

#ASHTAG

MAGAZINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note	03
Mbelesini shebeens contribute to increased teenage pregnancies and drug abuse.	04
Increased unemployment rate causes school dropouts in Lupane.	06



Club empowers women in Ntabazinduna	17
School appeals for assistance to rebuild a classroom block	19

Dete struggles with poor and inadequate sewer systems	08
--	----

Gardening project boosts PWDs in Marinoha village	10
--	----

Filabusi villagers appeal for more secondary schools	12
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Involve police to discipline children: Mzaca villagers.	14
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Editor's Note



Warm greetings and welcome to yet another edition of your favorite magazine.

Hashtag magazine is a compilation and display of our We the Future community stories

where they tell their community stories. In this edition, they discuss issues affecting them and their communities. The stories include cultural issues such as instilling discipline, economic issues such as the empowerment of women through income-generating clubs, villagers' appeal for more secondary schools, and other human-interest stories.



The We the Future program promotes digital skills and mobile journalism for young women, enabling them to participate in the information ecosystem by producing and distributing content in and from their communities. Basically, they are becoming trusted information champions in their respective communities.

It is an exciting season in our country as we count down to our elections on the 23rd of August. We encourage everyone to go and vote and exercise their right to choose their leaders. Our We the Future girls will be leading the pack and leading by example in casting their votes.

We hope you enjoy our July issue

Nozibusiso

We The Future Coordinator

MBELESINI SHEBEENS CONTRIBUTE TO INCREASED TEENAGE PREGNANCIES AND DRUG ABUSE.

By Cingani Nkiwane

A number of households in Mbelesini, Ward 4 Ntabazinduna make their living by operating illegal beer shebeens, which according to other locals has resulted in illicit behavior among the youth.

According to locals in Mbelesini, the presence of illegal gold miners who frequented these shebeens and solicited young girls worsened the issue.

As a result, locals claimed that Nhlambabaloyi High School in Ward 5, has continued recording the highest number of teenage pregnancies in Umguza District.

“Over the past years, that is from 2019 till date, Nhlambabaloyi High School has recorded almost 7 to 10 drop-outs a year, due to pregnancies, substance abuse, and peer pressure for marriage,” said a case worker in the district, Ms Mmwenda.

The case worker said these shebeens have led to negative impacts such as early marriages, an increase in the spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections, the rise of young commercial sex workers, family disintegration, a high crime rate, and violence.

“This is worsened by the fact that there are nearby gold mines where makorokozas work and usually spend their money on poor rural school girls,” Mmwenda said, adding that another effect was that these young girls were pressured to drop out of school, claiming it was a “waste of time.”



According to the case worker, the illegal gold panners “even paid police officers” whenever any of their misbehavior was reported.

“There is no way out to control the situation. It gets worse and it is depressing to see young girls becoming commercial sex workers yet they would have been good symbols,” Mmwenda lamented.

“Such actions are worrying especially for parents who grew up knowing that education is the key to a better life but for our children, it’s no longer the same due to these illegal mining activities and sex commercial workers.”

The case worker said the government and non-governmental organizations have tried to advocate and educate people against teenage pregnancies, drug and substance abuse, and prostitution but the message was not adopted by the youth.

“It is very difficult for the villagers to control children and stop them from going to shebeens because they claim they want money for upkeep. Although both genders are affected, the girl child suffers mostly because women have been victims of societal pressures and circumstances,” Mmwenda said.



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INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT RATE CAUSES SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN LUPANE.



By Lindsey Muzamba

Due to the country's high unemployment rate, it has emerged that a number of teenagers in Lupane have dropped out of school because they no longer see a future in education.

These school dropouts believe that looking for quick money-making possibilities is a better way to survive than attending school.

Several interviews with young people in Lupane revealed that girls were "prostituting themselves" putting their health at risk.

"Some young girls don't have information on how to protect themselves but are more worried about getting money. They then find themselves with unplanned pregnancies, which they later try to terminate not knowing they could be risking their lives as well because they use harmful substances," said one of the locals, Lucy Mugadza.

Mugadza said it was sad to see young children with a potential 'bright' future dropping out of school.

"At the same time, we realize there are no jobs to motivate youth to continue with their studies," she said.

Locals also bemoaned how youth are now involved in selling illegal drugs and alcohol such as marijuana and 'intshengu.'

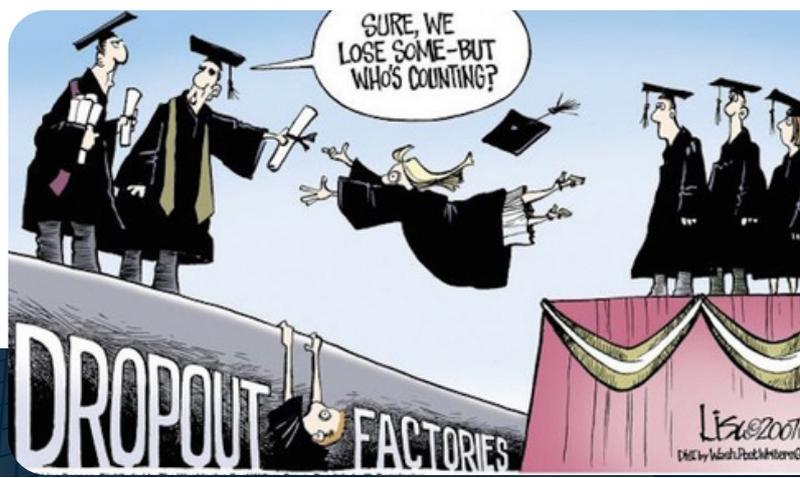
"I suggest that communities or the authorities come up with strategic ways of motivating our fellow youngsters to continue with their studies.

Once they stay in school, they can also enhance their chances of being employable," said Nokukholwa Malaba, one of the graduates residing in Lupane.

Malaba believes the government should create and fund projects to keep young students occupied when they finish high school.

"This way they can also make it to tertiary level with the help of those projects", she said and suggested that hosting workshops with young people in Lupane and inviting graduates from the district can also help motivate children.

"During the workshops, everyone can learn how to create a good name for themselves, use practical skills they learnt from school, and become entrepreneurs than to wait for the government or some Non-Governmental Organisation to come to their rescue."





DETE STRUGGLES WITH POOR AND INADEQUATE SEWER SYSTEMS

By Loreen Dube



Dete, a small town in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland North, is experiencing serious sewer system challenges due to the poor and insufficient infrastructure, a local councillor has said. The councillor, Stanley Torima, said this challenge has also contributed to health hazards and environmental concerns.

"Obsolete infrastructure is one of the key causes of Dete's sewer system problems. Many of the sewer lines and treatment plants were built decades ago and have never been properly maintained or improved. As a result, these systems are unable to cope with the increasing population and wastewater flow," he said in an interview.

Torima said the poor sewer systems had posed health risks to the community because of improper disposal of sewage.

"Sewer bursts have led to the contamination of water sources, including rivers and groundwater, which are used for drinking, cooking, and bathing. This contamination can cause the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery, putting the lives of residents at risk," he said.

The councillor said inadequate sewer systems also negatively impacted the environment. "Untreated or poorly treated wastewater is often discharged into nearby rivers or open fields, polluting the surrounding ecosystems. This contamination can harm aquatic life and disrupt the natural balance of the ecosystem.

Additionally, the foul odor emitted from these polluted areas creates an unpleasant living environment for residents," Torima said.

Torima acknowledged that a significant factor contributing to Dete's sewer system problems is the lack of maintenance and funding.

"The local authority has been unable to allocate sufficient resources to maintain and upgrade the infrastructure adequately. This lack of investment has resulted in deteriorating sewer lines, pump failures, and overwhelmed treatment plants, exacerbating the existing problems," said the councillor.

Residents in Dete have also complained about how the poor sewer systems have a direct impact on their daily lives due to frequent sewage backups, and overflowing manholes while blockages are common occurrences.

"This has led to unsanitary living conditions. The lack of proper sewage disposal also affects businesses, tourism, and overall economic development in the area," said Ndlelende Ncube coordinator of Tikobane Trust.

"To address the poor sewer systems in Dete, urgent action is required. The local authority has to prioritize the maintenance and upgrading of existing infrastructure such as repairing or replacing damaged sewer lines, improving treatment plants, and implementing regular maintenance schedules."

Ncube said increased funding from both local and national governments is crucial to make sure there is long-term sustainability of such infrastructural works.

Both Ncube and Torima concurred that it was imperative for local authorities and relevant stakeholders to address such issues urgently.

"By investing in modernizing and maintaining the sewer systems, Dete can improve public health, protect the environment, and create a more livable and sustainable community for its residents," Torima summed.





GARDENING PROJECT BOOSTS PWDS IN MARINOHA VILLAGE

By Enele Mpofu

People With Disability (PWDs) in Marinoha village, in Kezi, Matabeleland South have hailed Jairos Jiri Association for capacitating them through a gardening project-Marinoha irrigation scheme, which has improved their livelihoods.

The Marinoha irrigation scheme has enabled villagers from Ward 9 to produce their own food, take their children to school and look after their families financially.

Although the project was initially started to benefit the People With Disabilities in the area, it has now expanded to accommodate other members of the community.

The villagers practice market gardening growing such crops as cabbages, onions, tomatoes, spinach, and carrots.

A beneficiary of the project, Peter Khuphe, who is a person with a disability, expressed his gratitude.

"The project has really helped us a lot as people with disabilities. In most cases, we struggle to fend for ourselves but with the help of the Jairos Jiri organization, we can now grow crops here and sell the produce. I can safely say this has really boosted us financially and it has raised our standards of living," Khuphe said.

The irrigation project has also provided a source of water for both the villagers and their livestock.

"For years our village has been accessing water from wells which are an unsafe source. This has been posing health risks for people as they would be exposed to water-borne diseases. We are really thankful to Jairos Jiri for drilling boreholes in our area. We can now access safe water," Similo Nyathi, another beneficiary said.

A youth from the area, Yvonne Phiri, testified that she has been able to go back to school and finish her Ordinary Level with the proceeds from the gardening project.

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FILABUSI VILLAGERS APPEAL FOR MORE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By Moreblessing Sibanda

Villagers from Vusisizwe Village, Ward 2 in Filabusi, Insiza district, are appealing for assistance to build more secondary schools in the area to improve the access to education for learners.

The village has only one secondary school, Tshazi, and some learners have to travel about 11 kilometers every day.

The headman of the area, Samuel Moyo, expressed concern that there is an increase in the number of learners who have dropped out because of the distance, while those who are still going, sometimes miss morning lessons because they arrive late.

“We are affected by a shortage of secondary schools in Filabusi. They are traveling long distances from home to school, about 11km every day. We only have Tshazi Secondary School. Some children miss their morning classes because it takes them a long time to get to school,” Moyo said.



“Unfortunately some boys have dropped out of school and have decided to do artisanal mining. Some girls who have dropped out are getting pregnant at an early age. We need at least three more secondary schools to be constructed in our area to address this challenge.”

Moyo said this has also affected the pass rate of the school.

“The fact that most of these children miss lessons has affected the pass rate. We are particularly worried about the girl child. Their performance in exams is quite worrying. Traveling a long distance is affecting them and it reflects in their results,” he said.

A female student who attends Tshoazi Secondary School said the distance she travels is very long and it could help if she had a bicycle.

“A bicycle would help me a lot. I usually miss lessons because I get to school late. My results are not very good and I’m afraid if I continue like this I will not pass my final examinations,” she said.



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INVOLVE POLICE TO DISCIPLINE CHILDREN: MZACA VILLAGERS.

By Sandile Ncube

Mzaca villagers in Nkayi District have called on the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to be involved in the disciplining of children following increasing incidents of children beating their parents.

Villagers bemoaned the loss of cultural morals in society.

Culturally, beating a parent is considered taboo as it is associated with bad luck.

Villagers who spoke to the reporter said times have changed and this has come with cultural shifts and dynamics in the community.

"Many things have changed in the 21st century, children nowadays just live life for the sake of it. Cases of children beating up the elders in the community are rising each and every day, they are no longer showing respect anymore," said one villager Soneni Ncube.



Another villager, Sakhile Ndlovu said drug abuse is a major factor in children's behavior.

"My son now drinks alcohol at the age of 16, he comes home drunk and starts insulting me," said Ndlovu.

She added, "One of the community members was stabbed by one of his children in the village showing no respect for the culture anymore."

In addition, Mr Moyo added, "One day I was called to school by the headmaster to tell me that my child was getting suspended because he was found drunk during lessons and insulting teachers."

Moyo said the police involvement in the matter might ease the situation.

"We feel that if the police are involved, or even come down to the communities, children might fear them and start respecting us. Even arrest them for drug abuse," he said.

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WE THE FUTURE



Club empowers women in Ntabazinduna

By Progress Nkiwane

The 45-year-old, Judith Mthunzi from Mgijwa village in Ntabazinduna says a women's club has helped her eradicate poverty.

The club which was formed on August 20, 2020, was started by 10 members.

The club has played a big role in Ntabazinduna Community as it empowers women through the eradication of poverty. It has brought a lot of advancements to families and society as some women are now car and business owners.

When she first joined the club in 2021, Mthunzi struggled to pay the small joining fee of US\$5.

"I never gave up but I hustled more and more until I raised the money. Ever since I joined the women's club, my situation has improved.," said Mthunzi.

"Last year the members supported me a lot when it was my day to receive the share of the money. Some even gave me large amounts and this enabled me to buy my household property, livestock (two goats, one donkey and two heifers), pay my children's school fees, start a small business of grocery and finally earn better living standards with my family," she said.

Over the years, the club has grown as it now has 50 members.

The women are now holding club celebrations every week where they educate each other about different issues such as HIV/AIDS, Domestic Violence, Business Management, Entrepreneurship and other issues affecting women.

They also offer free Counselling sessions.

"As club members, we are more than a family, we support each other during situations of crisis, stressful life and other issues. I feel honoured to be part of the club. I have learnt that the sky is the limit, even if you're a woman you can be independent, achieve goals by unlocking certain doors and taking advantage of opportunities," said Mthunzi.

She is also hoping to construct a five-roomed house from the contributions she will receive this year.

"This year with my club's contributions I want to build my five-roomed house since I have started ordering cement and bricks," said Mthunzi.

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FIX MY CITY

SCHOOL APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE TO REBUILD A CLASSROOM BLOCK

By Moreblessing Ndlovu



Zwehamba primary school in Ward 22 Matobo, Matabeleland South, is appealing for assistance from well-wishers to help reconstruct a classroom block that was destroyed by strong whirlwinds in 2019.

The whirlwind destroyed the roof, windows, and floors of the classroom block.

Due to late payment of fees by some parents, the school has failed to self-fund the renovation of the classroom block.

In an interview, an official from the school who could not be named as he has no authority to comment said they have been trying to reconstruct the classroom block for the past three years but have failed.

"We have been trying by all means to save up for the classroom's reconstruction for the past three years but due to lack of fees payments we have been unsuccessful," he said.

He said the destruction of the classroom block has forced the learners to share classrooms to accommodate all pupils adding that, "teaching has become more unbearable as learners will be squashed in one classroom."

Another official said the situation is also affecting teachers.

The school said it is in need of building materials such as cement, asbestos, glass, and any other material necessary to reconstruct the classroom block.

"The school is not financially stable; we will not be able to renovate the classroom without the support of the well-wishers," said the school official.

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