengthen the partnership between the local government and the project, creating a more solid foundation for sustainable health improvements in the area. The partnership aims to empower local communities to take ownership of their health and ensure that vulnerable groups, especially women and girls, have the resources and knowledge to make informed health decisions.

The event also spotlighted the inspiring work of the Community Health Rights Champions (CHRCs). These grassroots leaders, who are on the frontlines of health lobbying, shared their stories of success in driving the Know Your Health Rights campaign across the district. Their stories underscored the power of community-based health education in transforming health outcomes. One particularly impactful story came from a CHRC in Chatikobo, who mobilized her community to participate in a critical Polio vaccination campaign. Her leadership showcased the crucial role that local advocates play in bridging the gap between health services and those who need them most.

The meeting emphasized the importance of collaboration between traditional leaders and health services. Chief Nemamwa highlighted the positive results of this community's partnership with the local Health Centre Committee, which has supported the growth and well-being of the Nemamwa Clinic. These partnerships prove that when local leadership and health services work together, communities benefit from better care and more sustainable health outcomes. Key recommendations from the meeting included expanding the reach of the ZIMACE Project to more health facilities, ensuring that CHRCs are equipped with necessary tools like phones and bicycles to improve communication and reach more people, particularly in remote areas. The District Development Coordinator stressed the importance of scaling up the project's impact, calling for an increase in coverage from 18 to 42 health facilities to ensure that more communities benefit from these life-changing initiatives.

In addition to these actionable steps, the meeting highlighted the need to engage men in health-related discussions, recognizing that they play a significant role in household decision-making. Local councillors echoed this sentiment, pointing out that community cadres, like CHRCs, are essential for ensuring that health information reaches every corner of the district.

The event demonstrated a powerful collective commitment to improving health outcomes in Masvingo. Through collaboration, reflection, and action, the ZIMACE Project continues to forge a path toward better health for all, especially the underserved and vulnerable populations. With the continued involvement of local stakeholders and community champions, the project is well-positioned to bring lasting change to health services in the district.

## Digital Health Tool for Stronger Health Services in Zimbabwe

In a transformative step towards enhancing community health, the Pangaea Zimbabwe Wild4Life Program has launched the Boost Mobile Health App, a revolutionary digital tool aimed at empowering Village Health Workers (VHWs) and Peer Educators across Zimbabwe. Funded by ViiV Healthcare, this cutting-edge mobile app is set to bridge critical knowledge gaps, enhance health education, and improve health outcomes in underserved communities.

The program recently hosted sensitization meetings in the districts of Binga, Lupane, and Hwange, where District Health Executive (DHE) teams and District AIDS Coordinators (DAC) were introduced to the Boost App. A total of 40 VHWs—15 from Binga, 15 from Lupane, and 10 from Hwange—participated in comprehensive training sessions that equipped them with the skills needed to utilize the app effectively, empowering them to deliver improved health services.

Developed by Avert, the Boost App is a user-friendly mobile tool designed to support VHWs in delivering health education and conducting screenings f or diseases such as HIV, TB, and Malaria.

This app is a timely response to the global push for digital health solutions and is already being celebrated as a game-changer for community health workers across Zimbabwe. Enock Musungwini, Program Manager at Pangaea Zimbabwe Wild4Life, emphasized the App's impact during the sensitization meetings, stating that, "This is more than just a technological innovation; it's about empowering our health workers to make a tangible difference in their communities."

The training sessions, conducted by Wild4Life staff who received initial training from OPHID (Organization for Public Health Interventions and Development), were met with enthusiasm and support from stakeholders. The app's simplicity, effectiveness, and potential to address knowledge gaps among VHWs were widely praised.



*Boost App VHW training -Binga district*

The app not only boosts the confidence of VHWs but also aligns with the Ministry of Health and Child Care's (MoHCC) digital health strategy, helping strengthen the capacity of local health systems. Currently in its pilot phase, the Boost App project welcomes feedback for ongoing improvement. Wild4Life is committed to working closely with VHWs, DHEs, and OPHID to refine the app and ensure it meets the needs of the communities it serves.

The Boost App is grounded in a simple but impactful theory of change: by equipping VHWs with powerful digital tools, the app enhances their capacity to deliver health education and screenings, ultimately improving health outcomes for entire communities.

The training sessions were documented in a series of vibrant photos, highlighting the excitement and commitment of VHWs from Lupane, Binga, and Hwange as they engaged with the app and explored its features. As the Boost App continues to roll out, the Pangaea Zimbabwe Wild4Life Program is determined to leverage innovative digital solutions to improve community health outcomes. With support from stakeholders and the dedication of VHWs, the Boost App is set to revolutionize health services in Zimbabwe and beyond.

## *Out and About*



# Resilient Health Systems For Climate Change



*Binga District Nursing Officer welcoming participants to the meeting*

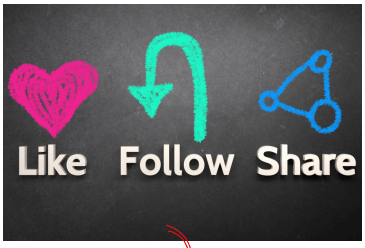
Climate change is no longer a distant threat—it is a present reality affecting communities worldwide. In regions like Binga and Lupane, where healthcare access is already limited, rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and extreme weather events pose serious risks to public health. To address this growing challenge, Pangaea Zimbabwe's Wild4Life program, with funding from The Sanofi Collective, has launched an initiative focused on strengthening local health systems to adapt to climate-related pressures.

The recent sensitization meetings held in both Binga and Lupane districts brought together key stakeholders, including government representatives, health officials, and community leaders. These discussions highlighted the urgent need for a coordinated response to climate-induced health threats and the role of collective action in ensuring communities remain resilient. Stakeholders welcomed the project, recognizing its innovative approach and pledging their support in making it a success.

A major component of this initiative is community-led governance, ensuring that those most affected by climate change have a direct role in shaping health strategies. By forming Climate and Health Resilient Committees and Task Forces, the program encourages grassroots engagement and local solutions to climate-related health risks. To enhance healthcare infrastructure, the project also aims to equip health facilities with solar energy solutions, ensuring continuous service delivery even during climate-induced disruptions.

In addition to infrastructure improvements, frontline health workers and community volunteers will receive specialized training on climate-sensitive health issues. This includes emergency response strategies and adaptation techniques that will empower them to handle climate-related health crises more effectively.

As climate challenges continue to evolve, this initiative presents a proactive and sustainable approach to protecting public health. Through ongoing collaboration and commitment from stakeholders, Binga and Lupane are taking significant steps toward a future where healthcare systems are not only reactive but resilient in the face of climate change.



# Denim Day Out!




**On the last Wednesday of April, people worldwide wear denim to challenge harmful myths and show solidarity with survivors. Let us speak out to amplify their stories, foster awareness off sexual violence and eliminate stigma surrounding sexual violence.**

**People wore denim as a sign of support**

**Speak up, every voice counts in ending sexual violence**

**Watch how the day went here:**




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*We envision an environment in which all human beings live healthy, productive, and quality lives.*

*We strive to transform the lives of underserved populations by working to increase access to quality, responsive, evidence based, client-centered comprehensive health services through facility and community engagement and policy advocacy*

*Equity*

*Intergrity*

*Inclusivity*

*Stewardship*