

Young People as Changemakers on Issues of Climate and Health

Youth-Led Climate and Health Research Report



Authors:

**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**

**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**
POWERED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

This report was part-funded
by a grant from Wellcome.



YOUNG PEOPLE AS CHANGEMAKERS ON ISSUES OF CLIMATE AND HEALTH

PREFACE

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"I imagine a world full of endless possibilities. Where opportunities arise and we take them up. Where doors open wide and we walk straight through them. I imagine a world, where future generations will lead fruitful, and productive lives. But my imagination will remain but just a mere imagination unless you and I take a positive step towards ensuring that future generations have a safe world to live in."

.....

This was my opening statement for a climate protection debate that I took part in during my high school years. I did not understand the depth of the statement that I made then, but more than 5 years later, I realise that we indeed need to do so much more to save the earth. It seems like a huge task, which it probably is, but when we work together, we can accomplish it. I remember how I used to hear about climate change and thought it was someone else's job to look into it. A younger me had not realized that small steps every day can lead to great change, either in the positive, or negative. That you and I need to be conscious of our daily routines and how they affect future generations.

These past 10 months have shown me that there is a lot that is yet to be done, but we need to start where we are, and with what we have. In this report, you will see what we found out about our peers' knowledge and misconceptions around climate change, and how we tested different methods that young people can use to increase our understanding of climate change, and the relationship between global heating and health. Some of these methods include the activities that "us" young people enjoy doing – debates, dialogues, role-plays, and home visits.

Our hope is that through this research, more people can rise up and take action to adapt and mitigate climate change effects. This requires the efforts of every individual, be it in politics and power, conservationists, educationists, children in schools, and civil society. No one is too small or too powerful not to care and play their part.

This report reflects what 20 young people can do in 10 months and in 2 districts; just imagine if each of us worked towards change in our various communities! May the change spread like a veld fire. Be the change you want to see.

Namandla Naledi Mpunganyi, Harare Zimbabwe.

On behalf of the research team.

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KEY TERMINOLOGY

Climate Change	Long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns.
COP	Conference of Parties
DPO	Disability programming Organisation
FGDS	Focus Group Discussion
Global Heating	A gradual increase in the earth's temperature generally due to the greenhouse effect caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide and other pollutants
KAP	Knowledge attitude and Practice
KII	Key informant interviews
RER	Rapid Evidence Review
SSI	Semi-Structured interviews

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth Climate Changemakers project addresses a gap in research on how communities in Zimbabwe are understanding, experiencing, and responding to the health effects of global heating. Climate change is an increasingly pressing issue to Southern Africa, already acutely affecting the livelihoods and health of communities in Zimbabwe. Equipping communities with understandings of potential climate change-related risks, their causes, and strategies for mitigation and adaptation is a priority. However, research on climate change in the region is limited, leaving questions of communities' existing knowledge of global heating and the strategies to cope with the health impacts unanswered.

To contribute a clearer understanding of global heating's health effects, the Young Climate Changemakers project piloted a youth-led mixed methods research approach across two districts of Zimbabwe. Those under the age of 25 make up 62 percent of Zimbabwe's population (UNFPA 2016). While young people will feel the impact of this uncertain future's effects on their physical and mental health, they also hold vast potential for innovative leadership that is often overlooked in decision-making. The research used a mixed methods approach to identify current knowledge levels of global heating and health across communities, using these findings to investigate different youth-led advocacy methods capable of developing community understanding of the links between global heating and health.

Restless Development's youth-led research methodology empowers a diverse group of young people to drive the inquiry process. To ground the research agenda in empirical evidence, Restless Development collaborated with a university-based regional climate & health expert to produce a Rapid Evidence Review (RER) of current research into the links between global heating and health in Southern Africa. The research design and data collection were then led by 20 young leaders (13 Female and 7 Male); 12 from rural Chimanimani District in Zimbabwe (Chikukwa, Coppa, Chimanimani urban, Nhedziwa, Chakohwa, and Mhakwe) and 8 from Harare (Highfields, Ushewokunze, Eyecourt and Churu Farm). 10 percent of these young people were disabled. The diversity of the young researchers ensured we heard different voices and perspectives, facilitating the inclusion of voices that often go unheard. Young leaders then designed advocacy plans, from which they piloted advocacy activities in their communities to successfully raise awareness of the links between global heating and health.

Disability inclusion was a key guiding principle in this pilot project, from recruitment to implementation. The recruitment of 20 young leaders actively encouraged applications from young people with disabilities, resulting in the recruitment of two disabled young people as researchers. We reached out to community care workers and disability programming organisations to reach young people with disabilities to be part of this project, both as young leaders and as participants. We made methodological adaptations targeted towards digital equity and inclusion, including the engagement of an interpreter and adjusting our foundation training and data analysis content to be more accessible to our young leaders' diverse needs.

The project's findings contribute a deeper understanding of young people and their communities' limited understandings and varied experiences of global heating's health effects. While 92 percent of participants across Harare and Chimanimani indicated they believed that climate change is really happening, understanding of global heating's causes and impacts were limited, often contingent on individual's own experiences, with prevalent misconceptions. The importance of an intersectional approach to climate change's effects on health emerged from the varied perceptions of vulnerability in our sample. Self-reported vulnerability to the effects of global heating was higher for traditionally marginalised groups, including female participants compared to male, and participants identifying as disabled or partially disabled compared to non-disabled.

Research participants identified crucial barriers and enablers regarding young people's leadership in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Young people suggested that the key barriers challenging their capacity to lead are access to resources and access to decision-making space. Participants advocated for the establishment of youth-inclusive spaces, such as youth centres, where young people could access communication and education resources to engage in leadership roles in response to global heating. Young people also stressed the need for quality training about climate change and its policy environment in Zimbabwe.

Young leaders piloted advocacy initiatives that showcased the considerable potential for young people's climate leadership in their communities. They carried out community dialogues, debates and home visits, giving insight into potential strategies that their local communities could undertake. The Youth Climate Changemakers project demonstrates the potential of young people's expertise and innovative capacity. If coupled with the provision of meaningful support, including economic resources, access to knowledge, and the policy space to actively contribute to change, the scope for young people's leadership is profound.

The research findings call to action a variety of stakeholders, including community leaders, educational institutions, and civil society actors, to facilitate young people's leadership in climate change advocacy. We call on leaders and policymakers to prioritise inclusive and sustainable climate policy, and elevate young people's voices within decision-making channels. We call on educational institutions to invest in a quality climate curriculum reflecting both the global challenge and local priorities, with a holistic understanding of young people's diverse needs. We call on civil society actors across international, national, and local scales to facilitate collaboration across stakeholders and equip young people with resources for leadership. Given the wide gaps that exist in the national and subnational institutional infrastructure for addressing global heating and health, we call on the Government of Zimbabwe to amend its National Climate Change Response Strategy to directly address the health impacts of global heating.

External consultants conducted a developmental evaluation to assess the scope of the pilot model, concluding that it is innovative, cost-effective, and sustainable. The evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of Restless Development's specific youth-led research approach and explore the potential for scale-up to different contexts. The evaluation affirmed that putting young people at the centre of leadership in the nexus between global heating and health opens new avenues for knowledge co-production, skills transfer, and advocacy initiatives promoting social change.



Chimanimani young leaders posing for a photo after a climate change community dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

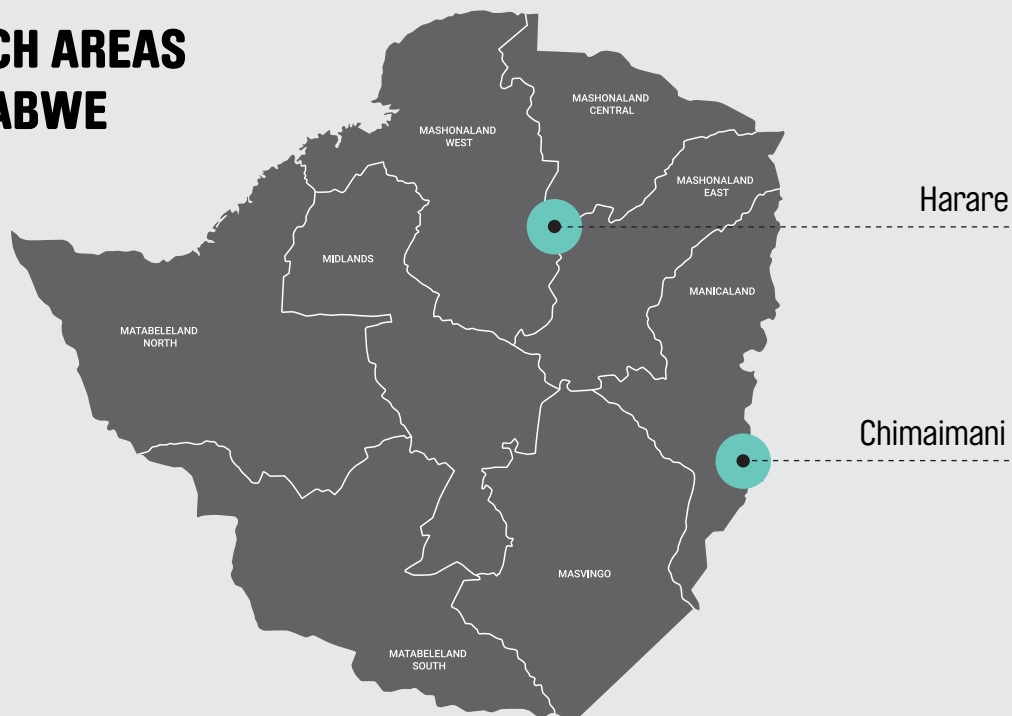
The Southern African region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (WFP,2021). Landlocked within this volatile context, Zimbabwe is at the front lines of dramatic climatic changes. Those under the age of 25 make up 62 percent of Zimbabwe’s population (UNFPA, 2016), and young people will feel the impact of this uncertain future’s effects on physical and mental health.

The threats posed by global heating to the Zimbabwean context, and in particular the effects on human health, are increasingly clear. What remains less certain, is the extent to which this knowledge is understood and acted upon within the communities across Zimbabwe that are vulnerable to global heating’s effects.

The Youth Climate Change Makers project aimed to start filling this gap. The project set out to identify current levels of young people and their community’s understanding of global heating and health, as well as to investigate different methods young people can use to advocate for increased understanding of climate change and the links between global heating and health.

After completing a Rapid Evidence Review (RER), Restless Development recruited and trained 20 Young Leaders (18–25) in Zimbabwe. These Young Leaders worked in pairs across 10 rural and urban communities in 2 districts, Harare and Chimanimani. These young leaders brought unique perspectives from the communities in which they live and work, first using a youth-led research methodology to develop insight into young people and their community’s understanding of global heating and health. Young leaders then used that evidence to conduct advocacy work and develop community-based solutions aimed at global heating and health education, mitigation, and adaptation.

RESEARCH AREAS IN ZIMBABWE



Using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, young leaders gained insight into their communities' understandings of climate change and global heating, and its potential effects on human health. The research found that overall, young people's understanding was often limited to their own experience of changing climates, and often based on misconception and little knowledge of existing policy. For young people to take ownership of efforts to curb climate change's effects in their communities, participants identified the need for increased youth access to decision-making spaces and resources. Participants also identified the value of accessible education and training on climate change, and forums for collaboration.

Acting as agents of change in response to their findings, the young leaders developed advocacy plans and piloted participatory advocacy initiatives in their communities. They carried out community dialogues, debates and home visits, giving insight into potential community-driven strategies that their local communities could undertake.

This was a pilot project that sought to assess the efficacy and appropriateness of Restless Development's specific youth-led research approach in two districts in Zimbabwe. Placing youth leadership at the centre, the pilot study explored the potential for young people to take the lead as advocates for the effects of global heating on human health in their communities. In a bid to check the effectiveness of our youth leadership model, Restless Development initiated a developmental evaluation led by external consultants. The developmental evaluation collected data at specific milestones to highlight learnings from the project journey, explore the effectiveness of the youth leadership model, and reflect on the potential for this model to be scaled to other contexts.

The developmental evaluation of the Youth Climate Changemakers pilot project found that the model is innovative and cost-effective. It concluded that placing young people at the centre of global heating and health advocacy in their communities is sustainable, facilitating the skills development of youth that have existing relationships with their communities' decision-making structures. Looking ahead, this pilot highlights the broad potential for youth-led research and advocacy to drive communities' approaches to global heating and its impact on health.



Yananai Kahwema, a young leader in Chimanimani leading a climate change debate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research focus of the pilot project

The Youth Climate Changemakers project combined two areas of research focus. Firstly, young leaders aimed to identify current levels of young people and their community's understanding of global heating and health, and potential gaps and misconceptions. Secondly, they sought to investigate and test different methods young people can use to increase the understanding of the links between global heating and health. The focus of the research was informed by the findings of the evidence review. An analysis of existing evidence demonstrated that there is little literature around young people leading climate change action in Southern Africa, especially in Zimbabwe. Policy and institutional responses to address the health hazards emerging from climatic change also remain fragmented and poorly understood. This research gave us a unique opportunity to contribute to the scarce literature on the subject and also think broadly about the spaces where young people can convene around advocacy to influence climate action.

This pilot research project sought to contribute to our understanding of young people's potential power in leading global heating and health advocacy work in Zimbabwe. To assess Restless Development's approach of facilitating youth leadership and youth-led research against this topic, a developmental evaluation was conducted by external consultants simultaneously with the research process. The purpose of this evaluation was to (i) generate knowledge from reflecting on the learning journey of the project (ii) explore the effectiveness of the youth leadership model in comparison to other interventions, and (iii) explore the extent to which the model is scalable and transferable to other countries/contexts. These three aspects of the project were assessed at specific milestones throughout the project.

Restless Development wanted to explore how young people can be empowered as agents of change, and better equipped to translate knowledge to their communities in order to improve awareness of global heating and health-related issues. The ongoing development evaluation enabled adaptive changes that not only informed the project as it was being implemented, but also gave tangible evidence to guide learning, innovation, replication, and future scale-up. This helped inform us how the youth led research and advocacy model piloted in this project might be effectively adjusted, scaled and transferred to contexts outside of the two districts included in the pilot.

Youth participation

Restless Development's youth-led research approach put youth participation at the centre of the Youth Climate Change Makers project. One aim of this pilot project, which applied this methodology to a number of selected research sites across Harare and Chimanimani districts, was to assess the potential for applying Restless Development's model of youth co-production in research to global heating and health advocacy work in Zimbabwe. 20 young leaders (13 female and 7 male) between the ages of 18–25, were recruited from across the two districts, as they were uniquely positioned to capture the insights of young people like themselves from their own communities. To ensure that all eligible young people had an opportunity to be part of this intervention, an advert was sent out on Restless Development's social media platforms as well as in print media. 60 young people were shortlisted for interviews, and the shortlisting was based on the young leaders suitability based on the Terms of Reference (ToR). The 20 young people that were eventually selected, were chosen based on merit, potential, and enthusiasm.

We employed our peer-to-peer research approach to garner young people's understandings, insights and ideas around global heating and health within their own communities. Our model has been designed to maximize youth leadership at every stage of the research process. The pilot nature of this project means that young leaders were not only reflecting on the findings of their research, but also the appropriateness of the application of youth-led research to understand climate change in Zimbabwean communities like their own.

Inclusion

The climate crisis affects us all, but its impact falls most heavily on the vulnerable. The effects of global heating on health are disproportionately felt by those already experiencing marginalisation – whether across lines of gender, disability, age, economic status, or locality. The RER explored the intersectionality of various factors that impact an individual's vulnerability to global heating's effects. Vulnerability hinges on both the degree of exposure to global heating, and the capacity an individual has to cope with the effects. The capacity to cope is interlinked with access to resources and services. These might be physical resources, such as level of income or access to health services in the local area. They might also be social or cultural resources, such as the power an individual may or may not have in their community according to specific characteristics of their identity. As we devise strategies for climate action, it is critical to elevate the voices of the most vulnerable to capture the risks facing those with the least capacity to cope with a changing climate. Traditionally marginalised perspectives were embedded in the design and delivery of the Youth Climate Changemakers project. For example:



Locality. The impact of climate change on health will affect different people in different ways. The rural populations are often more vulnerable due to poverty, geographical isolation, and non-prioritization in terms of the development of infrastructure and social amenities. 12 out of 20 of the young leaders that led this research were young people from rural areas. 4 were from peri-urban areas and 4 from urban areas.



Disability. Young people with disabilities face disproportionate amounts of social isolation and prejudice. We ensured that 2 out of 20 of young leaders leading this research were disabled young people so that we could fully utilise peer to peer methodologies while also role-modelling the capabilities of researchers who happen to be disabled.

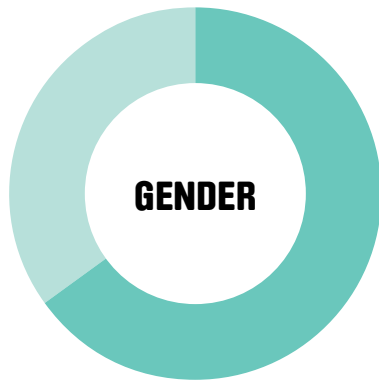


Gender. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change, but their voices are often systematically excluded in social and professional spheres. 13 of the 20 young leaders that led this research were female, elevating the perspectives of young women that too often go unheard.

Diversity among the young leaders was important, to ensure that the research design and advocacy planning was inclusive of young people's distinctive perspectives and needs. It was also crucial for aiding inclusive sampling during the data collection phase of the research, assuming that young leaders were well positioned to recruit participants in their social networks. The distribution of respondents for the quantitative component of the research successfully reflects, in particular, the balance in rural locality and disability rates.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG LEADERS / RESPONDENTS

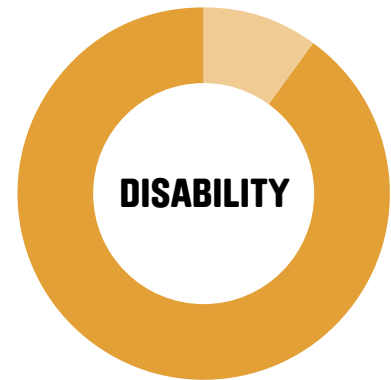
BREAKDOWN OF THE **YOUNG LEADERS** ACROSS GENDER, REGION, AND DISABILITY



Female
Male

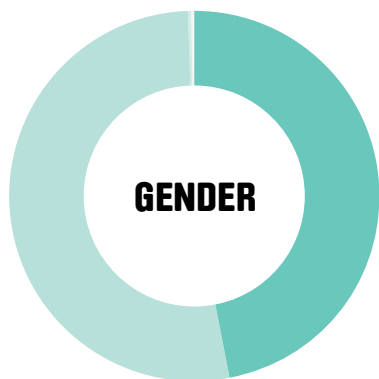


Chimanimani
Harare



Not disabled
Disabled

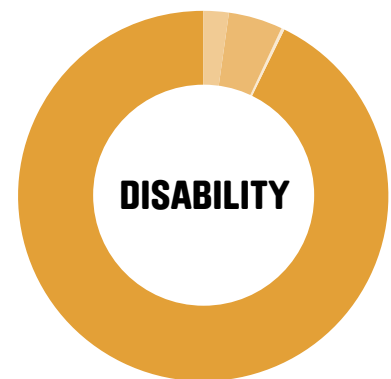
BREAKDOWN OF **RESPONDENTS** FOR THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH



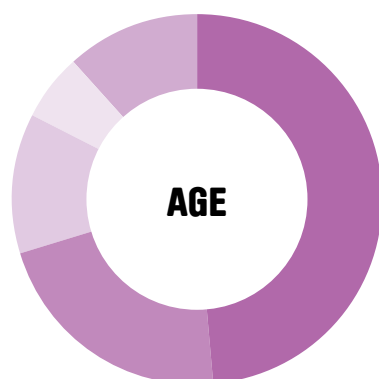
Female
Male
Other
Chose not to disclose



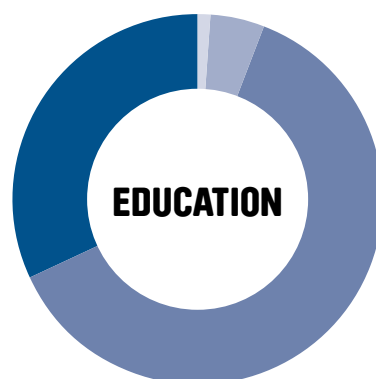
Chimanimani
Harare



Not disabled
Partially disabled
Disabled
I don't know



18-25
26-30
31-35
36-40
40+



Tertiary education
Secondary education
Primary education
Never been to school

Youth-led research process

Restless Development places youth leadership at the centre of each step of the research process. Our work is led by young people, and together we support young people to multiply leadership. The Youth Climate Changemakers project embraces young people as equal partners, taking ownership throughout the research design, delivery and analysis. The young people that led this project are within the age band of 18–25. These young people have diverse backgrounds; some are in formal education, some are in employment, but all have unique positionings within their communities that are well placed to capture an inclusive and insightful snapshot of young people's experiences.

6 STEPS OF THE YOUTH-LED RESEARCH PROCESS



Restless Development's youth-led research is not just about meaningful youth engagement. It is about ensuring youth insights are captured by those best positioned to do so – young people themselves. It is also fundamentally about shifting power to young people to be able to co-produce knowledge. What makes this methodology unique is that each step has a clearly defined role for both staff and young researchers designed to maximize young people's leadership and agency.

1. SETTING THE FRAMEWORK

Restless Development determined the evidence-based research framework collaboratively with an expert in the field, following a Rapid Evidence Review (RER). The RER covered the scientific evidence for global heating in the Southern African region, and elucidated the gaps in research that the Youth Climate Changemakers project could address. It highlighted the vulnerability to the health effects of climate change of different populations, including young people. Informed by the findings, Restless Development set out an initial research framework. Young leaders provided feedback, ensuring that it reflected their priorities.

2. DESIGNING THE QUESTIONS

Based on the research framework, young researchers determined the research focus by designing research questions. The outputs consisted of both overarching research questions and the detailed research questions included in the data collection instruments. Staff provided training and guidance on how best to formulate research questions and questionnaires. Young leaders were also given technical training on designing surveys and interview guides, which were developed with Restless Development's oversight to ensure best practice.

Below are the research questions that the young leaders explored:

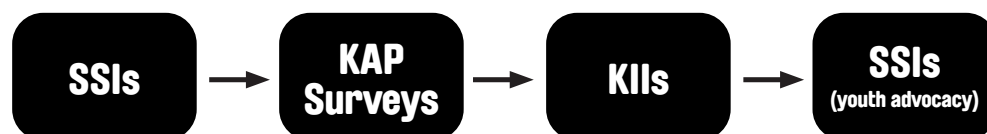
- What do young people and their communities understand about global heating and its health impacts?
 - » What are their concerns and the key issues relevant to them that have a direct impact because of global heating?
 - » What knowledge are they lacking in relation to the impacts of global heating on health? What are their misconceptions?
- What capacity do young people have to take action in relation to global heating and health?
- What kind of support is needed to help young people become change makers on global heating and health issues?
- What can young people do to alleviate some of their concerns?

3. COLLECTING THE DATA

Youth leaders received training in data collection methods, equipping them to identify participants in the field, administer surveys, and conduct semi-structured interviews. Restless Development staff provided support and supervision, lending their expertise to collaboratively troubleshoot any challenges the researchers faced.

The research employed a mixed methods design. Qualitative insights were captured through in-depth consultations in Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) in the two districts (Harare and Chimanimani) and complemented with quantitative insights gathered through a Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey. The data collection was conducted in four phases, working closely with the community members, young people, and climate experts.

4 PHASES OF DATA COLLECTION



The young leaders reached out to 60 respondents (30 per district) for the SSIs in the first phase. 1000 respondents split evenly between young people and other community members (500 per district) participated in the KAP survey. 60 respondents (30 per district) were interviewed for the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and lastly 30 young people (15 per district) were interviewed for the fourth and final phase of SSIs focused on youth advocacy.

The sample was split evenly between the 2 districts with flexibility for young people to adapt these to their local context. For instance in Chimanimani which is a rural area with no network and internet connectivity, mobilizing respondents took a longer period of time compared to the urban and peri-urban districts in Harare. The young researchers in Chimanimani also traveled long distances to recruit respondents as these were sparsely distributed, akin to a rural setting.

4. ANALYSING THE FINDINGS

Following analytical training delivered by Restless Development, young leaders lead the analysis of the qualitative data that they had gathered. Young leaders from each district were engaged in a participatory analysis workshop, where they were supported to conduct a preliminary deductive thematic analysis of the qualitative data and provide interpretation of the quantitative findings. Separating the teams based on geographical location enabled the research team to get valuable, context-specific insights. The research team was cognizant of the fact that the two locations differ across climatic conditions, demographics, residents' social status, among other variables.

Throughout this process, young leaders identified the key themes and patterns in the data to develop the qualitative data codebook. A detailed and comprehensive data analysis plan with a robust analytical methodology and guidance was developed to ensure the success of the process. In this data analysis plan and guidance, the young people were given an opportunity to reflect on the process of data collection and transcription, this was a relatively new area for most of the young people.

Young people coded the data and identified themes through a rapid theme brainstorm process and attached relevant quotes supporting each theme. While preliminary findings were established, the young people went on to do a rapid brainstorm of how to influence relevant stakeholders in the context of global heating and health of their communities.

5. CONDUCTING VALIDATION EXERCISES

Following the data analysis, the research team conducted validation exercises. The aim of this process was to ensure that the knowledge co-created by young leaders and their communities accurately reflect the meanings, perceptions, and beliefs of the participants.

The young leaders presented findings at the community level, back to those who participated in the study. Through these discussions, community members had an opportunity to hear and comment on emerging findings, critiquing whether it accurately reflected their perspectives and providing clarifications. With staff support, young leaders identified outstanding questions to return to when speaking with community members. The young leaders were able to not only validate their findings, but gave community members the opportunities to ask about what their insights would be used for and the next steps in the research.

To further validate the qualitative trends, the themes identified in the young leaders' analysis were integrated with descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected through the KAP survey. This report is validated by the young leaders themselves to ensure it reflects their experience of the research journey.

6. SHARING TO CATALYZE DISCUSSION AND ACTION

Advocacy was a central component to the design of the pilot research project. Young leaders used the initial findings of the qualitative and quantitative research to develop advocacy plans aiming to catalyze discussion and action within their communities. This report, summarising the findings and learnings from the pilot, sets out a basis for further youth-led research and action on global heating and its effects on health.

Limitations and methodological innovations

Through this pilot, the research team gained crucial learnings about young people, health effects of global heating, and climate advocacy. Below are some of the key limitations and learnings that emerged from young leaders' reflections on the pilot project:

COVID-19. Data collection was challenged by periods of lockdown, where face-to-face interaction was prohibited. Even when lockdowns were eased, keeping colleagues and community members safe was a priority. Researchers adapted in numerous ways. Young leaders changed the data collection methodology from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) over the phone.

The research team considered conducting FGDs online, however, this would have made the process exclusive for those living in rural areas who do not have access to the internet. In order to strike a balance between safety and inclusivity – we settled on SSIs by phone as the most suitable alternative. We acknowledge that a change in the data collection method from FGDs to SSIs somewhat limits the opportunities that young people have to interact with their fellow researchers in one setting. It also limits the young leaders' ability to capture multiple perspectives, emotional responses, contradictions, and enthusiasm that usually do not come through a structured questionnaire.

Representation. The quantitative dataset broadly represents disabled participants' perspectives, with 7 percent of respondents identifying as disabled or partially disabled. According to the (2013) National Survey on Living Conditions among Persons with Disabilities in Zimbabwe, the prevalence of disability in the country is also estimated to be approximately 7 percent. The snowball sampling method for qualitative data collection, however, restricted the extent to which all marginalised groups of young people were intentionally included.

The research team also recognises the importance of representing and elevating the perspectives of individuals at the intersection of multiple axes of marginalisation in society. Going forward we have learned that it is vital to develop a disability inclusion plan that caters to both respondents and young leaders, ensuring that there is a solid and satisfactory representation of young people both as researchers and as respondents.



Namandla Mpunganyi, a young leader in Harare with a local climate action partner.

FINDINGS

The research offered findings across two areas, giving insights into understanding of global heating and human health in the participant communities, and exploring potential for future action based on advocacy plans and pilot activities. Understanding the perspectives, and misconceptions of climate change and its potential impacts on human health is crucial to developing responsive advocacy plans.

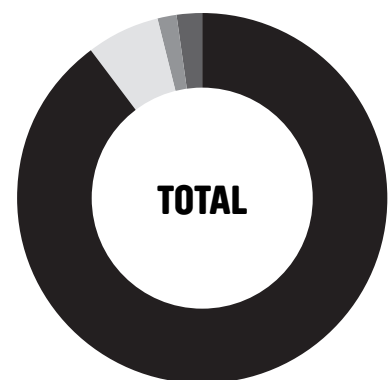
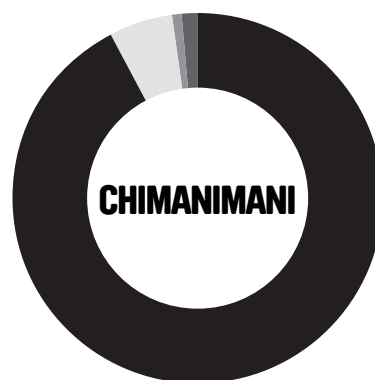
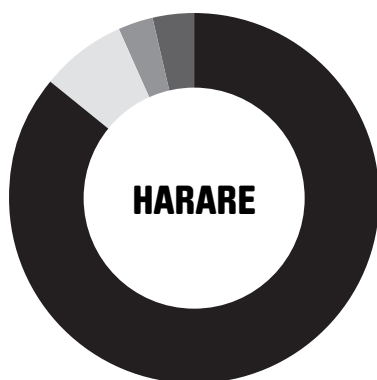
The mixed methods approach to data collection, gathering data from semi-structured interviews and through survey instruments, garnered a range of quantitative and qualitative data to be integrated. While the findings from our sample are not intended to be representative, they do offer valuable insight into understandings of climate change to start to fill in the research lacuna identified in the Rapid Evidence Review. These findings are summarised by key themes.

Knowledge of global heating

KEY FINDINGS

- *While most participants view climate change as happening, a small proportion remain unconvinced of real, human-caused global heating.*
- *Understanding of climate change is informed by local experiences of altered rainfall and temperature patterns, which vary between Chimanimani and Harare districts.*

IN YOUR VIEW, IS CLIMATE CHANGE REAL?



■ Yes

■ Yes, but is it not man-made

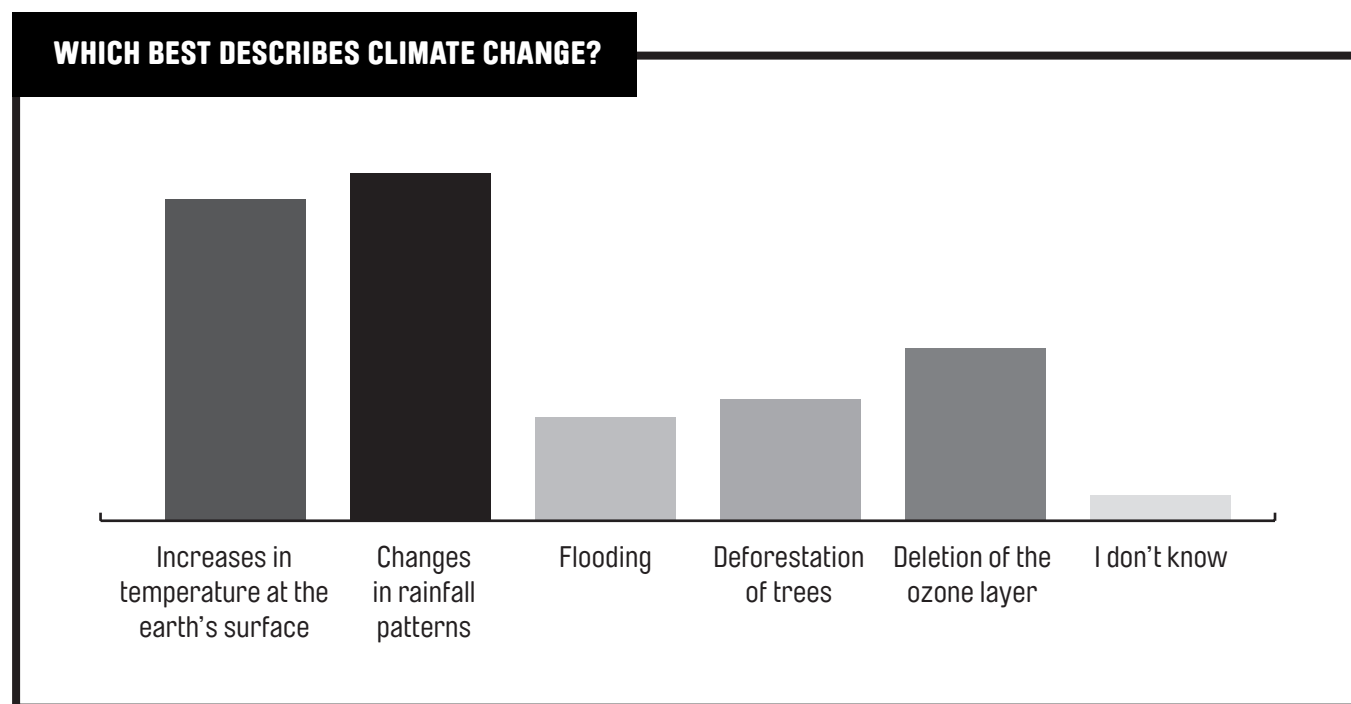
■ No

■ I don't know

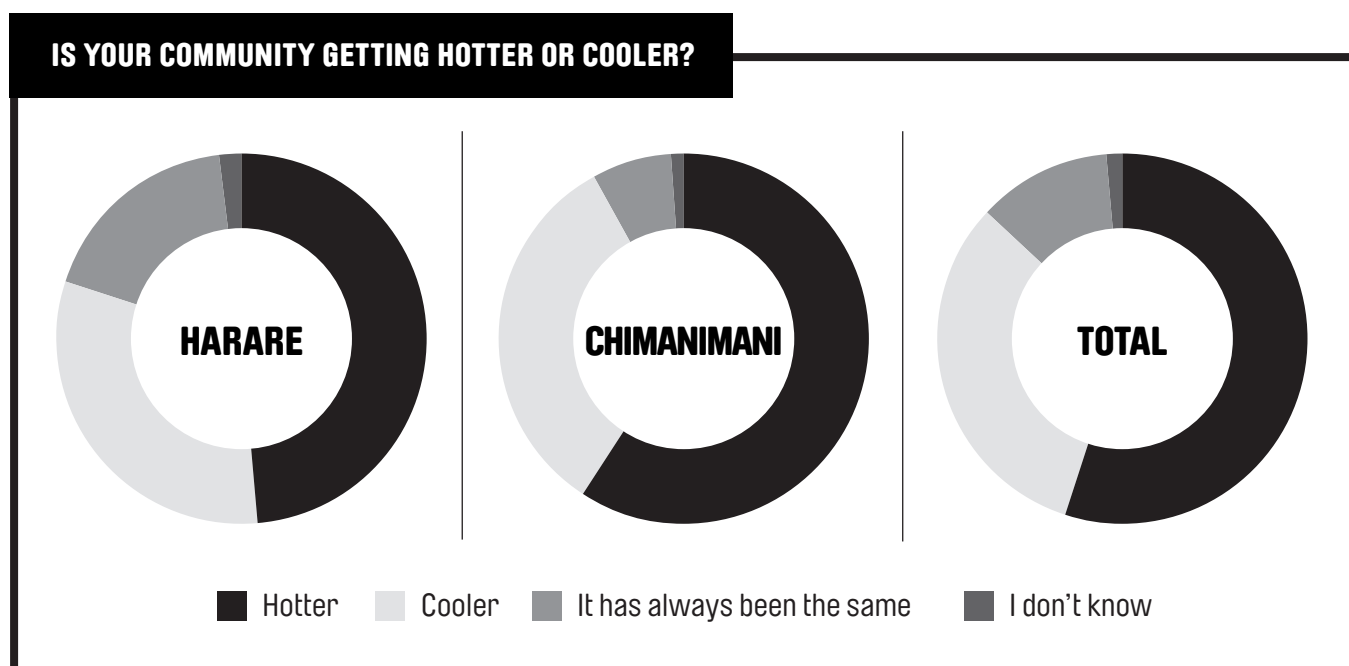
Across Harare and Chimanimani, 92 percent of the survey sample indicated their view that climate change is really happening. However, with 8 percent of respondents across both districts either denying the existence of climate change or its man-made nature, it is clear that gaps in climate change awareness remain. While the overall proportion of this sample remains small, it indicates a much greater number of the overall population of Zimbabwe who are potentially unable to adapt and mitigate the adverse impacts of global heating.

Respondents that affirmed that in their view climate change is real and not man-made, were also asked to describe what they are seeing that makes them know that climate change is occurring in their area. Changes in rainfall patterns, shifting weather patterns, droughts and heatwaves were cited by many participants. One interviewee in Chimanimani explained that “*seasons are clearly changing, causing heat waves and sporadic rainfall patterns*”.

Changes in rainfall patterns, followed by increased temperatures at the earth’s surface, were the experiences that most prominently feature in the survey sample’s understanding of what best describes climate change. Building on these findings, the semi-structured interviews highlighted that, while the participants had a general sense of what climate change is, young people tended to describe climate change in terms of phenomena that they themselves had experienced in their community. Knowledge of the broader causes and trends of global heating, as well as how climate change could be mitigated through community action and adaptation, was limited.



The survey respondents were asked if their community is getting hotter or cooler. Curiously, given the susceptibility of Zimbabwe to global heating, the experiences of respondents demonstrate considerable variability in the experience of changing temperatures in their communities. Respondents in the rural Chimanimani district reported much higher rates of heating than the urban Harare district. This is consistent with the current climate patterns witnessed in Zimbabwe. By 2015, the country’s temperature had already increased by 2°C, leading to more hot days and decreased cold days (USAID, 2015). The rainfall patterns have also become uncertain, (Frischen, et al., 2020) with periods of drought interspersed with periods of extreme rainfall such as Cyclone Idai. Additionally, by asking the question is your community getting hotter or cooler local communities are most likely to understand climatic changes using the expressions, hotter or cooler as opposed to the scientific diction used in climate change discourse.



Local experiences are central to understanding global heating and its effects for our research participants. While it is natural that personal experiences colour individual perceptions of climate change, the experience of climate change's effects are varied across time and locality. Without coupling local experience with knowledge of the wider regional and global climate trends, Zimbabwean communities most at risk from climate change and its effects on health are afforded less opportunity to mitigate, and adapt to, changing climate trends.

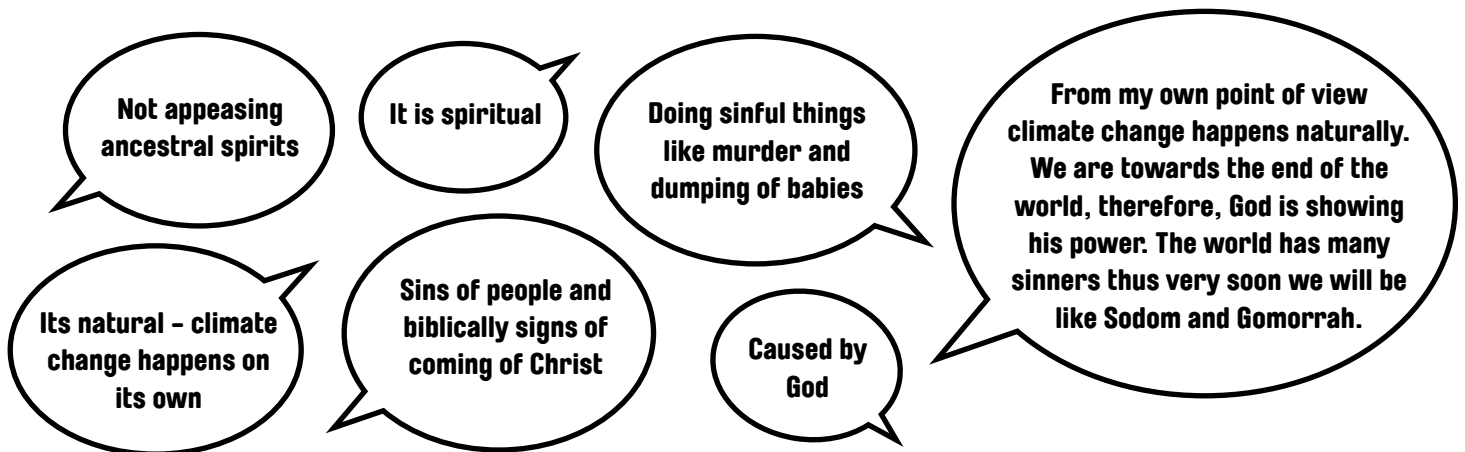
A photo of Chimanimani Eastern Highlands in Zimbabwe — one of the research sites.

Misconceptions of the changing climate's causes

KEY FINDINGS

- Participants indicated widespread acknowledgement of the impact of deforestation and carbon emissions on climate change.
- Numerous contrasting views and misconceptions on the causes of climate change within the community also emerge, including perceptions of global heating as a religious or spiritual punishment.

Most survey respondents indicated their understanding of climate change's causes to be deforestation and carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Alongside understanding of climate change informed by scientific evidence, several contrasting views emerged from the survey respondents.



Similar narratives emerged when young people were asked to reflect on the common misconceptions about climate change they encounter in their communities.



The findings demonstrate understanding of climate change as a divine punishment caused by human behaviour contrary to Christian beliefs, or a response to neglect of indigenous spiritual traditions and customs. This is not surprising according to the CIA World Factbook (2022) 87.4% of the population in Zimbabwe is christian, this consists of Protestant (Apostolic , Pentecostal, other), Roman Catholic and other Christians. Additionally, they highlight a misconception that climate change is a natural phenomenon, to which human actions have no effect. Perceptions that climate change is an issue predominantly experienced in the Global North demonstrates potentially problematic implications for the communities in the Global South that are projected as most vulnerable to the effects of global heating.

The misconceptions with communities are a crucial area for young people to focus their ability to act on climate change. These findings highlight a need for more education around climate change as well as a deliberate effort from community leaders to dismiss climate change myths and misconceptions.



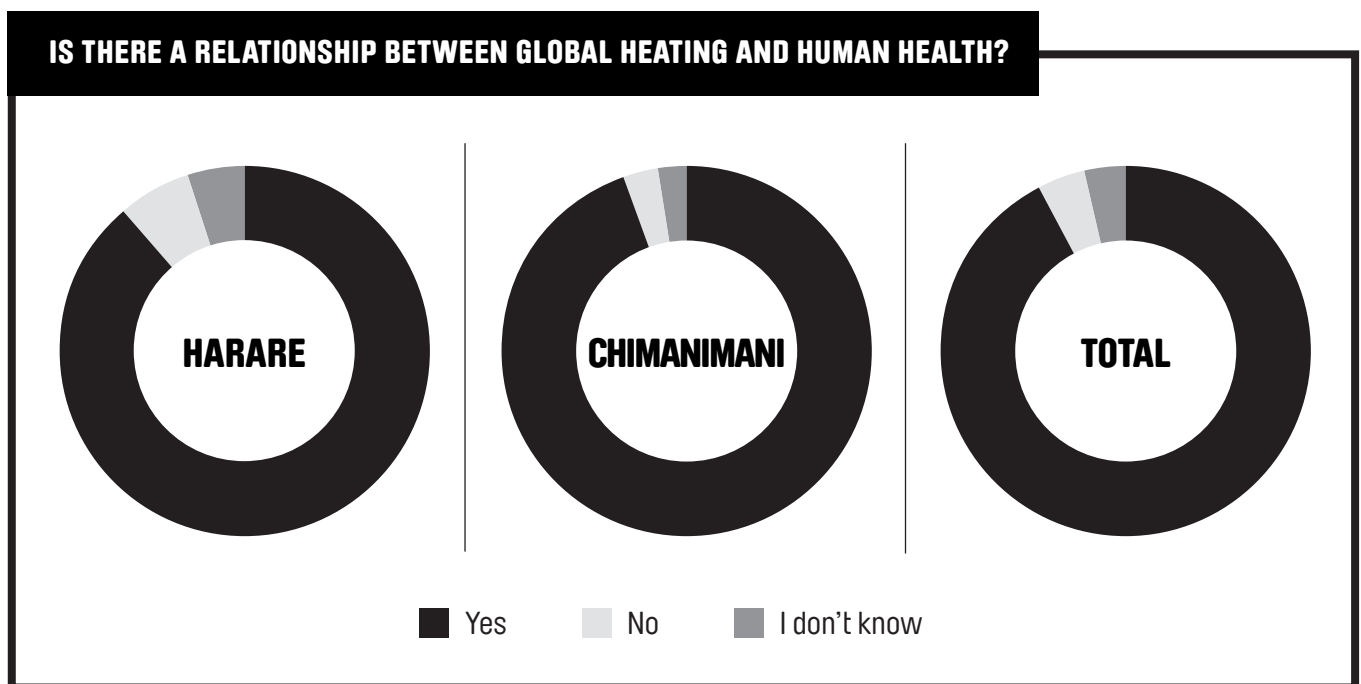
Thembekile Mlambo, a young leader leading a theme development session during data analysis.

Perceptions of global heating's health impacts

KEY FINDINGS

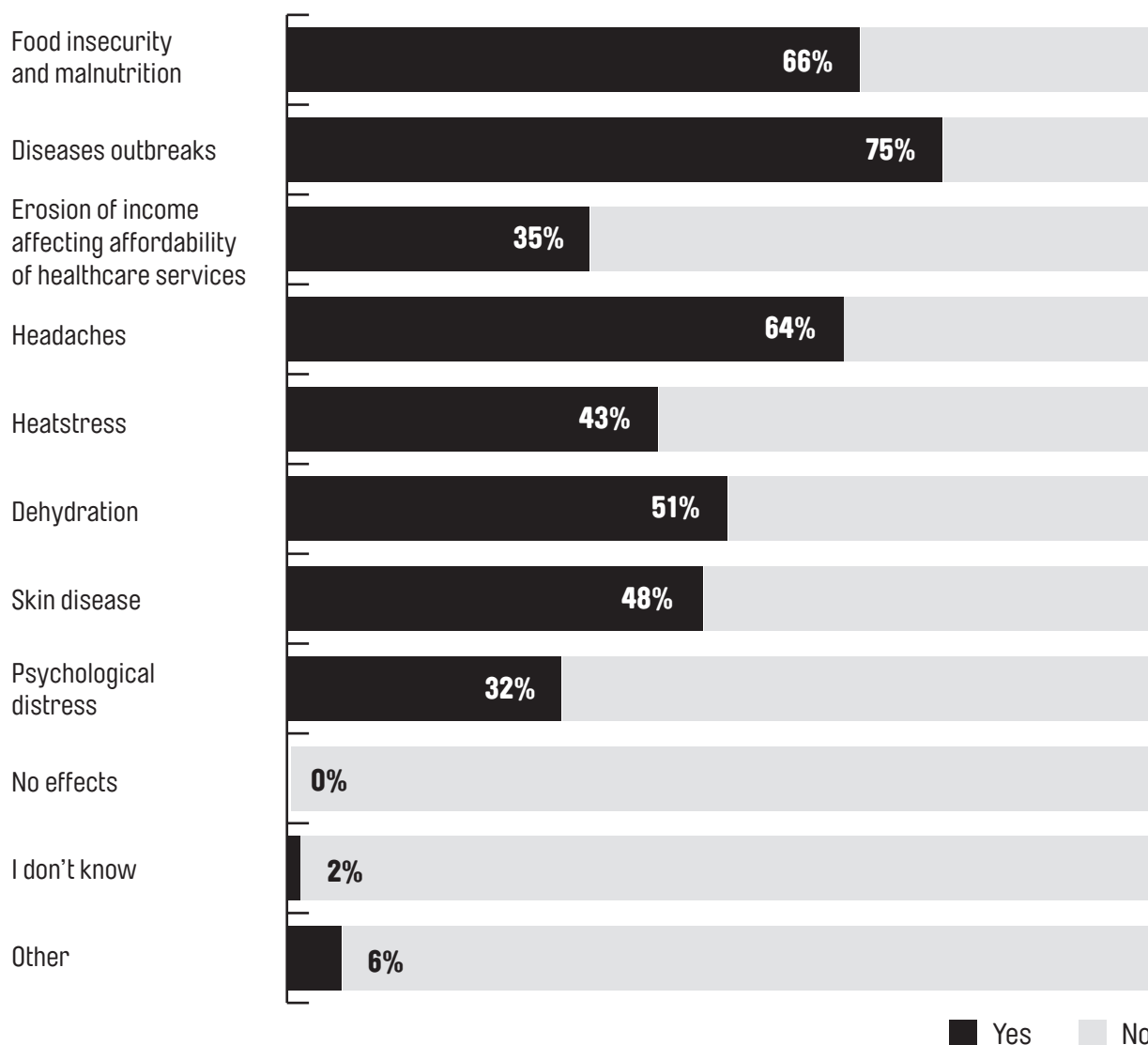
- 92 percent of participants acknowledged a relationship between global heating and human health.
- The effects of climate change on human health most frequently reported were disease outbreaks, food insecurity and malnutrition, and headaches.
- Self-reported vulnerability was higher for female participants compared to male, and participants identifying as disabled or partially disabled compared to non-disabled.

The research sought to identify the levels of participant communities' understanding of global heating's health effects on humans. 92 percent of survey respondents indicated that they believed there to be a relationship between global heating and human health. Respondents from Chimanimani district reported a perceived relationship between global heating and health at a rate much higher than those from Harare.



Survey respondents were also asked to indicate which, if any, effects of climate change they view to affect human health. The most cited effects of climate change on health in these communities were disease outbreaks (reported by 75 percent of respondents), food insecurity and malnutrition (66 percent), and headaches (64 percent).

IS THIS AN EFFECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HUMAN HEALTH IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



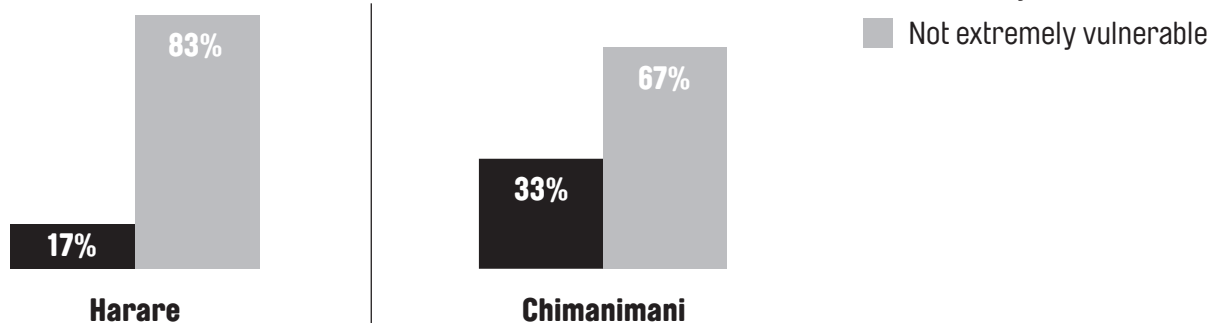
The experience of these health effects was echoed in the semi-structured interviews. One participant from the Chimanimani district voiced concerns that “*when the weather becomes too hot which may cause other diseases like malaria or those with high blood pressure will be affected too.*” Another participant from Chimanimani, spoke of the knock-on effects of climate change on water availability, causing dehydration and related health effects of headaches and heat stress. “*Our wells dry up very fast, and where we are going to fetch water is far.*”

A crucial aspect of the impacts of climate change on human health is the intersection of social, economic, or environmental vulnerabilities already experienced by different groups in society. Reflecting this, survey respondents were asked to rank their own vulnerability to climate change and the health impacts of its effects. Self-reported vulnerability was generally higher in the Chimanimani region than in Harare, perhaps reflecting the respondents’ experience of heating in this district.

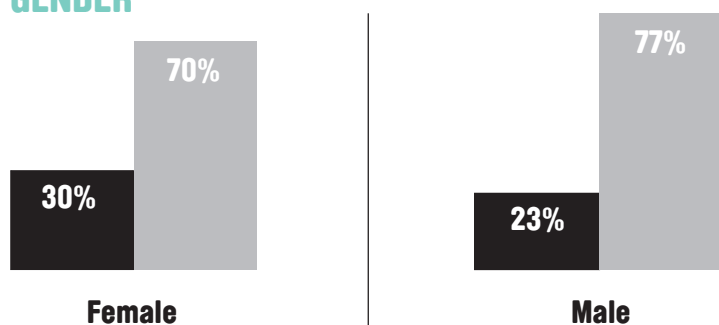
Self-reported vulnerability to the effects of climate change also varied along lines of gender and disability. Those who identified as disabled or partially disabled self-reported as ‘extremely vulnerable’ at a higher rate (43 percent and 46 percent respectively), compared to 25 percent of those who identified as not disabled. Similarly, 30 percent of female respondents self-reported as extremely vulnerable, compared to 23 percent of male respondents.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR VULNERABILITY TO THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE?

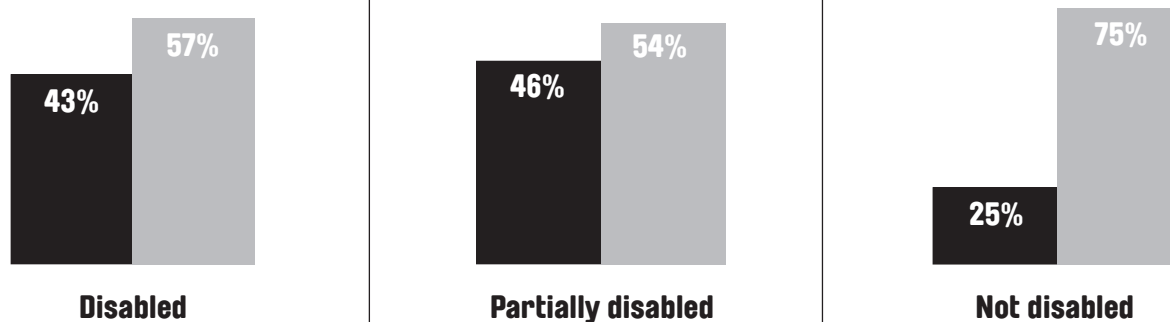
BY DISTRICT



BY GENDER



BY DISABILITY



Marginalised gender identities (including female and non-binary) and disability or partial disability disenfranchise individuals in patriarchal, ableist communities, and the effects of global heating perpetuate existing vulnerabilities. Economic status and poverty are also key determinants of experiences of climate change's effects, as one SSI participant from Harare explained: *"Poverty makes everything worse, we are in this situation, and we face problems which become even bigger because we do not have the money. When a disaster comes, and people are warned about it ahead of time, the rich can easily take their belongings and vacate but us the poor will choose to die here because we have no other place to go and most living here are orphans"*. An intersectional approach to mitigating and adapting to global heating is a crucial starting point for inclusive, youth-led research to be truly meaningful.

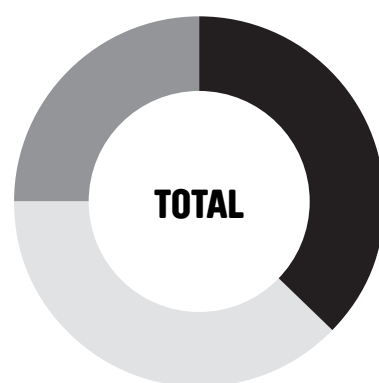
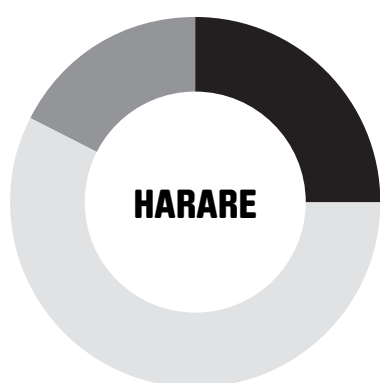
Knowledge of climate change action

KEY FINDINGS

- Awareness of climate change-targeted policies was considerably lower in Harare than in Chimanimani, as was the reporting of community level action addressing climate change.
- The most cited local action was the adaptation of crops to more resilient varieties, followed by planting more trees.
- NGOs are most frequently cited as the actor leading these actions, followed by local leadership.
- Young people's leadership constitutes 2.6 percent in these community actions.
- National climate change policy neglects the impacts of global heating on health, and the links between global heating and health effects are not reflected in institutional responses.

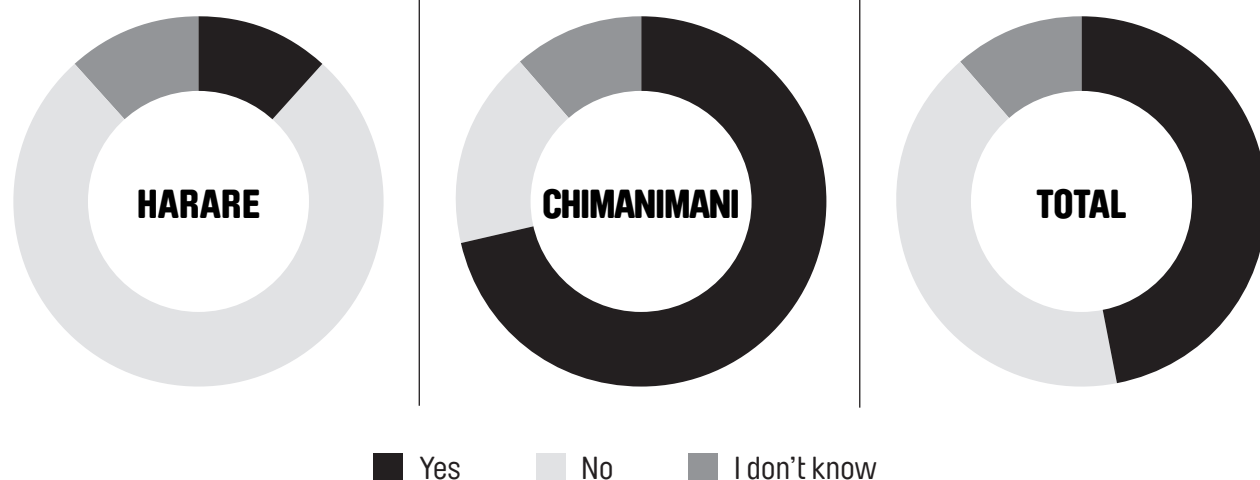
Awareness of national and local level policies aimed at curbing the effects of climate change was low among survey respondents. Only 37 percent of our total sample reported they were aware of such policies, and the regional disparity between Chimanimani and Harare was notable. These findings suggest that, where policies do exist, understanding and awareness of them are limited. Knowledge of existing policy is crucial for civil society to hold policy-makers accountable and advocate for the filling of policy gaps.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OR NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES YOU ARE AWARE OF?



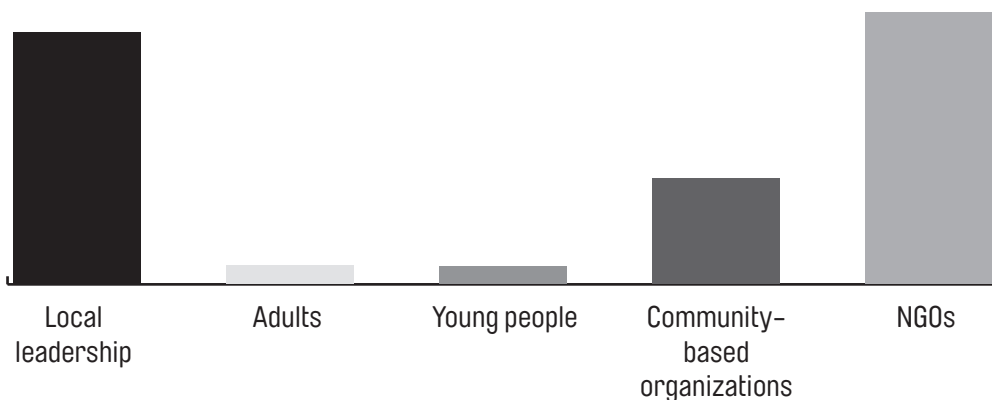
■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know

ARE THERE ANY ACTIONS BEING DONE IN YOUR COMMUNITY TO CURB/ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE?



Awareness of actions being done in respondents' communities was higher, totalling 47 percent across both districts. There is, however, a substantial disparity between the reporting of local community action on climate change in Chimanimani compared to Harare. For respondents that reported actions being done in their community to adapt to, or mitigate, the effect of climate change, the most cited local action was the adaptation of crops to more resilient varieties, followed by planting more trees. NGOs are most frequently cited as the actor leading these actions, followed by local leadership.

WHO IS LEADING ACTIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



Young people's leadership in these activities was at 2.6 percent. The SSIs described the types of activities that young people are leading. A participant in Chimanimani district mentioned that after Cyclone Idai, "*young people made up youth committees from churches as well as schools and came up with an initiative to mobilise resources including food, clothes and medication to help the displaced families and the elderly who had left with nothing due to the disaster*".

Young people are capable of mobilising other young people and leading efforts to mitigate and respond to the effects of climate change, yet youth climate advocacy in the two research community districts remains low compared to the involvement of other actors.

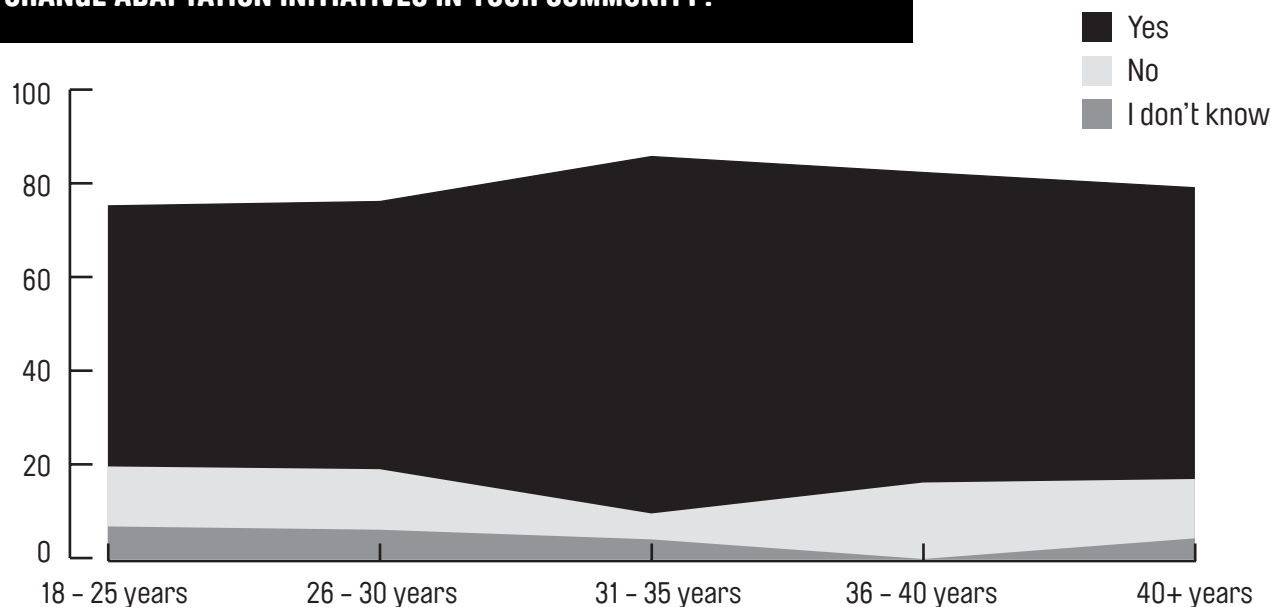
Avenues for youth advocacy and action

KEY FINDINGS

- *Young people suggested that the key barriers challenging their capacity to lead are access to resources and access to decision-making spaces.*
- *Young people stressed the need for education and training about climate change and its policy environment in Zimbabwe.*
- *Participants suggested that the establishment of youth centres, and support with communication resources, would enable young people to engage in leadership roles in their community's response to global heating.*

The survey sample was asked if young people have the capacity to lead climate change adaptation initiatives in their community. 80 percent of respondents agreed that young people do have this capacity. Interestingly, the confidence in young people's capacity was marginally higher among the older age groups of the sample, compared to the young age groups.

DO YOU THINK YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO LEAD CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION INITIATIVES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



The semi-structured interviews gave insight into the opportunities and barriers that confront young people in their potential contributions as climate change advocates and leaders in their communities. One key theme that emerged was young people's **access to resources and decision-making spaces**. One participant in Harare mentioned that *"I think as youths we are energetic and vibrant so we just need resources so that the ideas we have can be implemented"*.

One participant from Chimanimani reflected on the need for the creation of spaces where young people can participate in discussions and local decision-making. *“Yah I can say it starts from our local leadership. They should stand behind our back to create spaces for us so that we discuss our issues. In our communities right now we don’t have any say at any point. It seems like we don’t exist at all”.*

Another participant shared similar sentiments: *“Hmmm it’s because we don’t have the support that we need from our elders and the stakeholders and we don’t have any resources”.*

For young people to step into their potential as local leaders and advocates for climate change mitigation and adaptation, meaningful access to decision-making spaces and improved access to resources are crucial.

As one young advocate from the Harare district mentioned, these spaces not only include formal policy-making spheres but also the religious and educational institutions that structure daily lives for the individuals being affected by climate change’s health effects; *“The community should be empowered to take climate issues seriously, the religious sector should teach their congregants about climate change, the school curriculum should accommodate the issue of climate change and all other institutions in the community should treat this issue of climate change as a matter of urgency”.*

Linked to the need to incorporate climate change advocacy into the institutional fabric of communities in Harare and Chimanimani, a second key theme that emerged was the need for **education and training initiatives**.

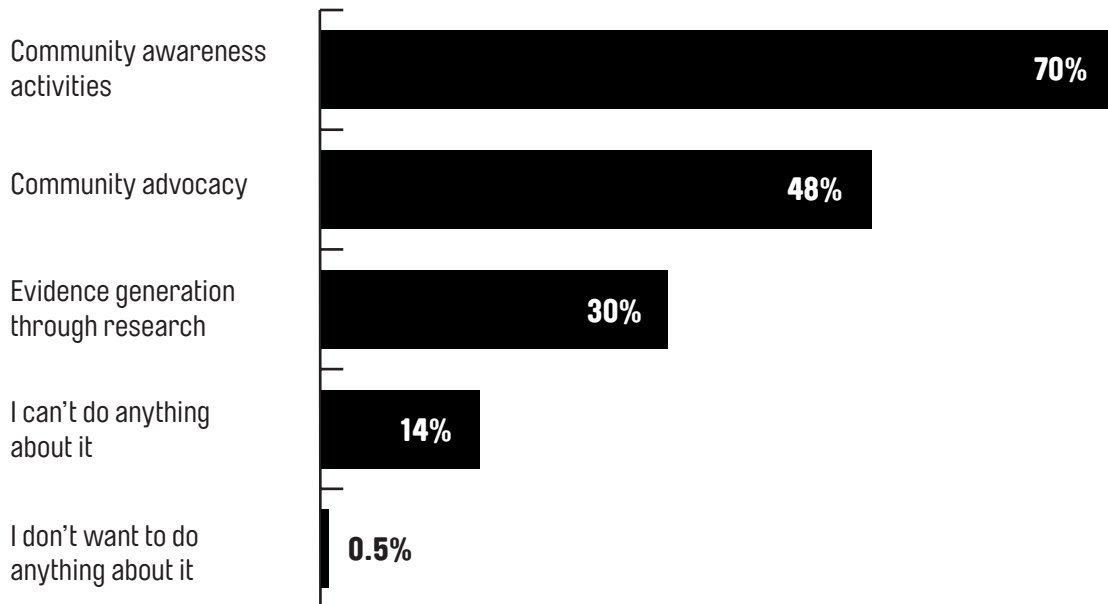
One participant in Harare mentioned that *“We would also want support in terms of training on what climate change really does as some of the information we are giving out we are just getting it from the internet”.* Given the emphasis on accurately communicating scientific evidence, explaining climate change terms, and build the capacity and knowledge base of young people climate change scientists could be part of subsequent climate change trainings at community level going forward.

The SSIs captured young people’s desire for adequate training and education to be incorporated into the school curriculum. Key areas to feature in the curriculum included the policy environment, as one participant stressed that *“people should be educated on policies, as we speak there is little knowledge on policies”.*

There was also a desire for greater education and training on mitigation and adaptation to climate change’s effects. *“When it comes to prevention, we are now asking those who are knowledgeable to come and teach us about these things”.*

70 percent of the survey respondents felt that the role they can personally play in addressing the human health challenges being caused by global heating is community awareness activities. The semi-structured interviews with young people about potential action and advocacy in their community generated insightful ideas as to what this might look like in practice. 13% of the survey respondents felt that they could not do anything about addressing the human health challenges being caused by global heating. The respondents reiterated that they are not being consulted or involved in climate action at community level. This confirms that the people who are currently leading climate action in the communities need to transform the way they approach mitigation and adaptation strategies by lending a listening ear to young people’s ideas.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK YOU PERSONALLY CAN PLAY IN ADDRESSING THE HUMAN HEALTH CHALLENGES BEING CAUSE BY GLOBAL HEATING?



One participant in Harare discussed a vision for **youth centres** focused on climate change awareness. *“Our plans involve the empowering of the youth by giving them knowledge and changing their mindsets. We plan to do these by means of workshops, awareness campaigns, and also by connecting them to investors and so on. If we can change their day to day livelihoods it will improve their lives and make an impact in their communities”*. Young advocates in Chimanimani had similar ideas, voicing a *“Need for Youth Centers where the youths can meet and discuss issues concerning climate change and other matters of concern”*.

These centres play a crucial role in giving young people a space of belonging, and a sense of power. Through these centres young people will lead discussions as well share ideas in a comfortable space together with their peers and stakeholders in a participatory and youth friendly manner. Young people envision these spaces as a platform to learn from experts, planning communications as well as discussing innovations. These are opposed to the meetings held in boardrooms and conferences where there are unequal power dynamics.

Another participant discussed the value of youth-specific spaces, and the types of **communication resources** needed by young advocates. *“Community spaces should be more youth friendly. They should be able to attract the attention of young people so they can learn, discuss, and research about any issue that will be relevant to them. WIFI is an element I have seen most people interested in and they spend most of their time on the internet”*. This quote highlights the value of Inclusive settings where young people have equitable access to the internet to educate and advocate additionally it shows how the internet can be used to mobilize young people and create a space for further research and reflection. Bridging the digital divide allows for increased and improved education and advocacy on climate change amongst young people.

Young leaders Namandla and Methembe coding their data during the data analysis workshop.



ADVOCACY PLANS AND POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE ACTION

Informed by the perspectives and ideas of participants, the young researcher's ideas for youth-led advocacy were further developed and formalised through advocacy plans. These advocacy plans featured pilot community-based advocacy initiatives, to assess potential avenues for future youth leadership in their community's mitigation of, and adaptation to, the health impacts of climate change.

Not all of these advocacy plans could be piloted during the life span of this project, however through the few participatory advocacy initiatives done, the young leaders demonstrated their potential to deliver impact within the communities.

CASE STUDY

Team Chimanimani young people's climate change debate on myths and misconceptions

12 young people leading this initiative in Chimanimani District came together to test different methods young people can use to increase their understanding of climate change. The young people carried out a debate. The objective of this debate was to effect a change in practices, knowledge, attitude, and beliefs towards climate change. This is the first step to a more sustained effort to increase young people's knowledge of climate change. The young researchers split participants into 2 groups, one group for the idea that climate change is there and it is happening, another group saying that climate change is not happening and it is just a way of life. An official from the Environment Management Agency (EMA) regulated the discussions bringing in facts that allowed participants to understand that climate change is actually happening and we need to do more to ensure that we are not adversely affected. A total of 30 Young people took part in this event whilst 3 ward councilors and 2 traditional leaders were also present to witness and support this initiative. The young leaders were excited to lead and deliver this event.

.....
"I am happy that we managed to organise and actually deliver this event, we have proven to the elders here today that young people are able to organise and successful advocacy initiatives".

.....
"Today I literally re-lived my high school days, I enjoyed spending time with other young people discussing climate change".

.....
"It all now adds up, Cyclone Idai was really bad, it destroyed my community in many ways, I thought it was just a week now I know that those are some of the effects of climate change".

The young people were for the idea that a similar activity can be done at provincial and national levels with young people from different places. The ward councillor present was delighted to have this initiative in his jurisdiction given the numerous vulnerabilities that the people in his area face. He mentioned that knowledge is key and we need to do more:

.....
"Cyclone Idai was an eye opener, now we have a sense of how vulnerable we are. This is the first time that the young people have led such a noble initiative, we have been vulnerable to natural phenoma for a long time. This has only be done in 6 wards in Chimanimani District, it would be good to do similar activities in all the wards in Chimanimani".

CASE STUDY

Team Harare community dialogue

8 young people from Harare leading this project carried out a community dialogue where young people came together with other community members. This was an opportunity to exchange information, share personal stories and experiences, clarify viewpoints, and more importantly develop solutions to community concerns. The young leaders who were the facilitators of this dialogue started by sharing research findings and the key recommendations, this was the basis of the dialogue where participants discussed what needs to be done to curb climate change at the local level and by whom.

Through this participatory exercise, the participants were in agreement that there is a lot that needs to be done around climate change firstly at local level then scaled up at province and national levels. This exercise gave the participants an opportunity to be who they are, young people discussing with their peers to make their community a better place using a participatory peer-to-peer exercise. As an output from this exercise, the participants developed an action plan embedded in the social, cultural practices, and traditional values of the community. This action plan has a clear pathway that shows how young people intend to do more in their communities to curb climate change. We are confident that the involvement of young people in the development of a work plan and resolutions will be effective for sustained action around climate change.



Participants during a climate change community dialogue in Harare.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY GAPS

The piloted advocacy initiatives demonstrated how youth-led, action that addresses the complex web of causes and impacts. Throughout the research journey, it became increasingly clear to the research team that wide gaps exist in the national and subnational institutional infrastructure for addressing global heating and health. This finding is not surprising, given that the RER highlighted how (sub)national policy responses to the effect of global heating on human health in Zimbabwe are inadequate and fragmented. For example, the Government of Zimbabwe's National Climate Change Response Strategy (GoZ, 2015) fails to directly address the health impacts of global heating, overlooking that emerging health concerns such as heat stress require coordinated institutional responses.

Awareness of the nexus between global heating and health effects is similarly not reflected in health sector policy and discourse. One KII interviewee in Harare noted that *“at the moment we haven't heard a sudden change in warning that can warrant institutions to start fighting”*. Despite increasing acknowledgement of the increasing susceptibility to disease brought about by global heating, its impacts remain low on the priorities confronting the health sector in Zimbabwe. Advocacy that increases public awareness and raises discourse about global heating and health to the policy agenda is a crucial step towards the institutional shifts that the interviewee above mentions.



Young leaders participating in the research training – Setting the research framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CALLS TO ACTION

Throughout the project, young leaders collated the perspectives of young people and community stakeholders. The key recommendations for different actors that emerged are summarised below.

Recommendations for policymakers and community leaders

The district-level authorities should come up with various strategies which have the capability to deal with the impact of climate change. The Ministry of Environment and EMA should effectively enforce laws that protect the environment and also consider carrying out targeted advocacy initiatives in partnership with civil society organizations. The health impact of climate change should be reflected in the institutional frameworks and policy priorities of the health sector.

We recommend that there should be an investment in early warning systems equipment and knowledge centers that have the capability to forewarn communities of an impending disaster, and give climate change knowledge to the community, similarly the same equipment can assist communities to track climate change and how it is affecting their community in relation to global trends.

Traditional and religious leaders are custodians of the community's belief system. As this research has shown, some respondents believe that climate change and its effects are happening as a result of not praying to God or appeasing their ancestors. This is not true. Traditional and religious leaders should take the lead in dismissing such misconceptions in their areas of influence.

CALLS TO ACTION:

- We call for leaders to immediately implement inclusive and sustainable climate change mitigation and adaptation policies.
- We call on decision makers to start the discourse on health-related impact brought about by global heating. This includes capacity building of health care workers and investment in local to national level health care systems.
- We call for leaders to transform the way they approach mitigation and adaptation strategies. We call on them to give a listening ear to young people's ideas and support youth-led climate action with resources.
- We call for additional capacity building and resource allocation to Environment Management Agency (EMA) and the District Development Coordinator (DDCs) office to regularly deliver disaster risk management and environmental protection training and awareness.

- We call on religious and traditional leaders to deliberately dismiss myths and misconceptions surrounding climate change.
- We call on policymakers and community leaders to develop a climate change action plan embedded in the social, cultural practices and traditional values of the community.
- We call for investment in youth centers equipped to be hubs for climate change advocacy, which are inclusive for all young people and other community members. These centres play a crucial role in having young people share ideas in a comfortable space together with their peers and stakeholders to think about change in different forms. learning from experts, planning communications as well as discussing innovations These are opposed to the meetings held in boardrooms and conferences where there are clear power dynamics.

Recommendations for educational institutions

As the young researchers discovered, there are significant knowledge gaps around climate change and its impacts on human health. While it is within the scope of the pilot project to tackle misconceptions, sustained efforts are required to build knowledge capacity, as well as to change mindsets and attitudes, over a longer period of time. The young leaders recommend accessible and contextualised education and training on global heating, its implications, potential adaptation strategies, and existing policies for the Zimbabwean context.

Dissemination of knowledge should be in the form of both formal and informal education. Curricula should reflect the importance of climate change being taught in schools from a young age. To teach the older and out-of-school generations, climate education can be achieved through holding training workshops, community dialogues, and awareness campaigns. Such efforts can be approached most effectively through multi-stakeholder partnerships that unite resources with local expertise. We recommended partnerships across central government, local leaders, and civil society actors.

CALLS TO ACTION:

- We call for investment in climate education through curriculum adjustments to cater to climate education as a compulsory subject.
- We call for civil society organisations to partner with local and national leadership, promoting informal forums for those outside formal education to access climate change learning and action.
- We call for innovative approaches to curriculum development that reflect the local priorities related to global heating, as well as the relevant policies over which members of the community can promote accountability and tangible progress.
- We call for education institutions and training providers to approach youth climate education with a holistic understanding of different young people's needs. We call for learning that is designed to be accessible across disability, locality, gender and income.
- We call on tertiary institutions to invest in climate change and health research led by experienced health scientists. This will contribute to the scarce body of knowledge in Zimbabwe.

Recommendations for international, national and local civil society actors

Civil society organisations provide vital links and resources between citizens and leadership. We recognise that civil society actors working at different scales have different resources and expertise, and therefore have different responsibilities.

Local civil society organisations are best placed to galvanise action for climate change advocacy and adaptation among young people in their communities. Local actors should work together with religious and educational leaders to ensure that climate change awareness is tailored to the local community's worldview. Local civil society organisations should invest in the valuable perspectives of young people. Resources and mentorship should equip young people as leaders.

National civil society actors provide a critical link between state-level policy and community-level responses. Our research demonstrates that distinct gaps exist in communities' understanding of climate change's health impacts, and in knowledge of policy responses to these threats. National civil society actors should play a vital role in facilitating youth-led accountability of those in leadership positions, providing communication links between local experiences of global heating, national policy approaches, and the Ministry of Environment.

International civil society organisations have crucial resources to support the development of youth-led advocacy for responses to climate change and its health effects in Zimbabwe. Donors from the international community should take seriously the recognition that while communities like those in Harare and Chimanimani have done little to contribute to the causes of global heating, the health effects will be felt acutely by vulnerable individuals in these localities. We recommend that donors invest in initiatives like the Youth Climate Changemaker pilot to generate nuanced research into local experiences and understandings of global heating. Initiatives must be designed to put traditionally marginalised voices – who are likely to be the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change – at the forefront of leadership.

CALLS TO ACTION:

- ➔ We call on local civil society organisations to equip young people with the resources to lead community-based climate change advocacy that is responsive to local needs and inclusive of diverse local voices.
- ➔ We call on local civil society actors to develop meaningful relationships with other local leaders, such as those in educational and religious institutions, to consolidate effective climate change education strategies and address misconceptions.
- ➔ We call on national civil society organisations to provide communication links between existing policy and community experiences, facilitating youth-led accountability of national leadership.
- ➔ We call on national civil society to facilitate deliberate collaboration of climate change interventions across localities, ensuring interventions and learnings are not siloed across Zimbabwe. We call for the creation of forums where trends, successes, and potential adaptation and mitigation measures can be shared.

- We call on international civil society organisations to step up as donors, providing the resources for successful interventions that encourage young people to take leadership roles in addressing global heating's health impacts in Zimbabwe.
- We call on international civil society to sponsor the generation of valuable, nuanced and co-produced knowledge on the impacts of global heating on health, especially in vulnerable but understudied contexts like Zimbabwe.
- We call on national NGOs to make space for youth-led actions in their work. This work includes adaptation of crops to more resilient varieties and planting more trees which were cited in the research as dominant actions that are being done by national NGOs.

Recommendations for young people

We recommend that young people take an active leadership role in advocating for greater understanding of global heating's effects, and potential avenues for mitigation or adaptation. Is it not just a cliché to point out that young people are the future. Young people have proven their unique ability to develop community-based solutions to national problems with limited government support. We recommend that young people take active steps to ensure youth leadership is inclusive of the experiences and perspectives of young people too often overlooked.

Climate change's effects also coalesce with other challenges for young people, who confront uncertain futures in the face of pandemics, economic changes, as well as changing climates. We recommend that young people acknowledge the potential impact of these uncertainties on their mental health, and lean into their support networks.

CALLS TO ACTION:

- We call on young people to use their eyes, ears and voices. We call on youth to continue to educate themselves on the health impacts of global heating, and use their platforms – whether physical or virtual – to share their learnings with others in their community.
- We call for young people to support each other through the personal and psychological journey of climate advocacy and leadership.
- We call on young people to elevate the perspectives of their peers, especially where these voices may have been systematically ignored in the past. This means young men giving space for young women to share their perspectives, able-bodied youth to listen to the experiences of disabled youth, urban youth to understand the realities of rural youth.

CONCLUSION

The Youth Climate Changemakers project piloted a youth-led research approach to addressing global heating and its health effects in two districts of Zimbabwe. Based on the evidence gaps identified in existing literature, young people designed and implemented quantitative and qualitative research to build a nuanced understanding of their communities' perspectives of climate change and its impact on human health.

Young leaders found that their communities' understanding of climate change was limited, often informed by their own personal experiences of climatic changes or events, and marred with misconceptions. Young people reported that a lack of access to resources, quality education, and policy-making spaces impaired their ability to address the gaps in knowledge and action identified in their community.

Informed by the findings of the pilot research, young people developed their own advocacy plans and piloted advocacy initiatives in their communities. The events that young people organised – including community dialogues and climate change debates – highlighted the organisational and creative power that young people hold, and the potential for youth to be climate changemakers in their communities.

Alongside the inspiring ideas and action of the young leaders we witnessed, the developmental evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the pilot's youth-led research and advocacy methodology against data-driven milestones. This process highlighted specific learnings from the project journey, explored the effectiveness of the youth leadership model against alternative models, and reflected on the potential for this model to be scaled to other contexts.

The developmental evaluation of the Youth Climate Changemakers pilot project found that the model is an innovative, sustainable and cost-effective approach to global heating and health advocacy. Transferring research and advocacy skills to young people in their communities builds capacity, equipping youth with the capacity to leverage their social networks and contextual understanding.

The evaluation of the pilot project recommends ongoing collaborative research on the nexus between climate change and global health. It suggests methodical evaluation of future similar interventions, aimed at measuring the progress towards training objectives, changes in knowledge and skill levels, and the impact of the application of knowledge and skills on the wider community. The evaluation also recommends extending the length of interventions into global heating and health advocacy using the methodology piloted in this project. Advocacy interventions require time, so that the benefits of decision-maker engagement and lobbying can be reaped.

Looking ahead, we want to use the learning from the Young Climate Changemakers pilot project to create robust and impactful youth-led research initiatives into climate change that influence policy, strengthen the youth climate movement, and deliver meaningful change to communities.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our vision for the future is based on the 4 aspects outlined below:

1. The findings from the first phase of youth-led research conducted in the pilot;
2. Young researchers own ideas and recommendations emerging from their analysis of the data;
3. Recommendations from the consultant who conducted the developmental evaluation; and
4. Restless Development's expertise, deep knowledge of the country context, relevant networks, and strategic ambitions.

We would like to build on this pilot to create more sustained, impactful and meaningful roles for young people in creating change around climate change and health. This can be **delivered through multiple interlinked objectives** outlined below:

1

To build a knowledge base of the effects of climate change on the health of young people and communities in Zimbabwe.

There is a clear need for more specific research into the issue of climate change, its links with health and knowledge, and awareness amongst young people and communities in Zimbabwe. We would focus on bringing more diverse experiences into the scale-up by aiming to better understand how young people of different genders, those living with HIV, those living with a disability experience and understand climate change. Young researchers expressed the need to gather more insights from young people with disabilities in particular. Young researchers also emphasized the need to conceptualize innovative approaches to overcome climate change terminology gaps in sign language.

2

To partner with a research institution. We will partner with a research institution, particularly experienced health scientists, to forward this research and validate the findings of the current project at a national level. We aim to build up a fuller picture of climate change knowledge and action in Zimbabwe. We will aim to get our research published in an academic journal to add rigor and academic credentials to our findings. Developing one or more partnerships with academic institutions or other influential research groups will develop a more powerful influencing capacity as well.

3

To increase knowledge about climate change amongst young people and communities.

As the young researchers asserted themselves; there is a huge knowledge gap around climate change. Whilst it is within the scope of the pilot project to begin to address this and tackle misconceptions, sustained efforts will be required to change knowledge, mindsets, and attitudes over a longer period of time. This objective is connected to the objective above. The research outputs from partnering with health scientists will also play a crucial role in increasing knowledge about climate change amongst young people and communities.

4

To build a youth-led climate change movement. Young people can play a key role in increasing knowledge on climate change in Zimbabwe. Whilst the youth-led movement is fledgling, we know that young people are keen to learn more, connect with other youth-led climate movements at the regional and international levels, and have practical ideas on how they can transfer their knowledge to others in their community.

5

To scale up youth-led research on climate change. Restless Development has the capacity, youth, and community networks to scale up the youth-led research on the topic through two avenues: nationwide across Zimbabwe and/or to expand to other countries.

6

To create a robust plan to disseminate and share the research findings. For us, youth-led research is not just about ensuring meaningful youth engagement or even about ensuring youth insights are captured by their peers—it is also fundamentally about shifting power. We will develop a targeted outreach plan for the research with specific advocacy goals. This will include reaching out to key decision-makers in Zimbabwe at local and national government levels to lobby for climate action. It requires supporting youth capacity development in lobby and advocacy to ensure they can confidently represent the needs and interests of the study respondents. Beyond advocacy action, we will build out a broader dissemination plan for the study across diverse stakeholder groups. This will include peer organizations who work in Zimbabwe, local climate groups, educational institutions, and government actors. Bearing in mind that the 27th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP 27) is fast approaching, we will also take advantage of this world stage to lobby and advocate for more investment in the areas of global heating and health, particularly climate education and responses to the effects of global heating on human health.

7

To link the research to advocacy and relevant policy frameworks. We could leverage our youth-led advocacy methodology, as well as our relationship with the Ministry of Environment and other relevant government ministries, to link the research findings to policy and practice. The youth-led research has already brought new ideas to the fore which could help operationalize the National Climate Change Response Strategy – particularly the pillars on education and awareness, research and development, communication and advocacy, and information management and dissemination. Some of the Youth-led advocacy initiatives that the young people can explore include but will not be limited to awareness campaigns on various platforms that include social media, direct meetings with policymakers.

8

To pilot young people's ideas emerging from research. During the data analysis process, young researchers came up with solutions, ideas, and recommendations to enhance knowledge on climate change. These are ideas premised on advocacy action to ensure that knowledge around climate change is available for all young people in the community. Using research to inform youth-led solutions is a natural and effective next step in tackling development issues from a human-centered perspective. For example, young researchers came up with the recommendation that climate change could and should be embedded into the education curriculum in schools so that young people can be introduced to the topic from an early age. As a continuation of that educational space, community-based youth centers could either be established and or strengthen existing ones, for young people to continue to access information about climate change – alongside related and intersecting issues – and come together to advocate and take action on priority aspects of the issue in community-based groups. The young researchers have also suggested that young people can take a role in supporting local governments to raise awareness of – and roll out – relevant policies and initiatives such as the local disaster management plan and manage climate information flows between officials and community members.



Namandla Mupunganyi, a young leader from Harare sharing her reflections on data collection and transcription.

RESEARCHER PROFILES

Restless Development recruited and trained 20 Young Leaders (18–25) in Zimbabwe. These Young Leaders worked in pairs across 10 rural and urban communities in 2 districts, Harare and Chimanimani and brought unique perspectives from the communities in which they live and work.



Abigail Chikukwa

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chikukwa

Abigail is 21 years old. She likes farming and travelling. Her greatest values are teamwork, love and family.



Claris Tariro Chigamba

DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Churu Farm

Claris is 23 years old. She likes music, youth empowerment and entrepreneurship. Her greatest values are integrity, loyalty and accountability.



Farai Nyazire

DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Highfields

Farai is 22 years old and is partially blind. He likes music and his greatest value is honesty.



Gamuchirai Mutidzawanda

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chakohwa

Gamuchirai is 21 years old and she likes baking. Her greatest values are authenticity and commitment.



Kahwena Yananai

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chakohwa

Kahwena is 25 years old. He likes travelling and football. His greatest value is consistency.



Livert Mudzingenyama

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Mhakwe

Livert is 21 years old. He likes singing and sport. His greatest value is professionalism.



Mershance Muresherwa

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Mhakwe

Mershance is 25 years old and she likes sport. Her greatest values are teamwork and family.



Methembe Mlilo

DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Eyecourt

Methembe is 25 years old and deaf. She likes swimming. Her greatest value is friendship.



Namandla Naledi Mpunganyi

DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Eyecourt

Namandla is 25 years old and she likes to write podcasts. Her greatest values are authenticity, hard work and integrity.



Natasha Paidamoyo Nyangaswa

DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Ushewokunze

Natasha is 21 years old. She likes reading and singing. Her greatest values are success, religion and family.



Kahwena Yananai

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chakohwa

Kahwena is 25 years old. He likes travelling and football. His greatest value is consistency.



Nyasha Bridget Chinyundos

DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Highfields

Nyasha is 25 years old. She likes learning and personal development. Her greatest values are transparency and honesty.



Prince Abel Taushwa

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Coppa

Prince is 25 years old. He likes farming and religion. His greatest values are consistency and honesty.



Sharon Mhlandhla

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Nhedziwa

Sharon is 21 years old and she likes travelling. Her greatest values are self-respect and honesty.



Sibongile Simango

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Coppa

Sibongile is 25 years old. She likes researching, reading journals and listening to music. Her greatest values are integrity and reliability.



Takudzwa Makaza

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DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Nhedziwa

Takudzwa is 25 years old. He likes food and travelling. His greatest value is loyalty.



Kahwena Yananai

.....

DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chakohwa

Kahwena is 25 years old. He likes travelling and football. His greatest value is consistency.



Takudzwa Mudzani

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DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chimanimani Village

Takudzwa is 25 years old. She likes fashion designing and sport. Her greatest values are teamwork and religion.



Tatenda Muripo

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DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chikukwa

Tatenda is 20 years old and she likes reading. Her greatest value is hard work.



Themba Harahwa

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DISTRICT: Chimanimani

PLACEMENT: Chimanimani Village

Themba is 25 years old. He likes mechanics and sport. His greatest value is open-mindedness.



Thembekile Mlambo

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DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Churu Farm

Thembekile is 22 years old. She likes acting, cooking and women empowerment. Her greatest values are honesty, integrity and loyalty.



Trevor Kumbirai Miti

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DISTRICT: Harare

PLACEMENT: Ushewokunze

Trevor is 23 years old. He likes music and dancing. His greatest values are honesty and reliability.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The research team would like to thank Sabina Basi of Restless Development, Mellisa Perekwa of Restless Development, Natalie Agboeze of Restless Development, Farai Muronzi of Restless Development, Caroline Ward of Wellcome, and Haidee Bell of Wellcome for their thoughtful strategic direction of the research and their review.

This report was part-funded by a grant from Wellcome.



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Youth Voices Lab
Power of the Collective



Co-funded by
the European Union

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the financing of a **EuropeAid/177759/DD/ACT/Multi** Grant. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the **AU-EU Youth Voices Lab - Power of the Collective** consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.