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#ASHTAG

MAGAZINE

**Brot**  
für die Welt



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# Editor's Note

Hello and welcome to another exciting edition of your favorite magazine, the Hashtag. We are excited to showcase and travel with you to our communities in Matabeleland and tell you our beautiful stories. Walk with us as we continue to grow from strength to strength as storytellers.

This month the magazine continues to showcase the stories from Matabeleland beautifully compiled by the We the Future participants who have shown incredible growth in crafting and nurturing their writing and storytelling skills. We the Future, a programme that seeks to upskill the female or girl child in digital skills has been nurturing these ten young women and guiding them to enhance their digital skills



CITE, is a digital and innovative hub that nurtures others to be digital-savvy while distributing accurate and reliable information in this age of information disorder, mis, and disinformation.

The Hashtag magazine prides itself on giving you authentic and organic content and stories right from the source. The young women are the center of information, news, and events in their communities and are able to narrate their stories themselves. We hope you enjoy these compilations.

Nozibusiso  
**We The Future Coordinator**

# INCREASED DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTHS IN DETE TROUBLING COMMUNITY

By Lorreen Dube

The small town of Dete in Matabeleland North has witnessed a significant and concerning rise in drug and substance abuse among its youth population.

The escalating numbers, which pose severe threats to the physical and mental well-being of the community's young individuals, has alarmed local authorities and concerned citizens who said substance abuse requires immediate attention from both local government and community members.

One of the local women in Dete, Prisca Mathe, said the rising numbers of drug and substance abuse among youths in Dete necessitates urgent action to stop the scourge.

*"With a concerted effort from all stakeholders, this issue can be tackled head-on, creating a safer and healthier environment for the youngest members of the community," she said.*

Local councillor, Stanley Torima, concurred that community leaders, local activists and concerned citizens must join forces to combat this critical issue.

*"One promising initiative that has gained traction is the development of peer support programmes. These programmes aim to create a safe space for youths to share their experiences, offer guidance, and provide support to one another," Torima said.*

*"By relying on peer mentors who have successfully battled addiction, these programmes offer a practical and relatable approach to helping young individuals overcome substance abuse."*

The councillor claimed authorities were also intensifying efforts to provide counselling and rehabilitation services within the Dete community.

*"By increasing accessibility to professional help, individuals battling addiction can receive the necessary support and guidance to break free from substance abuse," he said.*

suggested that one of the main factors contributing to the surge of drug and substance abuse is the lack of awareness and education about the dangers associated with these habits.



*"Inadequate access to comprehensive information regarding the risks and consequences of substance abuse has left youths ill-equipped to make informed decisions and resist peer pressure," he said.*

Lack of suitable recreational activities and effective support systems also played a significant role in the rising numbers, Torima added.

*"The increasing availability of drugs and substances, coupled with societal pressures and limited recreational opportunities, has contributed to this distressing situation. Young individuals, seeking an escape from daily challenges and pressures, often turn to drugs and substances as a coping mechanism. Without viable alternatives, these destructive behaviors become more appealing, leading to a vicious cycle of addiction and despair," said the councillor.*

One of the youths in Dete, Prince Mathe, said community engagement is a vital aspect of the fight against drug and substance abuse.

*"Increasing awareness through workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns can help educate parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals on how to identify early signs of substance abuse and provide appropriate interventions," he said.*  
*"Furthermore, addressing the supply side of the issue is critical."*

Mathe said police must strengthen their efforts to combat drug trafficking, have increased patrols, and stricter enforcement of regulations pertaining to the sale and consumption of drugs.

According to a local secondary school headmaster, Bhkinkosi Matshaqa, in order to achieve long-lasting change, it is critical for the governments and civil society to invest in the establishment of treatment facilities and rehabilitation centers that cater specifically to the needs of young substance abusers.

*"These facilities should provide comprehensive treatment programmes, outpatient support, and ongoing maintenance therapies to make sure abusers have sustained recovery," said the headmaster.*



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# NGO GIVES DIBA COMMUNITY TWO BOER GOATS TO REPRODUCE MORE

**By Princess Thandeka Tshuma**

Community members in Diba under Ward 2 in Plumtree recently received two Boer goats from a non-governmental organisation named GOAL.

GOAL has been working with vulnerable communities in Zimbabwe since 2002 when it first responded to the country's food security crisis.

The organisation has been implementing a wide range of humanitarian and development programmes, with an emphasis on systems, partnerships, and resilience building.

The delivery of the two Boer goats was part of GOAL's resilience-building programme where they aimed to capacitate the community to be self-reliant.

Boer goats are different from other normal goats, as they originate from South Africa and are preferred due to their rapid growth and high fertility.

The two community members were given the Boers' goats after attending classes on caring for and rearing them.

According to the community members, the Boer goats will help other villagers who will bring their goats to mate with these and produce more goats to sell.

*"Boer goats can reproduce all year and reach sexual maturity at five months of age.*

*A conventional breeding program must produce three kids every two years, which means the female goats are pregnant for five months, nurse their kids for three months, and then breed again," said Saijen Moyo, one of the members who attended the training.*

Community members who wished to remain anonymous claimed that if the goat-rearing project is successful, it will enable them to increase their revenues because there is a market for these Boer goats.

*"Because of their largeness in quantity, Boer goats have been used to improve the meat qualities of other breeds," said Dube, the other villager who participated in the GOAL training.*

Other villagers agreed that the Boer goats would benefit the community because of their high fertility and birth rate, as well as their ability to grow rapidly for slaughter.





# ELDERLY VILLAGERS IN DIBA WORRIED BY CORRUPTION IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMME

By Princess Thandeka Tshuma



Elderly villagers in Diba under Ward 2 in Plumtree are increasingly concerned about the corrupt manner in which food distribution programmes are carried out in their community yet they are intended to ease the area's persistent food insecurity challenges.

According to the elderly, these dishonest ways were causing tensions in the community.

The villagers also expressed their displeasure with the way those in authority exploit the food aid distribution process by picking and choosing who receives food.

*“The selection of food aid recipients is not based on the poorest or vulnerable principle as advocated by donors, but it's highly determined by the village politics, where blood relationships, alliances, and power determine who is selected,” said the elderly woman who requested to remain anonymous.*

They also complained that the selection of food aid beneficiaries is “now heavily influenced by who is known by who.”

*“Sometimes the money and food aid was meant to benefit the elderly to fight hunger and save money on food but such assistance ends up going to the youth who can still find jobs and make money,” continued the elderly woman.*

The disgruntled community members added that “most of the vulnerable villagers fail to receive food aid, while those who are rich get it.”

Other concerns raised by the community members was that some youths even faked being orphans on the day of food distribution.

“It is hard for the donors to notice as they do not belong to the village,” said one of the community members.

*“We therefore ask the donors to change the way in which food aid is distributed.”*



# United Zimbabwe Alliance

## UZA POLLING AGENTS IN NTABAZINDUNA UNPAID FOR ELECTION SERVICES

By Cingani Nkiwane

Some United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA) members who were employed as polling agents in Ntabazinduna Ward 4 for the August 23 national elections have complained about not being paid for their work.

One of the affected agents, Busani Sithole, a 45-year-old who lives with disabilities, claimed they could not locate the party's aspiring local authority candidate Andrew Wilson who was responsible for paying them. As a result, Sithole claimed he reported the matter to police but was turned away.

*"I was one of the crew of the UZA polling agents. I reported the matter to the Ntabazinduna police but they rebuked me and said I should have reported that when I was first selected to be the polling agent. They taunted me for only coming now because we haven't been paid," he said.*

*"We also couldn't trace the aspiring local authority candidate Andrew Wilson who was supposed to pay us."*

Sithole said when they were hired, they were not told how much they would receive.

*"We were just told we would be paid but until today we haven't been paid a cent," he said.*

Sithole further claimed UZA supporters were aware that the party would not make many electoral inroads but continued having false hopes.

*"The aspiring candidates failed to deliver the promised development projects. They even failed to provide adequate regalia for us, yet we were less than 60 supporters. Our analysis now regarding the experiences we have had with UZA indicates we must not be surprised that we haven't been paid," he exclaimed.*

*"But we want our payments because we deserve and earned them."*

Sithole claimed some agents were hesitant to speak up, despite the fact that politicians and political parties frequently exploited individuals.

*"Some polling agents are afraid to speak out about the experience they have with UZA. Moreover, this fuels confusion and conflicts between locals as some polling agents of the opposition parties were fairly paid in time," Sithole said.*

*"We kept on asking the party about our payments but the last note we saw on our WhatsApp group was Mr Wilson claiming that he has returned to Bubi District, which is his rural home. Mr Wilson said anyone who needs him should catch him there. Then afterward, he called claiming our money was processed and we will receive it but we still doubt that."*

Reached for comment, UZA secretariat, Denzel Mhepo said he will verify and come back to the reporter.



# ALCOHOL ABUSE WORRY MATOBO VILLAGERS

By Moreblessing Ndlovu

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Zwehamba villagers in Matobo district, Matabeleland South province have raised concerns about alcohol abuse by young people.

Most teenagers have dropped out of school due to alcohol abuse.

They consume cheap alcohol popularly known as 'ntshengu.

A villager, Brendon Ndlovu said young people are drinking recklessly.

*"I have a fifteen-year-old son who once came home drunk. This got me asking myself how does an underage child get access to alcohol when they are not allowed in bottle stores, but I got my answers when I visited our business center as young boys of different ages were drinking recklessly," said Ndlovu.*

He said bottle store owners have been fueling the rise of alcohol consumption by teenagers.

*"They no longer apply the no under eighteen years rule in their stores. They allow everyone to purchase alcohol despite their age. This has seen boys as young as thirteen years of age drinking alcohol."*



*Ndlovu added, "These bottle store owners do not care about the harm caused by alcohol in our future generation and society, all they care about is the money they make."*

Another villager, Eva Ncube said they have tried many times to come up with measures to stop the teenagers from drinking but they have been unsuccessful.

*"The police have been involved on several occasions to discipline these youngsters but nothing has changed," she said.*

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# NHLEKISA VILLAGERS BENEFIT FROM A WATER SOURCE DONATION

By Sandile Ncube

A Non-Governmental Organization known as Hefo which operates in ward 28, Nhlekisa village, Nkayi district has donated a water system to the villagers as part of the efforts to curb water shortages in the area.

Following the donation, villagers are now able to grow vegetables which they sell to other surrounding areas.

This has also seen most parents being able to pay school fees for their children.

Domestic animals are also benefitting from the installed water sources .

A villager, Austin Manda said after receiving water, the villagers opened a community garden where they now grow vegetables.

“This system has helped us a lot, we opened a big garden where we now grow vegetables like chomolia , tsunga , rape , tomatoes and onions,” said Manda.



Another villager, Daniel Ncube said the community garden has become their source of livelihood.

“This has become our source of income as we sell vegetables to other surrounding villages in exchange of money, maize. We are now able to use the money for our daily expenses and even pay school fees for our children,” said Ncube .

He said other surrounding villages are also benefitting from the water source as villagers in Nkayi struggle to access water.

In addition, Sithabile Dube also concurred that children are now able to attend school without being sent back home.

“There is a big change in terms of fees payment at Dolahali Primary School, but working in this garden, we can now raise the money to pay school fees,” said Dube





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# WE THE FUTURE





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# *NTABAZINDUNA YOUTHS CONDEMN Rampant selling of land.*

By Progress Nkiwane

Young people in Ntabazinduna communal land under Chief Khayisa have condemned the ongoing selling of land by their elders to people from other areas.

A villager, Philani Dulo who is aged 29 years from Ward 4 Mgiqwa village said the locals are no longer benefitting from the land

*"The whole of Ntabazinduna-eManxeleni is overpopulated and dominated by strangers, illegal gold miners, and Shona-speaking people while we; the locals are being outnumbered slowly but surely. This is due to some of our elders and leaders who are selling our own land to strangers," said Dulo.*

He said this has had a negative impact as the young people from the area are being left out.

Another villager, Lloyd Maseko who is aged 30 years said the selling of land by the elders from the area will affect them in the future.

*"I blame our elders and the local leaders who don't care about us young people, our children, and the upcoming generations. Where are we going to stay in the next coming years since people from other areas are now occupying the land as if we are going back to the colonialism stage," said Maseko.*

He added " Due to this occupation of land by many people, our lives no longer have grazing land and greener pastures. This results in overgrazing, land pollution, land degradation, increase in prostitution, theft, and crime rates," said Lloyd.

Praise Dube a female from Mafanisa Line condemned the involvement of the Village Development Committee (VIDCO) stating that they are abusing their power.

*"Our leaders and elders have their own personal interests driven by greed. Also, the greed practiced by the local ruling political party representatives is the other main driver of why people sell land," she said*

Dube added *"Some locals are trying to make a living through wrong means while unaware that they are complicating our future as youth, exploiting our right to land. Our leaders don't share resources equally, there is no free flow of information such as employment opportunities, social welfare benefits, and governmental support especially regarding farmers like farming seeds and machinery."*

She said the local leadership is depriving the youths of their right to land as they use their power to engage in corrupt activities.



# 'Healing' tree amazes

## Vusisizwe villagers



Jabulisa Ngwenya, an elder from the village, said he was introduced to the fruits by his friend at a time when he was struggling with high blood pressure.

*"The fruits helped me a lot. I had been diagnosed with high blood pressure and I did not have enough money to be going back and forth to the doctors. My friend introduced me to the fruits. He gave me instructions on how I can eat them in solid form or take them as juice. Since then I have been feeling much better," he said.*

Another villager, Nokulunga Nyathi, said most villagers encourage their children to eat the fruit frequently to prevent them from diseases. She said the fruit can be consumed in various forms and some people use it to make sour porridge.

*"You eat it the same way you eat the Baobab fruit (Umkhomo). It is quite helpful health-wise. You can make juice out of them, or you can use them to make sour porridge. Most villagers encourage their children to eat the fruit because it helps to prevent a number of diseases," Nyathi said*

Villagers from Vusisizwe, Ward 2 in Insiza district are amazed by a rare, medicinal tree found in their area, which they believe has healing powers.

The 'treasure' tree, called Zhiga, bears fruits that are used for medicinal purposes to cure a wide range of illnesses.

Elders in the village said the tree is not a common sight and is mostly found in areas around Gokwe and Binga.

A traditional healer, Susan Siziba, explained that Zhiga fruits are special fruits that are used to cure various diseases.

*"Zhiga fruits are not just common fruits. They are important fruits that help people by curing a lot of illnesses. People with high blood pressure and asthma can be cured by these fruits. They can be mixed with other traditional herbs or they can just be taken as they are, either crushed to make a liquid substance or in their solid form," Siziba said.*



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