

# UNDP Innovation Fund - Report

Youth and Civil Society using Social Media to Communicate  
HIV Results and Issues in Zimbabwe



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*





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# Youth and Civil Society using Social Media to Communicate HIV Results and Issues in Zimbabwe

During 2014 the UNDP Innovation Facility developed a programme with support from the Danish Government to improve 'HIV Results communication for Key Affected Populations'. The aim was to look at ways of developing innovative communication of results or issues among Key Affected Populations, to enable end users to monitor and provide feedback and to reach out to those who have not traditionally been involved in the development process, with a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa.

The programme had the following broad deliverables:

- The innovative communication of results to Key Affected Populations (KAPs) designed and prototyped. KAPs monitor and provide feedback on the results which is used to inform and help mobilize KAPs and to raise awareness of the role and value of innovation.
- The innovative communication of the UNDP / Global Fund Portfolio of results designed and monitored, by enabling end users to monitor and provide feedback on the communication of results reach out to those who have not traditionally been involved in the development process.

UNDP in Zimbabwe developed pilot projects with three civil society groups including one who currently works with UNDP and the Global Fund programme, and two additional groups:

- The Zimbabwe National Network of People living with HIV (ZNNP+) who focus on working with people living with HIV (PLHIV).
- Youth Engage (YE) which brings together young people aged between the ages of 15-35 years.
- The Centre for Sexual Health and HIV AIDS Research Zimbabwe (CeSHHAR), who have an innovative sex worker programme called 'Sisters with a voice' which operates nationally throughout Zimbabwe.

## The Partners

**The CeSHHAR** 'Sisters with a Voice' programme started as a demonstration project testing two models in 2009 – including a fixed site in Harare and four outreach sites along a major highway. The programme has since expanded across the country to include 6 fixed sites and 30 outreach sites. The programme provides sex workers with Sexual and Reproductive Health services, nested within a community mobilization programme and is supported by a team of 160 well-trained peer educators. Around half of the peer educators are also trained as paralegals so that they can provide legal advice and support to their 'Sisters'.

**ZNNP+** is one of the first networks of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in Africa established in 1999, which led to the birth of other networks in the Southern Africa region. The network is a national umbrella body whose mandate is to represent and coordinate the interests of organisations and support groups of PLHIV, with a membership of over 50,000 PLHIV. The organisation operates in all the ten provinces and 65 districts in Zimbabwe, with vibrant advocacy structures at ward, district, provincial and national level.

**Youth Engage (YE)** is a local youth membership network for young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Its focus is to draw members from the provincial and national level in Zimbabwe to challenge and mitigate HIV related stigma, silence, denial, discrimination, inaction and mis-action (SSDDIM) through equipping and empowering young people living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS.



## Objective of the Zimbabwe Projects

The overall aim of all three groups was to use innovative technology, such as new and existing social media platforms, as tools for communications and advocacy on a wide range of health and sexuality issues. The three projects aimed to include education to key affected populations – PLHIV, youth and sex workers, to improve knowledge of and access to service provision, to discuss any challenges and ways of overcoming these and to support linkages to prevention and care.

### **ZNNP+ and Youth Engage specific project objective:**

To use technology interventions to ensure that young people in Zimbabwe are making use of social media platforms' in advocating for political commitment around Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) at country level and that political commitment is sustained to respond effectively the AIDS epidemic among young people.

### **CeSHHAR specific project objective:**

To strengthen CeSHHAR existing web-based and social networking resources to better support the 'Sisters' programme in Zimbabwe in order to enhance linkage to prevention and care and build social cohesion.



## Methodology

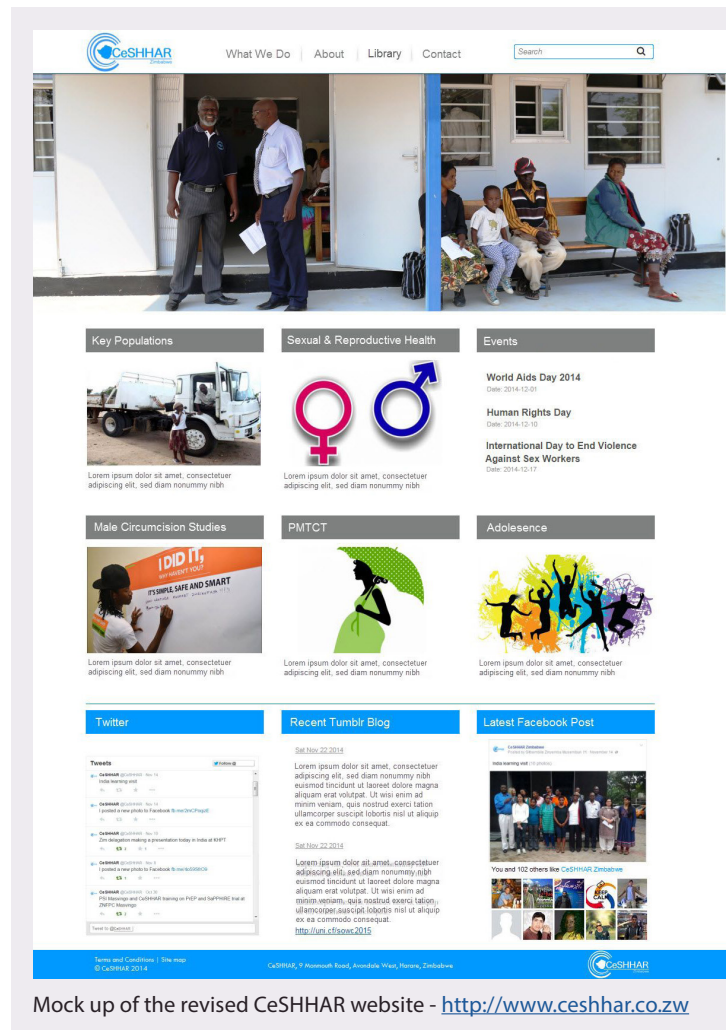
The projects focused firstly on improving central communication tools – the organisational websites (where they previously existed) and then setting up social networking forums linked to these websites. The forums were a mixture of closed forums for discussion amongst the key populations to raise internal issues and challenges, and find solutions; as well as open forums which would provide a platform for the groups to communicate externally and to raise issues with broader communities. Closed forums included 'WhatsApp' and Facebook groups, with Facebook also being used as an open forum along with Twitter and Tumblr.

Following the initial development of the central websites all groups held workshops to discuss the ways of communicating through social media, to agree on the best forums for communicating results and challenges, and to agree how the forums needed tailoring for the groups individual needs, with particular reference to how to ensure safety and, where necessary, anonymity for Key Populations who are both stigmatised and illegal.

The CeSHHAR 'Sisters' group of sex workers saw that the use of communication forums would support the following:

1. Provide security information: How to keep safe, alerts on violent clients, police arrests and 'sex workers clean up operations'. It was also suggested that the forum could provide safety codes that could be used in public places to alert one other.
2. Provide educational material and health updates, e.g.: information on STIs, including pictures.
3. Updates on clinic schedules.
4. Create a network that creates community and solidarity through communication.
5. Safer sex practices: including video demonstrations how to use condoms, especially female condoms.
6. Link to Income Generating Projects.
7. Funeral Notices of other sisters, or notification of sickness.
8. An app that can remind sisters to take medication, for those on ART.

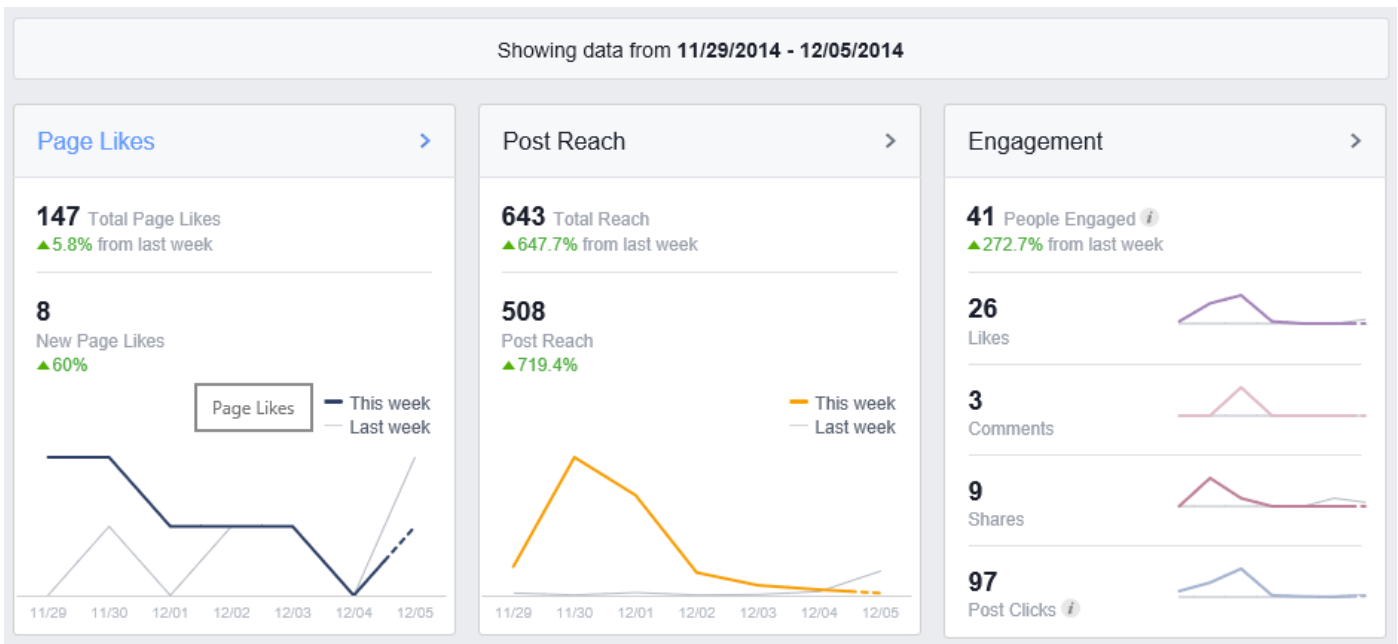
Youth Engage and ZNNP+ also purchased entry level smart phones for their provincial youth focal persons, who would be leading on the communication of results and issues. All groups included some training for staff on how to set up safe blog sites, and how to post.



## Monitoring uptake of the communication forums

The use of Facebook social media platforms proved the most attractive to youths both within ZNNP+ and with Youth Engage, which in fewer than two weeks rose in numbers by 60% and 50% respectively.

Twitter numbers on the other hand grew slightly less than on Facebook (ZNNP+ had 60 followers and Youth Engage had 32 followers) owing to the fact that most participants already had Facebook accounts and were fairly new to use of the Twitter platform. The use of Twitter as a single tweet only composed of 120 characters also presented a limitation to participants in terms of fully expressing their thoughts.



<https://www.facebook.com/YouthEngageInfo/insights?section=navOverview>

### Summary Tweet statistics by 5 December 2014

Organisation	Followers	Following	Tweets	Favourited	Re-tweets
ZNNP+	79	43	81	46	107
Youth Engage	59	108	271	111	96

In a bid to boost the uptake of the external communication forums ZNNP+ and Youth Engage supported the running of a World AIDS Day competition for youths on social media. This involved making posts on the new forums telling their World AIDS Day stories in text or pictures.

Prizes including a smart phone, T-shirts and airtime bundles and were issued to 10 winners before the close of the project. Both organisations reported an increased use on their social media platforms during the competition. This was promoted by a you tube video <http://youtu.be/UPHgmthO7-0> and was followed by an award ceremony for the winners.

The areas discussed on the forums were wide ranging. A summary of the key topics are detailed below:

Issues raised	Discussion
Role of churches and wider society in getting to zero (new infections, stigma & discrimination, HIV related deaths)	Challenge and mitigate HIV related SSDDIM <sup>1</sup> , creating platform to discuss SRHR issues freely, designing programmes & interventions dovetailing into the current National Strategic Plan on HIV.
Adherence to ART	Challenges/difficulties faced by ART recipients in changing their receiving point upon relocating/transferring to other provinces in-country for short periods of time owing to administrative procedures.
	Enhancing adherence on ART through the use of cell phone sms reminders in addition to support groups initiatives on adherence presents a more personalised approach
Mismatch between current rates of comprehensive knowledge of HIV & SRHR amongst young people and the decline in HIV prevalence.	Ignorance, promiscuity, peer pressure, power dynamics, lack of economic means causing mismatch between knowledge and behaviour change.
Lack of knowledge on HIV status	Inform, motivate, encourage family, friends, colleagues & wider community to go for HTC.
	Offering comprehensive sexuality packages at youth centres and more recreational facilities.
Lack of popular participation on SRHR issues bottlenecking youths' effort to fight sexually transmitted infections	Call for political and civic leadership to act on declarations and protocols ratified and acceded to.
	Provision of youth friendly services in a non-stigmatising environment by youth service providers.
Translating HIV and SRHR knowledge into practice	Taking personal responsibility to act in getting to zero (new HIV infections, discrimination and HIV related deaths).  Sexually Transmitted Infections on the increase in tertiary institutions.
Youths professing ignorance on issues related to HIV & AIDS and SRHR	
Youths appearing to have a clear vision for the future yet they lack perception on sexually related issues.	

<sup>1</sup>Stigma, silence, denial, discrimination, inaction and mis-action (SSDDIM)

<p>HIV prevention (Condom use, abstinence, faithfulness, lust for material provisions)</p>	<p>Youths in tertiary institutions prone to abuse through power dynamics arising from well-to-do men especially who are gainfully employed.</p>
<p>(World AIDS Day youth competition posts)</p>	<p>Unwanted pregnancies and abortions on the increase as evidenced by recent national reports on apprehended students in tertiary institutions as well as backyard incidents</p>
<p>General tweets/re-tweets/favourite</p>	<p>Personal descriptions of the day, its significance and the hope for the future.</p> <p>World AIDS tweet pictures &amp; captions</p> <p>World AIDS Day competition prizes</p> <p>Request for adherence video clips</p> <p>Appreciation messages on launch of innovative social media platform and the development work of UN agencies and its partners.</p>

### Example Tweets on World AIDS Day

Three example tweets are shown, all retweeted by Youth Engage:

- Tweet 1:** By **Ronald** (@munron43) on Dec 1. Text: "#ClosingTheGap How do we close the gap between the people moving forward and the people being left behind? #WAD2014 @YouthEngageInfo". 3 retweets.
- Tweet 2:** By **Dr Paul Chimedza** (@chimedzap) on Dec 1. Text: "@munron43 @mohcczimbabwe @YouthEngageInfo @znpinfo Zimbabwe will help meet the global target of reducing new infections to 500000 by 2020". 3 retweets. Includes a "View conversation" link.
- Tweet 3:** By **UNFPA ZIMBABWE** (@UNFPA\_Zimbabwe) on Dec 1. Text: "Between 2009 & 2011 #Zimbabwe saw a 45% decline in the number of new paediatric #HIV infections #WAD2014 @UNAIDSZimbabwe". 5 retweets, 2 favourites.

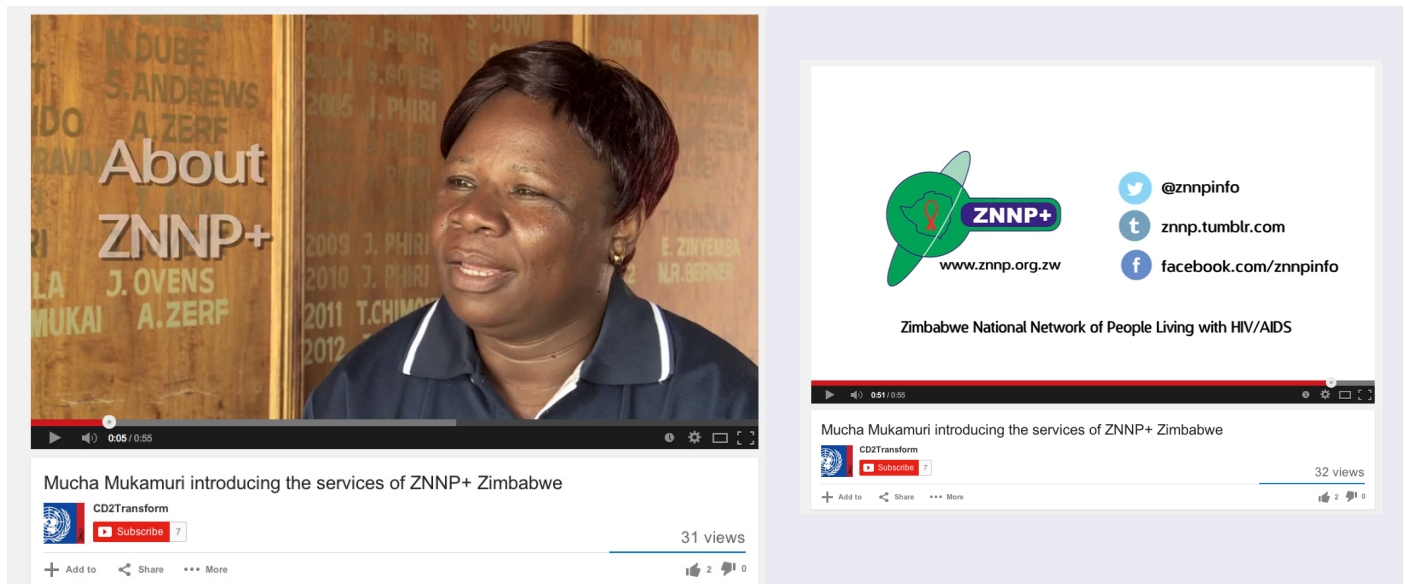


## Production of Video Content

The increased use of social media highlighted the opportunity to generate social media content. Simple but effective youtube videos were produced. Youth Engage produced a video on youth taking advantage of technology <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jQ5Q2EFHWQ> together with a short video on the work of Youth Engage <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZMBJVzfBeg>.



ZNNP+ produced a video on the support available from their national network for people living with HIV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwlbOtLeVYQ>.



To compliment the innovation work with NGOs work is underway to disseminate results achieved in Zimbabwe to stakeholders and key populations. This is using 2.5D Motion Graphic of the collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC), The Global Fund and UNDP and other partners. This together with short videos on the ART program and the HIV Testing and Counselling (HTC) program will be disseminated in early 2015 to help sustain the momentum of the project and further broaden the network.



## Lessons Learnt

1. The use of technology to communicate results and challenges takes some time to adapt to and use on regular basis. This was exacerbated by the fact that the duration of project implementation was short. It also benefited from a kick-start (the World AIDS Day competition) to encourage use, and training for participants in smart phones and new apps or social media websites not previously used.
2. Subjects discussed by participants were wide ranging, although some sensitive subjects such as Gender Based Violence (GBV) and teenage pregnancy were not discussed despite being prominent in the national media during the same time period. Participants suggested having a central social media portal where extremely personal and confidential issues are addressed and personally responded to by a mediator.
3. Internal rather than external forums were more popular to start with for a variety of reasons. Facebook and WhatsApp are available as apps, and during the project phone companies were marketing competitive bundles solely for WhatsApp use. There was also a group dynamic whereby gradually group members warm and open up to others, then encouraging one another to use pseudo-names to highlight more personal issues and seek opinions and experiences from others.
4. The greater use of social media by youth and key populations has enabled them to design and test new solutions to issues around HIV services and results. The initial prototype has helped demonstrate the potential of social media and can now be scaled up in new programmes and interventions.



## Recommendations

1. Take the subjects discussed on the forums and present these to policy makers to show results and challenges and to advocate for change.
2. Consider the greater use of social media in the design and implementation in programmes supporting youth and key populations.
3. Provide a mediator to support some discussions to provide advice and, if required, referrals.
4. Ensure a longer time frame for the project to ensure group members have the time to adapt and feel comfortable with the new methods of communication, which will also aid the use of external communication of issues and results.
5. Provide larger up-front funding to ensure quicker start-up.



## Feedback from groups involved in the project

*“This will go a long way in addressing concerns and barriers to access SRH and HIV and AIDS services for the young people. The project has also illuminated ZNNP+ work as we now post and update our sites; website, Facebook, twitter and tumblr.”*

**ZNNP+**

*“This innovation is helping us to keep our young people together on one platform where they are accessing information about their SRHR needs at the click of a button; this activity has actually revolutionised our advocacy work.”*