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CONNECTING COMMUNITIES ACROSS ZIMBABWE



*"...it's about knowing
young people can
build something for
themselves and their
families. It gives me
confidence..."*

A background image showing a stack of books with a pencil resting on top. A green curved line separates the top image from the white text area.

DEAR READERS,

We're excited to bring you the latest edition of our newsletter! It's our pleasure to share the inspiring work our teams have been doing over the past months, highlighting the dedication of our staff, partners, and communities.

In this issue, you'll find updates on ongoing projects, new initiatives, and impactful stories from the field. From expanding access to essential health services to addressing pressing social issues, our goal remains the same: empowering every person to live a healthier life.

We hope these stories inspire and engage you, and we thank you for your continued support.

Warm regards,



The Editorial Team 

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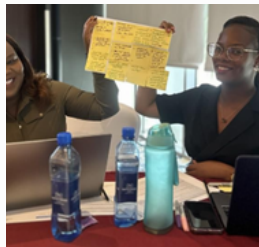
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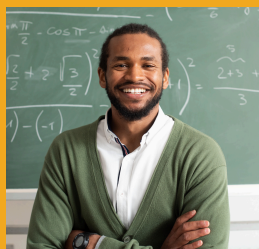
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INSPIRED ADOLESCENTS LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV

"a safe haven for adolescents in my community."

In the heart of Chitungwiza and Mazowe communities, a quiet transformation is taking place—one that is reshaping the future of young people. The SHAZ Hubs, operating under the Combination HIV Prevention (CHIP) project, have become a safe space for adolescents seeking more than just guidance; they are finding hope, empowerment, and the tools to transform their lives.

At the recent CHIP Review Meeting, the project celebrated its remarkable progress, recognizing how young people's attitudes are shifting towards a more positive outlook. This was captured by Tariro Mazivanhanga, one of the CHIP Champions from the Mazowe SHAZ! Hub, who described SHAZ Hub as *"a safe haven for adolescents in my community."*



The CHIP team during the teambuilding activities

The shift has been transformative: with its targeted HIV prevention efforts, mentorship, and skills training, young people who once lacked direction are now setting goals and embracing healthier lifestyles. The stigma around HIV is being broken down, and participants are becoming ambassadors of change within their communities.

“Young people are learning that they are not alone,” shared Tariro. “Literacy sessions at the SHAZ Hub give them access to comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) information and support they need to protect themselves from HIV. Most of them thought it was scary and uncultured to speak about SRH, but now they are now bringing others to the Hub to learn more.”

As the project prepares to enter its third year, it is building on this success with a renewed focus on mental health screening, team building, and economic empowerment. Plans include refresher training for the SHAZ! Hub team and CHIP champions and introducing economic strengthening innovations such as the

production of Pine Gel, toilet cleaners, and dishwashing liquids. Participants will not only be gaining skills but also generating income, which allows them to take charge of their futures in new ways.

“I’m excited about the economic projects,” said Malvern Magwaza, another CHIP champion highlighted. “Learning how to make these products isn’t just about income—it’s about knowing young people can build something for themselves and families. It gives me confidence,” he explained.

Malvern also remarked on how the team building exercise had been an excellent way of demonstrating how to work together to achieve the common goal of raising awareness of the services being offered at the Hubs in Chitungwiza and Mazowe.

Mental health is another crucial area the CHIP project is addressing. Many adolescents are facing overwhelming socio-economic pressures, and the program’s focus on mental health ensures that their well-being

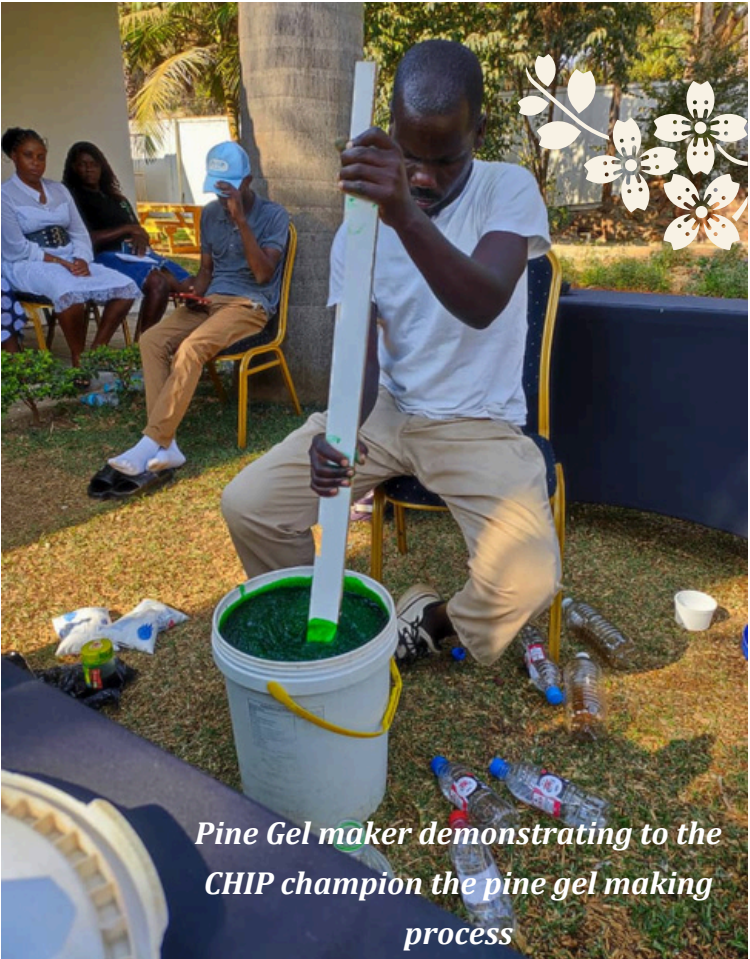


CHIP Champion learning how to make soap during the review meeting

is supported both emotionally and physically.

“Our goal is to create a holistic environment for our youth—where they can be mentally, physically, and economically empowered,” said Rufaro Manyanga, CHIP Project Officer.

“We’re seeing them take control of their lives in ways we never imagined. We want to see them starting businesses, pursuing further education. It is important that they begin to make healthier lifestyle choices, actively participating in their communities, and serving as positive role models for their peers. The transformation is remarkable. We’re not just addressing the immediate needs of our youth, but equipping them with the tools to build sustainable futures.”



Pine Gel maker demonstrating to the CHIP champion the pine gel making process

As SHAZ Hub enters its third year, the project is set to deepen and strengthen its impact. With ongoing support from community members and the dedication of its champions, the Hubs in Chitungwiza and Mazowe communities are poised to continue empowering the next generation—one adolescent at a time.



The CHIP team during the teambuilding activities

Participatory Approaches for Impact

In the world of advocacy, success hinges not only on the actions taken but, on the ability to reflect, refine and adapt strategies based on context. This is where participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches become invaluable. These approaches empower advocates to take ownership of their efforts, reflect on the quality of their results, and adjust their strategies for maximum impact. Such was the emphasis of the MERL Roadshow.

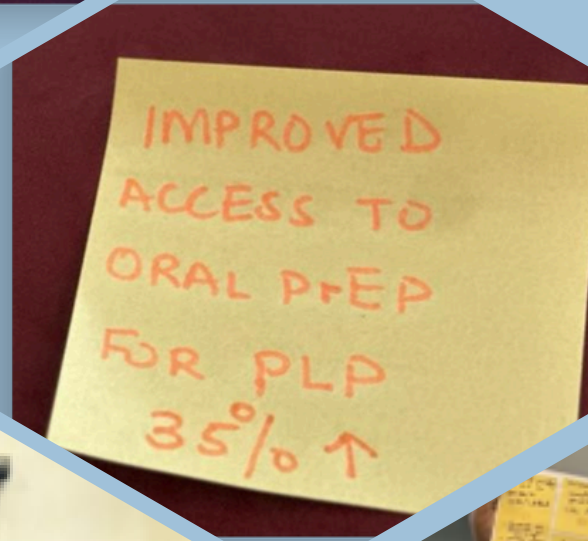
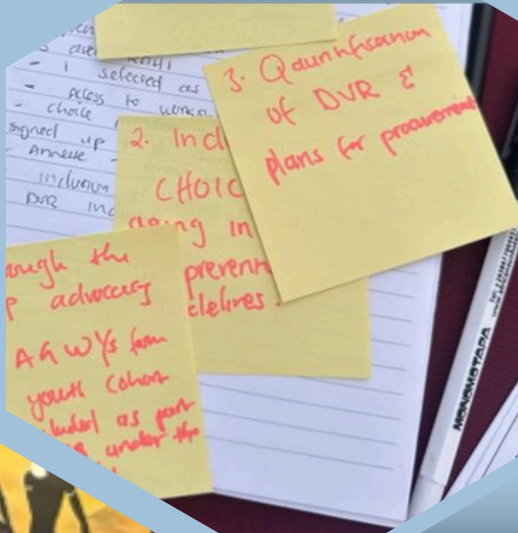
The MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning) Roadshow is an in-person workshop aimed at strengthening the skills of CASPR partners. In 2024, roadshows were held in Zambia, and Kenya, bringing together 31 participants from 13 partner organizations. The Kenya roadshow was held with 21 partners while the Lusaka roadshow had 10 participants. In both workshops, the aim was to equip these organizations with practical tools for evaluating their advocacy work, ensuring they could assess their own results and tell their advocacy stories more effectively.

The workshops were designed to be highly interactive, encouraging participants to reflect on their own advocacy outcomes. During the workshops participants engaged in coalition-level discussions to understand how their individual efforts contributed to broader, collective outcomes. This allowed participants to think critically about the quality of their results and the usefulness of their activities, all the while refining their advocacy approaches based on real-time feedback.

The participatory nature of the workshops fostered a sense of ownership among the participants. By taking the lead in evaluating their work, they developed a deeper understanding of their advocacy strategies and how to improve them. This collaborative reflection helped participants refine their approaches, making their advocacy more targeted and impactful.

At its core, the CASPR MERL Roadshow highlights the power of monitoring, evaluating and learning from advocacy results using participatory approaches. This kind of engagement not only strengthens individual organizations but also bolsters the entire coalition, leading to more impactful, lasting change.

PICTURES



ROADSHOW

Expanding PrEP Access Across Africa



The 2024 Africa Regional PrEP Workshop brought together experts, policymakers, and implementers with a mission to enhance the next generation of HIV prevention. Under the theme of broadening access and innovation, the workshop emphasized priorities such as integrating new PrEP options, improving delivery systems, and addressing supply chains while also tackling the critical issue of HIV drug resistance. A central focus was on developing tailored PrEP services for vulnerable groups.

One of the workshop's key deliverables was the development of strategies to make PrEP accessible to underrepresented populations, especially women and adolescent girls who encounter unique barriers in accessing HIV prevention services. The discussions highlighted the pressing need for youth-friendly services that facilitate the making of informed health choices by adolescents.

Workshop presentations emphasized the vital role of healthcare providers in offering comprehensive PrEP counselling, fostering trust, and promoting PrEP continuation. Recognizing the intersection of GBV and PrEP uptake, the workshop underscored how rising rates of gender-based violence—particularly intimate partner violence (IPV) and non-partner sexual violence—pose significant obstacles to effective HIV prevention. In many cases, perpetrators exert control over access to PrEP, using it as a means of power and

manipulation. The need for discreet and supportive PrEP access in regions heavily impacted by GBV was highlighted. Promising approaches discussed included integrating trauma-informed services, offering a range of PrEP product choices, and engaging in community-driven efforts to combat stigma surrounding HIV prevention. Experts reiterated the importance of GBV screening and support to improve PrEP outcomes among high-risk populations. New research data presented at the workshop emphasized the necessity of real-time evaluation and monitoring systems to ensure that innovative HIV prevention products effectively reach those most at risk. Additionally, communication campaigns aimed at generating demand for PrEP services were identified as crucial in countering misinformation and raising awareness within communities. The Africa Regional PrEP Workshop delivered a powerful message: Africa is ready to intensify its response to HIV by innovating prevention strategies and committing to reach every individual who could benefit from PrEP. Participants made commitments to address the structural barriers that impede PrEP uptake, including stigma, lack of awareness, and inconsistent supply chains.



Charting Path for Enhanced Healthcare Access and Operational Efficiency



The team during the review meeting

Pangaea Zimbabwe under the ZimPAAC Consortium conducted the Key Population (KP) Program Strategic meeting in Bindura. The objective of the meeting was to review program performance and outline future priorities. Emphasis was also put on ensuring alignment of program activities with PZ's scope of work. Critical sessions conducted included, organizational growth, operational efficiency, relational dynamics, knowledge sharing, and the evolution of the program's impact.

Program Director, Shamiso Nyakuwa, gave an overview of the program, the background and next Country Operational Plan's (COP) objectives.



Project Director, Shamiso Nyakuwa, giving an overview of the program

"One of the primary objectives of the strategic session is to review the program's achievements to date and ensure that the outlined priorities for COP 24 align with expansion plans and scale-up strategies. With the goal of improving healthcare access and outcomes for key populations, the workshop outcomes will serve as a roadmap for refining service delivery."- she said during the meeting.

Key Populations often face unique, evolving challenges that require flexible and responsive programming. They frequently encounter social and multi-sectoral stigma, legal barriers, and limited access to healthcare services. As a result, traditional healthcare approaches often fail to reach them effectively.

"We need to strategically think of ways to strengthen organizational structures, improve operational workflows, foster stronger relationships with

communities and partners, enhance knowledge and learning processes, and evolve the program to meet emerging challenges.”- Precious Moyo, Program Manager indicated this while leading a discussion on how best PZ’s can strategically position itself to remain effective and adaptable in addressing the needs of Key Populations.



By strategically positioning itself, PZ can ensure its programs are resilient, remain relevant, and continue to provide equitable and inclusive healthcare services that address the specific needs of key populations in a sustainable way. This strategic adaptability allows PZ to respond to emerging challenges while expanding its reach and impact across communities and contribute immensely towards the vision of the organization.

PZ’s Program Assistant, Talent Manyemba, also shared invaluable insights on the effectiveness of PZ’s interventions. He emphasized the power of the peer-to-peer model, which has been at the core of their success in providing accessible and equitable healthcare to key populations. By leveraging the lived experiences of peer educators, PZ has fostered trust within communities and created meaningful change.

"These interventions are not just about healthcare; they're about empowering individuals and ensuring inclusive development for populations often left behind," said Manyemba. His insights underscored the importance of grassroots involvement in driving equitable service provision.



As the program looks ahead, the strategies and lessons learned from this workshop will be instrumental in improving programming for key populations. With a focus on scaling up and adapting to the evolving needs of the communities served, PZ remains committed to promoting inclusive development and ensuring that healthcare is accessible to all. This strategic meeting is part of a broader effort to build on the program’s strengths and address any gaps, ensuring that PZ continues to make a meaningful impact in the lives of Zimbabwe’s key populations.



Youth Health and Decision-Making

A collage of various contraceptive methods is displayed against a vibrant pink background. In the upper right, a white T-shaped intrauterine device (IUD) with a copper coil and a purple string is visible. Below it, a blue condom is partially unwrapped, showing its yellow ring. To the left, several blister packs of birth control pills are shown: a white one, a gold one, and a dark brown one. A yellow birth control patch is also visible on the left side. A dark, semi-transparent circular graphic with arrows is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

“Contraception isn't just about avoiding pregnancy; it's about gaining control over our bodies and making decisions that fit our personal and professional aspirations,”

Rumbidzai Munhanzi, MOSAIC Graduate intern, a young advocate.



Mazowe SHAZ! Hub team during the Mazowe Veterinary College session



Rumbidzai Munhanzi posing for a photo on the World Contraceptive Day

“Similarly, young men also benefit from the ability to take responsibility for reproductive health. With contraception, they can contribute to family planning and ensure they are supporting their partners in making shared, thoughtful decisions. The rise in open conversations about contraception has further fostered an environment where both genders feel responsible for these important choices,” echoed Clive Machimbidza, an IT Officer.

To mark World Contraception Day, the Mazowe SHAZ! Hub team conducted a sensitization session at the Mazowe Veterinary College on Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health. The session was held in collaboration with the National AIDS Council. As part of the commemorations, the team highlighted why access to contraceptives was important and how young people need to make informed decisions about the methods they use and the choices they make regarding their sexual and reproductive health.

However, despite the benefits, many young people still face barriers to accessing contraception. Whether it is due to financial constraints, lack of availability, or insufficient education about reproductive health, the challenge remains significant in many parts of the world. Health organizations, governments, and educators must prioritize closing this gap to ensure that youth everywhere have access to the resources and information they need. World Contraception Day serves as a reminder of the critical role contraceptive options play in giving young people the freedom to make decisions that will shape their lives. As global attention turns to reproductive health, contraception is more than a medical choice—it is a vital component in creating a future where young people can make informed, responsible decisions about their lives.

“Whether through condoms, birth control pills, or other methods, I have learned that access to contraception remains a key factor in ensuring that individuals can plan their lives on their terms, achieving both personal and professional success without unnecessary hurdles,”

noted one of the young women who attended the session.



The Silent Toll: The Impact of Climate Change

As the effects of climate change continue to shape global weather patterns, Zimbabwe finds itself on the frontlines of an intensifying El Niño event. The shifts in temperature and rainfall patterns are triggering a crisis that goes beyond crop failure and water shortages — as it quietly wreaks havoc on the mental and sexual health of many Zimbabweans.

El Niño, a recurring climatic phenomenon, disrupts weather systems, leading to prolonged droughts or erratic rainfall. In Zimbabwe, these changes are especially negative, as rural communities largely depend on agriculture. Failed harvests, drying rivers, and food insecurity create stressors that ripple through households and communities.

Over the past few years, the psychological toll of climate-induced disasters has become apparent. Anxiety over unpredictable weather patterns, fear of hunger, and economic instability are pushing many to the brink of mental breakdown. Rural communities are hit the hardest. The lack of access to mental health services in these areas means that many silently suffer, with fewer avenues for professional support. Economic challenges compound the problem, as people are often forced to prioritize survival over addressing their mental health needs.

The impact of climate change is not limited to mental

health — it extends to the sexual health of the population, as well.

Increased poverty, which follows climate disasters, exacerbates sexual health challenges, particularly for women and girls. Economic hardships push some into vulnerable situations, including transactional sex, where access to basic needs like food and water is exchanged for sexual favors.



This rise in transactional sex heightens the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Drought and food insecurity also lead to a rise in early marriages, with families marrying off their daughters in exchange for financial security out of desperation. This practice, prevalent in marginalized communities, increases the risk of sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies, and higher dropout rates from school.

The impact of El Niño and climate change on mental and sexual health is a warning that the climate crisis is not just an environmental issue — it's a public health emergency. There is a need for an integrated approach that considers mental and sexual health as critical components of disaster preparedness. For Zimbabwe, the road ahead will require collaboration between health organizations, climate experts, and communities. In the fight against climate change, it's crucial that health — in all its forms — be placed at the forefront of the conversation.

MONKEYPOX: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

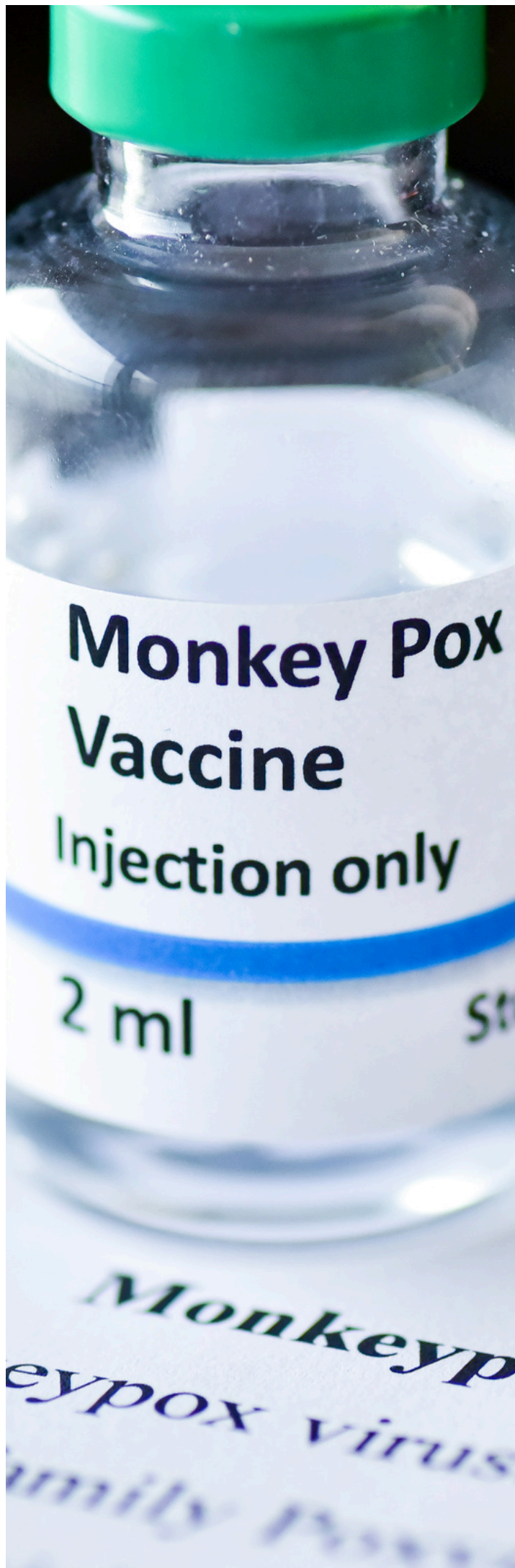
Monkeypox is a rare viral infection that has sparked concern across the globe, especially considering recent outbreaks. Although it is not as severe or as contagious as COVID-19, monkeypox still poses a public health threat that warrants attention. Understanding how the virus spreads, recognizing its symptoms, and knowing how to protect yourself can make a significant difference in preventing further transmission.

Monkeypox spreads through close contact with an infected person or animal. Human-to-human transmission can occur through direct skin contact, respiratory droplets, and contaminated surfaces or materials like bedding. Unlike respiratory viruses like COVID-19, monkeypox does not spread as easily in casual settings; prolonged close contact is typically required. This means households and healthcare workers dealing with infected patients are at higher risk of exposure. Animal-to-human transmission can also occur via bites, scratches, or handling infected animals.

Symptoms of monkeypox usually appear 5 to 21 days after exposure. These include fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and swollen lymph nodes, followed by a characteristic rash.

The rash starts on the face and spreads to other parts of the body, including the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and sometimes even the inside of the mouth. The rash progresses from flat spots to raised bumps, then fluid-filled blisters that eventually crust over and heal. The illness usually lasts 2 to 4 weeks, and most people recover without requiring medical intervention. However, severe cases can occur, especially in people with weakened immune systems, children, or those with underlying health conditions. In rare instances, complications like pneumonia, encephalitis, or secondary infections may develop.

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In 2024, monkeypox cases continued to surface in different parts of the world, including countries that had not previously reported the virus. According to recent updates from the World Health Organization (WHO), over 80,000 confirmed cases have been reported across 110 countries since the 2022 outbreak, with most cases concentrated in Europe and North America.

While the situation remains fluid, the spread of monkeypox has slowed significantly thanks to increased public health interventions, but cases continue to pop up sporadically. Public health experts are working closely to contain these outbreaks through isolation protocols, contact tracing, and the strategic deployment of vaccines. These efforts are key to ensuring the virus does not spread more widely or develop into a major global health crisis.

The smallpox vaccine has proven effective in offering protection against monkeypox, and countries are now leveraging these vaccines to combat its spread. In many places, vaccines are being offered to those most at risk, including healthcare workers, close contacts of confirmed cases, and individuals in high-exposure settings. While vaccines are a powerful tool, they are not widely available in all areas, so other preventive measures remain essential.

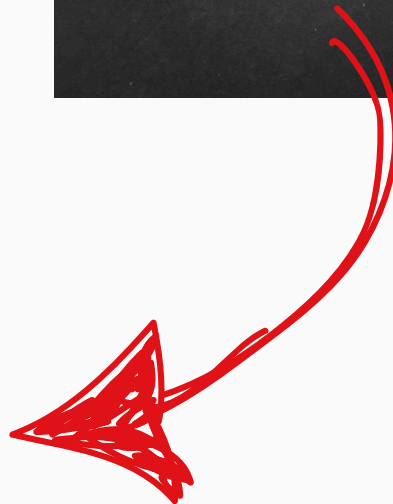
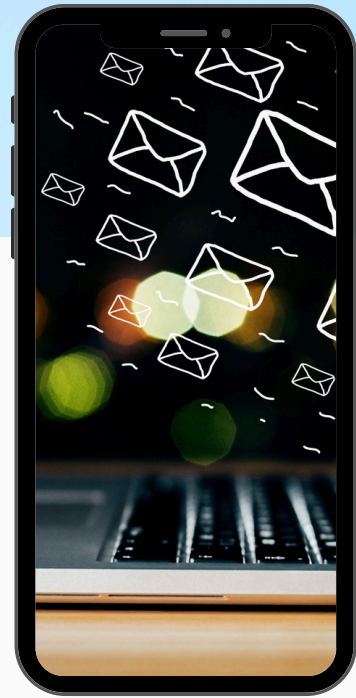
It is important to remember that while monkeypox can cause discomfort, it is usually not life-threatening. The key to controlling the spread lies in early detection and responsible behaviour. Simple actions such as avoiding close contact with infected individuals, practicing good hygiene, and using personal protective equipment when caring for sick individuals can go a long way in preventing transmission. In cases of suspected exposure or if symptoms develop, seeking immediate medical attention and adhering to isolation protocols can help prevent further spread.

Though the term "monkeypox" may cause alarm, it is important to stay informed without panicking. Health authorities around the world, such as WHO and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are working tirelessly to monitor the situation and provide timely updates. With continued public health efforts and personal vigilance, the spread of monkeypox can be contained, and the risk of a widespread health crisis reduced.

Public interest in understanding monkeypox has grown, particularly as the world grapples with the broader implications of global health threats. Being informed and prepared is a shared responsibility, and by following reliable health advice, the community can help protect vulnerable populations and prevent further outbreaks. The cases reported so far serve as a reminder that viruses know no borders, and global cooperation is essential to manage and mitigate the spread of infectious diseases.



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