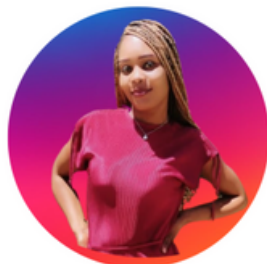


CHROMA VOICES

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Editors Note



***"We Were
Never Meant to
Whisper"***

Dear Reader,

This edition of the DAWA Newsletter is not just a collection of stories it's a reckoning. Across villages and cities, in classrooms and fields, women and girls are rising. Not to be included, but to transform. They are unlearning silence, reclaiming their bodies, challenging systems that were never built for them and building new ones rooted in care, justice, and radical joy.

Inside, you'll find stories of everyday activism theatre that disrupts silence, bold community leadership, resistance rooted in love, and the quiet revolutions reshaping homes, fields, and futures. Feminism here is not theory. It's lived. It's loud. It's legacy. It grows in soil, speaks in mother tongues, and dares to rest even while resisting. It's the fire that refuses to be managed.

And we know: true change is collective. We walk with those who understand that feminism is not against men it is against oppression. We see men not as threats, but as allies when they choose empathy over ego, accountability over control, and justice over silence. As Zimbabwean writer Tsitsi Dangarembga reminds us, **"We must speak, because silence is the language of complicity."**

Thank you for walking with us not behind, not ahead, but together. Let us continue to raise those voices, amplify their power, and make change impossible to ignore.

In solidarity,
Salim Bhebhe
Programs and Advocacy Coordinator, DAWA

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June 24–July 24 marks Global Self-Care Month. In this issue, we explore how self-care goes beyond bubble baths

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Celebrating Self-Care Month

24 June marks the start of Self-Care Month, which ends with Self-Care Day on 24 July. It is a time to pause, reflect, and intentionally nurture our minds, bodies, and spirits. It is the foundation for feminist leadership, resilience, and community wellbeing.

For many girls, young women, and gender-diverse youth, self-care is not just about bubble baths or spa days — it is an act of resistance in a world that often demands our exhaustion. Self-care is the intentional act of caring for your mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

It means making choices that protect your peace, prioritize your health, and support your personal growth, because **“You can’t pour from an empty cup — self-care helps refill it.”**

Self-care is about putting people at the centre of their own health. This is especially urgent in contexts like ours, where health systems are overburdened, and access is often limited.

Globally according to WHO (<https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2023/06/24/default-calendar/self-care-month>)

- Over 4.3 billion people lack access to basic health services
- There’s a 10 million global shortage of health workers, especially in lower-income nations
- Conflicts, pandemics, and disasters are stretching fragile health systems

Self-care practices — like taking to PEP and PREP, mental wellness, menstrual health management, and HIV testing, practicing safe pleasurable sex, STI testing, contraception etc — allow people to take control of their health.

Meet Grace Ruvimbo Chirenje: A Feminist Rooted in Resistance



This month, we spotlight Grace Ruvimbo Chirenje—a fearless feminist, movement builder, and daughter of Zimbabwean soil. From her grandmother’s quiet resistance to founding the Zimbabwe Young Women’s Network for Peacebuilding, Grace shares how activism, healing, and legacy intertwine. Dive into her journey of voice, vision, and care.

Q: Who is Grace Ruvimbo Chirenje?

A: I am a weaver of movements, a daughter of Zimbabwean soil, raised by women who taught me that justice is not begged for, but built. My work lives at the crossroads of coaching, training, feminism and protest: dismantling patriarchal systems while amplifying the voices of rural women and young people whose dreams are already maps to liberation. As the founder and director of the Zimbabwe Young Women’s Network for Peacebuilding (ZYWNP),

I travel deep into various communities feminising lives, bridging realities and supporting development of women and youth in the NGO sectors. It is activism married to accountability

Q: How did your upbringing shape your passion?

A: My grandmother was a fifth wife in a polygamous marriage. She never used the word ‘feminist,’ but she knew her body was a site of resistance. Watching her bend but never break under the weight of poverty and tradition, that birthed my sacred rage. She taught me: **Our Labor feeds nations. Our silence will no longer protect us so we ought to become more of ourselves with each moment and take up space wherever we find ourselves.** From university days at Midlands State, I realized feminism wasn’t an abstraction, it was a lived reality demanding lifelong commitment. It became my lifeblood.

Q: Facing resistance? How did you navigate it?

A: Resistance? Darling, my very existence is resistance. When elders called me ‘too loud,’ I brought them tea and asked, **“Who does my voice threaten?”** They would always laugh and say, there goes our Chiheras and that in itself was such strong affirmation that I come from a

bloodline of defiant women whose strength is compared to none other than themselves. I navigate resistance by caring for myself for as Audre Lorde famously stated, "**Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.**"

Q: In your years of advocacy, what was one moment that made you feel, "Yes, this is why I do this"?

A: Watching my 14 year daughter becoming with each moment. Each time she speaks, defies, challenges, softens, chooses herself and many more transformations, that for me is the reason I keep at it...legacy at its best!

Q: Biggest changes for women and girls?

A: We've moved from whispers to wildfires:

- Girls demanding period dignity instead of dropping out
- Women reclaiming customary land rights, not as dependents, but as custodians
- Queer kin dancing at Pride, refusing invisibility

Yet laws change faster than hearts, and until patriarchy itself is dismantled, the fire must keep burning.

Q: When did you realize the fight continues?

A: Every time I have to fight the patriarchy within me. Every time a girl is pulled from school for marriage. Every time a woman is beaten for 'nagging.' Every time a sister is silenced for speaking in her mother tongue at a boardroom table. Colonialism dressed in a new suit is still colonialism.

Q: Key issues still holding women back?

A: Bodily autonomy, from forced marriages to abortion bans.

Economic violence, unpaid care work trapping generations.

Spiritual erasure, labelling our grandmothers' healing as witchcraft.

And worst of all: fear of our own power. We've been taught to shrink so others won't feel small.

Q: Are there feminist issues today that you feel aren't getting the attention they deserve?

A: Rural women's climate resilience - they hold seeds, stories, solutions, yet are deemed 'vulnerable.' Disability justice - when disabled women's bodies are policed and their desires ignored, feminism is incomplete. Justice isn't intersectional until all our bodies can breathe free.

Q: How has feminist activism changed over the years, especially with social media and youth involvement?

A: Social media tore down the gatekeepers, but true power lives offline. Young feminists blend hashtags with herb gardens, protests with potluck solidarity. They remind us: revolution isn't a trend. It's ancestral, embodied, and ungovernable.

Q: What do you admire about young African feminists—and advice?

A: Their audacity. Their refusal to inherit silence. Their insistence on intersectionality. To them:

- Your rage is holy.
- Your rest is resistance.
- Stop asking permission to exist. When they call you divisive, smile: division from oppression is survival. We are daughters of women who bent time.

Q: If you could change one thing right now?

A: Land. In our names. Not as wives or daughters, as owners. Land grows food, sovereignty, legacies. Without it, equality is poetry without breath. Whilst we are there, financial independence to achieve the same.

Q: How do you sustain your energy?

A: I sit with rivers, forests, mountains and the various forms of nature.. I let mostly soul music and let it crack my heart open. I've learned: tiredness is not a trophy. Community care is my compass. My ancestors whisper: "Rest, child. The fight needs you alive."

Q: What keeps you hopeful when work feels slow?

A: The gift of nothingness....sitting and doing absolutely nothing. But I will be doing something called nothing...methodology in my madness I suppose!

Q: One message for young African feminists?

A: Your voice is not too loud, the world is too silent. Root yourself in the women who came before you. Lift those climbing behind you. Remember: we do not navigate patriarchy. We dismantle it, brick by brick. Voice by voice. Deed by deed. Action by action.

Q: One word for your journey—and why?

A: Ubuntu.

I am because we are. My feminism isn't a solo pilgrimage, it's a chorus of grandmothers, sisters, future kin saying: "No one is free until all of us are."

Champions Voices

I am Tabeth Msiza from Masvingo. I am a single mother of one and as you all know single mothers face a lot of challenges in the community. Here is my story.



When I first attended the activities under the project: Connecting adolescent girls and young women for HIV prevention in Mwenezi I didn't understand anything especially about PEP and PREP. I wanted to try but the thought of being judged yakandi dzosera kumashure(pulled me back).

As you all know as single moms you will be tired of relationships wakungoti chero zvazvaita(you'll just reach a point where you say, 'Whatever happens,) forgetting about your own health.

I remember this day I went to get PREP services but I was denied vakanditi enda kumba unorongeka wozouya tokupa because,makutofunga kuti kuita single makuziva zvese (They told me to go home, then come back so we can give it to you, because you already think that just by being single, you know everything).

I was ashamed of myself and I gave up on the PREP issue until we went to Harare for the 3 day Capacity building training in April. The training lessons were centered on health and self care. That's when I told myself that I have to go back and do what's right. I came back to Masvingo and went to the clinic. This time I got my services. I'm proud to tell people that I am 1 of the people who are taking PREP. So to you guys prevention is better than cure .



Being able to share my story and lead within my community means so much to me. I've seen how real change begins when we, as young women, come together, speak out, and support each other. DAWA's role in creating space and support has opened up space for us to learn, grow, and take charge of our health and futures. I'm proud of the progress we're making here in Chingwizi

PRUDENCE RIKIOS
CHINGWIZI WARD 2

Masculinity Redefined

5 Questions with Aubrey Allen Shumba



Q: What does equal, caring, non-violent masculinity mean to you?

A: *Positive masculinity refers to a set of values or masculine norms that promote respect for others.*

Q: Why are you committed to ending gender-based violence?

A: *I'm committed to ending gender-based violence because I believe that everyone deserves to live with dignity and respect.*

Q: What is one harmful belief about manhood you've unlearned?

A: *The idea that men need to be tough and emotionless. This stereotype can lead to men suppressing their emotions and being less empathetic, which can harm themselves and others.*

Q: What message do you have for other young men in transforming patriarchal masculinities?

A: *True strength lies in being able to acknowledge and manage your emotions, rather than suppressing them.*

Q: Who or what inspired you to change the way you think about gender roles?

A: *I've been inspired by educational resources that challenge traditional gender norms and personal experiences that have taught me the importance of empathy and respect. When my marriage didn't work out & u know the chaos bt I managed to handle it without violence or hurting someone.*

The Boy from Bocha Meets the World: My Reflections on Masculinity

By Jephiter Tsamwi

There are many times I find myself in direct conflict with modern social systems. And honestly, that's expected. I grew up in Bocha, what they now call an SRB, a Strong Rural Background. You can take me out of Bocha, but you can't take Bocha out of me. Never! Yes, I have spent years in Harare. By now, society expects me to have changed, to have progressed, as they say. But the truth is, I haven't. I remain Jeph, the rural boy. In the rural areas, we were toughened by life. And that upbringing shaped a certain worldview, especially on what it means to be a man. I don't easily subscribe to many modern ideas about masculinity. Maybe I'm right. Maybe I'm wrong. Let's talk about it. One of the most hotly debated topics is masculinity. One phrase in particular is being banded around a lot at the moment: **"positive masculinity"**. But what exactly does that mean, especially in the Zimbabwean context?

I will leave the academic definitions to other writers in this edition. Here, I want to keep it real. Let's keep it authentic. Let's keep it practical. Does positive masculinity mean you're weak? Absolutely not. Is it a sign of weakness for a man to cry? Again, no. But remember, I'm a realist. A hardened rural boy from Bocha. And I believe we need to have honest, uncomfortable conversations about these things. I am a young father raising two boys.



Every day, I am torn about how best to raise them in this complex world. Should I raise them to be emotionally aware, caring men who are unafraid to cry and show vulnerability? Or should I prepare them for the harsh realities of a society that doesn't accommodate caring and emotionally aware men because they are 'soft,' where strength, grit, and silence are often seen as survival tools? Let's be honest. Zimbabwe is a tough environment to survive in.

Look at our macroeconomic indicators. Look at the daily social pressures. This isn't an environment that embraces the everyday struggles and challenges that men and boys may encounter in trying to fit into their traditional patriarchal roles of being providers and protectors. Here is the dilemma: we raise our boys with the ideals of contemporary masculinity, to be emotionally open, expressive, and nurturing. But the environment they're growing up in doesn't support that version of manhood. Worse still, even society, including some women, might not be ready to embrace and accommodate emotionally aware and present men.

Cry in front of your girlfriend today, and she may label you weak. It's a difficult time to be a father. But here's what worries me: According to the International Association for Suicide Prevention, over 703,000 people die by suicide every year. And globally, men are more than twice as likely to take their own lives as women. Why? Because society condemns men who express the need for mental health support. Because men are not allowed to fail publicly. Because men who cry are mocked. Because men who seek help are told to "man up." And so, we die inside. Silently. While trying to keep up the façade of being strong, unbreakable, and always in control. Until one day, that silence kills. **Women are four times more likely** than men to be suicidal, but because they make connections with others and are "soft" and "vulnerable," they do not end up committing suicide at the rate that men do; so embracing this "softness" will allow you to "rise again and keep going."

So, what's the answer? It lies in our hands. We can continue pretending. Or we can be real. Cry if we need to. Be emotionally aware and caring when the situation demands it. Because positive masculinity is not a weakness. It is a strength and a transformation. It is the courage to challenge the status quo. It is the boldness to redefine what it means to be a man. So yes, cry if you need to. Show emotions when you must, and when you're done, wipe your tears, rise again, and keep going. Because the Zimbabwean patriarchal society and economic struggles require resilience. Whether you're from Bocha or Borrowdale, you've got to hustle.

Partner Spotlight: Womandla Foundation

Womandla is a feminist oriented organization which has been designed to build and strengthen gender interested activities and coalitions to improve the livelihood of girls and women in Zimbabwe. At Womandla Foundation, we are driven by a powerful mission to challenge societal barriers, celebrate, and empower women and girls across Zimbabwe. Based in Zvishavane, our work is deeply rooted in improving the economic well-being and quality of life for adolescent girls and women through feminist-oriented, innovative approaches that promote and protect their rights. We focus on critical areas like SRHR, entrepreneurship, skills development, and creating safe spaces.

Womandla is a girls and women-led organisation, with our trustees, management, and secretariat comprised of adolescent girls and young women, including representatives from key populations and vulnerable communities. This authentic representation inspires our daily journey with our projects being led by the very beneficiaries we serve, ensuring sustainability and relevance. We are incredibly proud of our commitment to dismantling structural inequalities and fostering resilience. Our vision for the future is aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls by 2030, ultimately striving to end Gender-Based Violence and transform patriarchal mindsets.



Key Achievements

1. Launch of Womandla Unlocked Podcast Studio:

Successfully launched a podcast studio, "Womandla Unlocked: Giving Voices Making Waves," to amplify the voices of young women in our community, providing a platform for them to share their stories and experiences.

2. Establishment of Safe Movement Consortium:

Curated a consortium of organizations in Zvishavane district that implement Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), promoting healthy relationships, sexual health, and rights among young people.

3. Empowerment of Young Women through Stokvel Project: Empowered young women through the stokvel project, providing funding for income-generating projects and promoting financial independence, with a significant number of young women now financially independent. These achievements demonstrate our organization's commitment to promoting the rights, health, and economic empowerment of young women in our community.

Our collaboration with DAWA has been a cornerstone of our progress. We've had the distinct privilege of partnering with DAWA on the Tosirika project, a testament to our shared passion for promoting women's rights. This partnership has been incredibly enriching, allowing us to collaboratively break the silence on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and other pervasive issues affecting women. Through our joint efforts, we've learned immensely from each other, shared best practices, and significantly amplified our collective impact. Working together with DAWA has undoubtedly forged a stronger, more effective movement for women's rights, and we look forward to future collaborations that continue to advance this vital agenda.

Farming Her Way to Freedom

Meet Lynn, a bold young woman who proved that women belong anywhere decisions grow. Her story is a reminder to every girl: your gender is not a limit, your dream is valid, and you don't need permission to start. In this honest and uplifting Q&A, she opens up about the hustle behind her farming journey.

Q: Can you tell us your name, age, and where you're from?

A: Hi, my name is Lynn Rutendo Mazerenganwa, but most people call me LyRue. I'm originally from Karoi, Magunje. I am a trained industrial engineer and I've always loved showbiz—talk shows. In fact, I have a YouTube channel with over a thousand subscribers where I used to host talk shows.



Q: What inspired you to become a farmer, and how did your journey begin? Did you have any resources or support when you started?

A: While filming one of my shows, I interviewed the CEO of an agricultural company. He offered me a job in their marketing team, filming farmers and telling their stories. That's when the idea of becoming a farmer myself took root even though I grew up hating farming! I didn't have capital, but I held onto the dream. Later, I found an affordable farmhouse in Bulawayo, moved in, and started farming with income from freelance media work.

Q: What did you grow first?

A: A bit of everything — lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, maize. Most of it failed, except the lettuce. I harvested every single one, and that gave me the confidence to plant 3,000 next season!

Q: What challenges did you face in the beginning — and how did you overcome them?

A: The biggest challenge I overcame was debt. Some of the things were stolen and some of the things were

mismanaged. I was in debt everywhere. My helpers at the farm, my landlord, I was owing everyone. And I sat down and I was like to myself, "this is my end. I don't have any way out. I don't even know how to do it". But I sat down, listed who I owed, made a plan, and paid them off step by step. That taught me discipline and resilience.

Q: Farming is often seen as "a man's job" in many communities. How have you navigated that mindset as a young woman?

A: Yes, yes, yes — a lot of people still think farming is backward, farming is dirty, farming is for the men. But let me tell you something: When I first got into this industry, people were shocked. They'd say, 'Wait, you're a woman... and you're farming? And the community side, the people I was with, they were like, you're young, you're a woman, how are you able to do all this? A man is supposed to be doing this. But I still excelled. Over time, they respected my work. I lead a team that includes men, and we work together. It's about consistency, not gender.

Q: What's one thing you've learned about managing money or running a small business?

A: Don't live off borrowed money. Use what you have. If it's \$50, start there. Manage small things. Do you get what I'm saying? When you want to go big you can destroy yourselves by wanting to be big overnight. You're not going to be big overnight. Be very patient with yourself, you're gonna grow, you're gonna get to that stage but before you get there make sure you are moving in small steps.

Q: What keeps you going when things get tough — especially during droughts, low sales, or lack of support?

A: My vision. I've written it on my wall — where I want to be in 10 years. When things get hard, I look at it and remind myself. I'm not done yet. That vision gives me the strength to keep moving. When you paint that picture and you put it in your mind or you put it on your wall, when things get tough, it's that picture that reminds you that you have got a purpose, you've got a vision, there is a place that you need to be. So you can not give up. So when no one is supporting you, when no one is looking, and when no one cares, that picture should keep you going. It's always like, okay, I need to fight, because this is where I want to get to.

Q: What advice would you give to another young woman who feels like she has no money or support to start a business?

A: No one owes you anything — not money, not help. Start with what you have. Do you get what I'm saying? Start with that \$10. Sell eggs. Use backyard space. Believe in yourself. If you've got a vision, write it down and take that first step. And it's not only a man's job to be an entrepreneur. It's not a man's job to be a farmer. It's not a man's job to be a business person. Girls we can do it too, Believe in yourself. Use whatever you have, to start something. Some of us have land from our parents. We live at places where we have enough land to start something even with water from the dams and wells. There can never be a good time to start. There can never be a right time to start. Write your vision down, put it on the wall, and start with what you have towards your vision.

Q: Favourite crop to grow?

A: Lettuce! It was my first success. It grows fast, it sells well, and I love eating it too!

Q: What makes you proud of yourself:

A: My resilience. Every day I show up — even when it's hard. That's something to be proud of.

DAWA in Action

Conversations on HIV Prevention



📍 Chingwizi

In partnership with My Age Zimbabwe, DAWA hosted a powerful theatre session on HIV prevention and abstinence. Students engaged with real-life stories and reflected on the impact of peer pressure and material exchange in relationships.

● “We learnt that saying no is powerful. Education should come first.” — Student participant



📍 Mwenezi

Champions trained by DAWA and My Age are leading self-care sessions with AGYW in their own villages. Together, they're exploring HIV prevention methods, sharing experiences, and building confidence to choose the method that works best for each girl.

What We Invite You to Do This Month

Pause and care for your mind, body, and soul — even just for 10 minutes a day.

Challenge one gender stereotype you've been carrying.

WAYS TO Practice Self-Care

Celebrate Yourself

Acknowledge your wins – big or small. You've survived things you never thought you could. That matters. 🍷

Practice Mindfulness

Take 5 quiet minutes each day. Breathe deeply. Reflect. Journal. Pray. Meditate.

Protect Your Peace

Say "no" to things that drain you. Set boundaries that honour your mental health.

Stay Connected

Lean on friends, family, or safe spaces when life feels heavy. You are not alone.

Prioritize Your Health

Visit the clinic for regular check-ups. Get tested. Ask questions. Know your options.

5 PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE MASCULINITY

EMPATHY



Understand and share others' feelings

ACCOUNTABILITY



Own your actions and their impact

EMOTIONAL HONESTY



Express your feelings without shame

ALLYSHIP



Stand with others against injustice

FINAL THOUGHT: FROM US TO YOU

If this is the first time you're reading Chroma Voice — welcome.

If you've been with us for a while — thank you for walking this journey with us. Here's to being real.

Here's to showing up.

Here's to raising our voices and holding the line — together.

Want to share your story in the next issue? Email us at

coms.dawa@gmail.com or send a message at +263 77 888 3840

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

TO THE GIRLS WHO SAID YES TO BEING INTERVIEWED,
TO THE MOTHERS WHO OPENED UP ABOUT HARD TRUTHS,
TO THE BOYS WHO DARED TO SPEAK DIFFERENTLY,
TO THE FARMERS, DREAMERS, AND FIGHTERS —
THANK YOU.
YOU ARE THE VOICE, THE PULSE, THE POWER BEHIND EVERY LINE IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

Scan Me for all Social Media Links & Don't forget to follow

