



Until we are all equal

RIGHT: Tanyaradzwa (centre), 20, is a role model who shows young women a different path.
BELOW: Adolescent students in Zimbabwe learn about HIV prevention, sexual health and their rights.



Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-Free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) Project

Education equips young women in Zimbabwe to prevent HIV and protect their futures.

Project Summary

With HIV infections on the rise, young women and girls need our support now more than ever.

In Zimbabwe, poverty and unemployment can drive adolescent girls and young women into unsafe or exploitative work such as artisanal gold panning, selling wares or working as housemaids, exposing them to a greater risk of unsafe sexual behaviour, substance abuse and dropping out of school. Realities like this are among the reasons that girls bear the brunt of the global HIV epidemic. Shockingly, nearly 98,000 adolescent girls were infected with HIV in 2022.

Tanyaradzwa saw these risks play out for young women around her. But she discovered that access to information about sexual health was a lifeline to protect her education and navigate life's challenges. (Read her inspiring story on page 4.) She got involved with the DREAMS project, which aimed to keep girls in school, reduce gender-based violence and increase access to youth-friendly health services. Achieving those goals helps reduce girls' risks for contracting HIV.



Through the DREAMS project, the community plays a pivotal role in supporting healthy relationships for girls and young women.

THE FACTS

WHO: Participants: Adolescent girls and young women ages 9–24. **Funders:** The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and individual Canadian donors.

WHAT: The DREAMS project sought to prevent HIV transmission in adolescent girls and young women.

WHERE: The project was implemented in four districts in Zimbabwe (Chimanimani, Kwekwe, Umguza and Umzingwane).

WHEN: January 2021–December 2023

WHY: Keeping girls in school and ensuring they have access to health services helps reduce their risk of exposure to HIV and gender-based violence. The DREAMS project:

- Provided comprehensive sexual and HIV education in schools.
- Set up mobile clinics to provide HIV testing and counselling in communities with high risk of transmission.
- Worked with parent groups to increase support for girls' education and adolescent sexual and reproductive health and to foster healthy parent-child communication.
- Provided subsidies for school fees, uniforms, stationery and dormitories to help girls stay in school.

BY THE NUMBERS

Project Highlights



The DREAMS project helped me with school fees, uniforms and exam fees. My dream of finally being in school fully came true. I passed my exams, an achievement that I would never have thought could happen two years ago.”

—Rudaviro, 18, project participant

144,919

adolescent girls and young women took part in HIV, sexual education and life-skills training. [TARGET: 133,135]

11,965

school fees per year were paid for girls and young women, who also received support to pay for uniforms and school supplies. [TARGET: 12,000]

30,926

girls and young women participated in sessions on sexual health with their caregivers, to enhance their confidence in discussing these topics together. [TARGET: 30,000]

21,296

adolescent girls and young women were reached through mobile clinics that offer HIV testing and medication to prevent HIV transmission. [TARGET: 19,200]

National-Level Highlights

The DREAMS project is part of a large-scale multi-partner effort to reduce HIV transmission throughout Zimbabwe. Our efforts helped contribute to the following improvements being measured at a national level. In 2022:

1.2 million

people were on antiretroviral therapy for HIV.

80,000

HIV tests were taken by people in at-risk populations, including adolescent girls and young women.

93,000

people were reached with HIV prevention services.

A STORY OF CHANGE

The Power of Perseverance

It's not always the solutions you expect that make the biggest difference.

To get to her high school, Tanyaradzwa had to walk seven kilometres, after waking up early to complete her chores. People would come out of their homes to mock her as she passed, saying things like, "Your education will amount to nothing in your village." Men wait along the road to proposition girls or offer them a ride to school – at an unspoken cost.

But Tanyaradzwa made the trip each day, because education was her dream. When her grandfather lost his job and could no longer pay her school fees, she enrolled in the DREAMS project, which paid her tuition and set her up in a safe boarding house near the school.

Tanyaradzwa scored the best A-level results in her school and is now studying at the University of Zimbabwe. She credits another intervention from the DREAMS project with helping her stay focused on her goals: "They [teachers] told us that it's possible to abstain from sex and that if you want to get involved with someone, you have to get tested for HIV first," she says of the project's in-school sexual and reproductive health education program.

"If I hadn't been empowered with information on sex, I don't think I would be where I am today," Tanyaradzwa says. "Those lessons helped me make the right decisions about my life."



When I have completed my education, I want to help others who are in my situation."

—Tanyaradzwa, 20

Want to know more about Tanyaradzwa? Click or scan the code to watch the video.



Tanyaradzwa shares a happy moment with her grandmother, her biggest support on her educational journey.

SPOTLIGHT

Daddy-Daughter Bonds

“I thought it was taboo for fathers to talk about relationships with their daughters,” says Sekuru Elijah Madzima. Madzima is father to two teenage girls, Loyce, 16, and Rumbidzai, 14, and never used to talk to them about things like menstruation or sex, either. He also believed that controlling their behaviour by disciplining them physically was in their best interest, based on how he was raised himself.

Madzima brought his daughters to a parent-child communication session hosted by the DREAMS project, because his wife had enrolled them but then had fallen ill. What he learned there fundamentally changed the way he and his daughters relate to each other.

The sessions are designed to increase caregivers’ and adolescents’ knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and rights and facilitate positive conversations about sensitive subjects. The groups broach these subjects directly and also help build ongoing positive communication skills within families.

“The sessions gave me the confidence to discuss any issues with my girls,” Madzima says. “I’m more equipped with techniques and skills to manage them [without violence].”

Madzima says he has seen their relationship improve as a result, and Loyce confirms this. “I used to be shy to walk with my father,” she says. “Now I love walking with him because he tells us jokes – that’s a side of my father I wasn’t aware of before.”



Mentor Fillomina Chiriga was trained by the DREAMS project to provide counselling for adolescent girls and young women.



Tanyaradzwa talks about HIV prevention with students in her former high school.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Globally, 1.5 million children (0–14 years old) are living with HIV.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls and young women are more than three times as likely to acquire HIV as adolescent boys and young men.
- In 2018, 12.5% of the 57,500 students who dropped out of school in Zimbabwe stopped attending classes because of reasons relating to pregnancy or marriage – and almost all of the students in that percentage are girls.

Thank you for your support.

Your dedication is offering a pathway for girls and young women in Zimbabwe to stay healthy and stay in school.



Click or scan the code to learn how you can support Until We're All Equal.

WHAT'S NEW AT PLAN

Our Shared Dream

We see the world as it is and the world as it could be. No matter how complex the challenges, a better future is possible.

It takes **determination**.

It takes **optimism**.

It takes **vision**.

Our “moon shot” vision is equality for girls everywhere. Improving the lives of girls improves the lives of everyone in the family and the community. That understanding, which we know you share, is at the heart of our fundraising campaign, Until We Are All Equal. When you support this campaign, you're trusting us to identify the greatest threats to equality, especially for girls, and respond to them as they arise.

Just going to school every day is impossible for many girls, with one in six living in a conflict zone. That's why, right now, about 120 million girls are missing out on an education. What's more, many girls – 12 million every year – are forced into early marriage, placing them at a heightened risk of dying from complications of early pregnancy or childbirth.

There are 500 million girls alive on our planet today, each filled with promise and potential and with their whole futures ahead of them. How do you transform the world? Start by investing in girls.



About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. We're determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.

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