



Aspiring Women Leaders at the Nyanga Women in Leadership Program Selection

## Getting Engaged

**W**elcome to the first issue of "Engaged", the CEAA (Citizen Engagement for Accountability Activity) newsletter. CEAA is a five-year project implemented by a consortium that includes EWMi Zimbabwe Trust, Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE), and Restless Development (RD). The project engages and supports efforts that strengthen the culture of civic engagement in Zimbabwe. The Activity works with and through local organizational initiatives, seeking unique methods and innovative pathways and partnerships to achieve

this purpose. CEAA's objectives are to: (1) Activate citizen agency for accountability, (2) Strengthen women's leadership and inclusion, and (3) Increase youth empowerment and positive engagement.

The main purpose of the Engaged newsletter is to keep our stakeholders in the loop about the work we are doing. To do this we will feature regular columns that pick up on different aspects of CEAA's interventions.

Part of CEAA's philosophy is to use new and innovative methods to ensure that the project achieves meaningful, long-lasting, and sustainable results. The "Leading Edge" column will

showcase the innovative approaches the project uses.

"After Effects" is a column about notable changes that resulted from CEAA's work. These changes could be complete or in progress. And the column may be written by one of the CEAA partners, the CEAA team, or indeed by a beneficiary.

Insights gained by CEAA partners and grantees during project implementation inform the execution of the project strategy. "Vantage Point", written from a partner's or grantee's perspective, brings some of these insights to life.

The "Future Tense" column will inform us of major upcoming events.

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# LEADING EDGE

## Celebrating Change-Makers

### CEAA's Inaugural Best Practice & Innovation Awards

In October 2023, CEAA announced a new initiative to honour standout civil society efforts in Zimbabwe - the Best Practice and Innovation Awards.

With the goal of fueling even more dynamic action for accountability and empowerment, CEAA put out an open call for organizations and individuals to showcase their most creative programs making a difference. The response revealed the wealth of inspiring advocacy happening across sectors, from youth leadership to economic justice.

A judging panel selected five finalists demonstrating impact and possibility: Legal Resources Foundation, Habakkuk Trust, Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association, and Signs of Hope. In November, they gathered for the awards ceremony at the NANGO Directors' Retreat in Victoria Falls.

It made for a powerful scene: civil society leaders from all walks of life mingling at sunset, as the finalists delivered impassioned five-minute

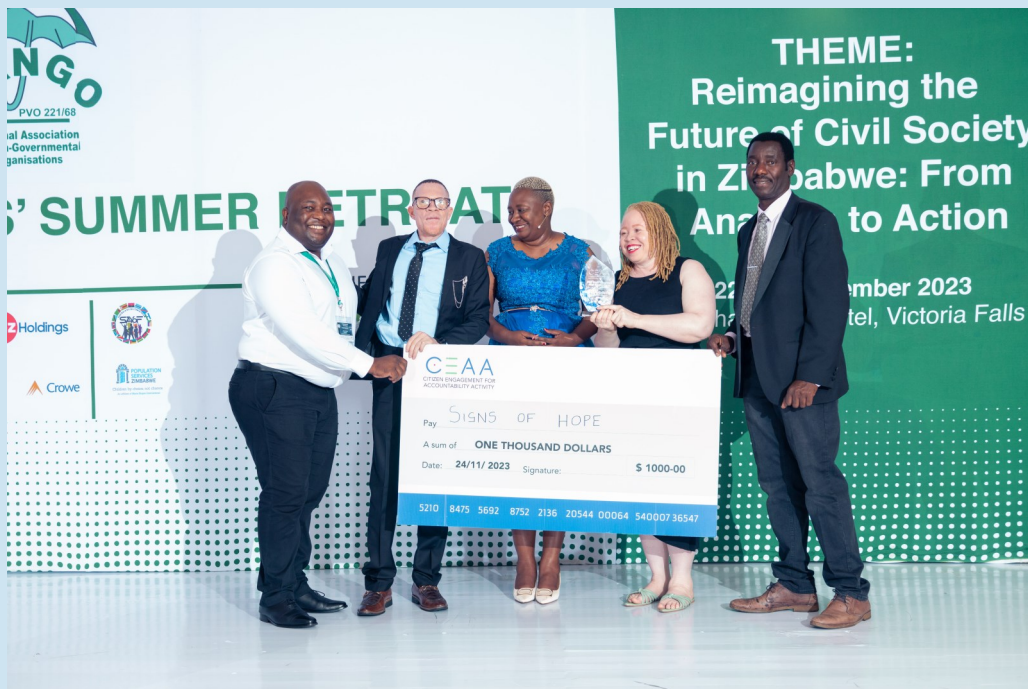
itches on their initiatives. From amplifying mining community voices to empowering female informal traders, their presentations highlighted homegrown solutions

shaping a vibrant democracy.

When the envelope finally opened, Signs of Hope and Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association emerged as the inaugural awardees. As they stepped on stage to claim their

trophies and prizes, everyone was on their feet, filled with inspiration.

The first-ever awards marked a milestone for CEAA and Zimbabwe's civic movement, bringing together changemakers to celebrate and multiply progress. Most of all, they confirmed an unstoppable truth: united with imagination and purpose, citizens have the power to transform their nation for the better.



The Signs of Hope Team receives their award from CEAA CoP, Tapiwa Chisakaitwa (left)

## VANTAGE POINT

### WiLP - Empowering Women to Lead



Women in Nyanga patiently wait to be interviewed for the Women in Leadership Program

In 15 districts across Zimbabwe, a groundbreaking program is unfolding that could reshape gender equality for generations to come. The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) has launched the Women in Leadership Program (WiLP) under CEAA, an initiative uniquely designed to empower women to realize their full potential as leaders in their communities.

WiLP aims to shatter barriers that have long excluded Zimbabwean women from decision-making spaces. Through an intensive selection process across Manicaland, Matabeleland, Masvingo, Harare, Midlands and Mashonaland West, 750 aspiring women leaders from diverse backgrounds will receive training, mentorship and support to equip them to occupy leadership roles at the local level.

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**VANTAGE POINT** *(Continued from page 2)*

Tailored training sessions will cover a wide range of topics from communication and public speaking to information and communications technology (ICT), instilling skills vital for leadership. WCoZ is also providing smartphones to facilitate digital literacy and access to online platforms for all participants.

The program entails a ripple effect of impact within communities. Each of the 750 women will share their knowledge by training ten more aspiring leaders in their neighborhoods. A separate cohort of 75 mentors will provide one-on-one guidance to instill confidence for new leaders navigating their roles.

WiLP also focuses holistically on

tackling obstacles to women’s participation like economic disempowerment. Social entrepreneurship training will open up income generation prospects. Participants will receive in-kind



*Celebrating receiving their smartphones*

business start-up support in their ventures of choice, from a needs

assessment through securing inputs. The program also establishes community savings and loan associations to alleviate financial limitations.

By boldly investing in women, WiLP is setting change in motion across Zimbabwe. Women will continue stepping up from the community level to the national stage. As WiLP participants progress through the program, they will gain the vision, voice and resources to leave an enduring legacy of women’s empowerment for their districts. With only 28% of parliamentary seats currently held by women, and a society still skewed by patriarchal norms, there has never been a more vital time to unleash women’s leadership.

## AFTER EFFECTS

### Rise of a Rural Entrepreneur - The Story of Anna Makarutse



Ms. Anna Makarutse, a married entrepreneur from Tandvi Village has four children of her own and also takes care of her late sister’s three children of school going age. She has achieved remarkable success in her floor polish business, thanks to her participation in the Girls Entrepreneurship project funded by the Citizen Engagement for Accountability Activity (CEAA) and implemented by Women for Economic and Social Empowerment (WESE). This initiative, which commenced in November 2022, empowers women to become self-sustaining entrepreneurs. Ms. Makarutse's journey began with a modest investment of US\$10. In

December 2022, immediately after the training, she procured basic ingredients and commenced her floor polish venture, initially generating a meagre profit of \$13.

Inspired by the Girls Entrepreneurship project, Ms. Makarutse decided to transform her knowledge of floor polish-making, passed down from her grandmother, into a thriving source of income. Her entrepreneurial path faced initial challenges, particularly in customer acquisition and brand establishment. However, through word-of-mouth marketing and demonstrating the effectiveness of her product, she steadily gained her customers' trust. As Ms. Makarutse narrates her journey she appreciates the knowledge gained from WESE which transformed her into being a leader as she coordinates with the young women she mentors into

With additional funds from 'mukando,' a women's savings scheme, and reinvesting her profits into the business, she expanded her production. Currently, she manufactures approximately 40 buckets of 40 litres of floor polish each week, resulting in weekly profits of around \$520. Her ambition is to grow her business further, ultimately offering various floor polish variants for different flooring types.

Ms. Makarutse's floor polish has become a renowned product in her village, attracting customers from far and wide. She has also employed two young women who market and sell her product in the village and neighbouring areas. One of them is a school dropout who is raising money to go back to school whilst the other one is married and is not an exception in the intersecting challenges faced by young



successfully selling her detergents.

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**AFTER EFFECTS** (Continued from page 3)

married women in Tandi Village. Through CEAA-supported mentoring and coaching initiatives by WESE, she has imparted her knowledge of floor polish-making to 12 young girls in the community comprising both school-going girls and school dropouts who have been having challenges raising money for their upkeep.

Participation in the local agricultural show offered Ms. Makarutse the opportunity to showcase her product and raise awareness about her brand, made possible with CEAA's support. This outreach enabled her to attract customers from neighbouring villages, expanding her market base. Notably, she caters to individuals with limited income by selling even the smallest amounts of floor polish (250ml). However, there is potential for further

growth through investments in modern, eco-friendly packaging and marketing strategies, as customers currently bring their own containers.

Ms. Makarutse's journey showcases the power of entrepreneurship and empowerment in transforming livelihoods and bolstering local economies, with support from CEAA.

To hear more about her success, watch her interview [here](#).

## Zimbabwe's Addiction Crisis Threatens its Future

By Ashton Bumhira

Zimbabwe faces a growing youth drug epidemic that threatens the country's future. Authorities recently established a commission to address rampant drug and alcohol abuse, especially among young people. Besides longstanding marijuana use, newer drugs like crystal meth, cocaine, and glue have taken root.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa has called substance abuse a "teething challenge," with usage reaching "phenomenal" and "alarming levels." The government has set up a National Drug Abuse Fund and outlined steps for "prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and rehabilitation." However, the criminalization approach may prove ineffective; addiction should be treated as a public health issue prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment.

Several factors drive youth toward drugs, including: family history of addiction, mental health disorders, peer pressure, lack of family support, ignorance of drug effects, and unemployment-fueled idleness. Drug markets thrive in urban areas where

bored youth have become the biggest consumers.

While the government's rhetoric sounds promising, questions remain

Two critical unanswered questions remain: Who supplies the drugs? And who suffers most from their spread? Marijuana and cheap liquors have local sources, but cocaine, meth and other hard drugs depend on overseas cartels and syndicates involving rich and powerful traffickers. Corrupt officials enable smuggling at ports of entry.

The brunt is borne by Zimbabwe's youth – the 60% of the population under 35 constituting the country's future. Drug use distracts young people from positive community engagement and diminishes their economic prospects.

Zimbabwe is not unique in facing a youth drug crisis. But reactive policies have proven ineffective so far. Authorities must

better understand the roots of addiction and adopt proactive rehabilitation programs. Only by rescuing the young generation from substance abuse can Zimbabwe safeguard its future. The government must back words with resources and efforts focused on the most vulnerable.

about funding and implementation. Plans to establish treatment facilities, vocational programs, recreation centers, etc. seem aspirational when land grabs have eliminated public spaces and social services remain neglected. Proposed legal amendments and inter-ministerial committees seem unlikely to resolve such a complex and entrenched issue.



### Acknowledging the Impactful Contributions of Our Partners Across CEAA Objectives

As we bid farewell to several CEAA partners whose projects concluded between September and November, we extend our most profound appreciation for the remarkable and impactful work accomplished during the lifetime of your projects.

Your unwavering dedication has

significantly contributed to the success of CEAA and its overarching mission. The positive outcomes achieved through your efforts have played a pivotal role in advancing a culture of active citizenship, inclusivity, and positive youth development.

In upcoming issues of *Engaged*, we will showcase some of the inspiring success stories that highlight the achievements made possible by your

hard work and collaboration.

To our valued partners, thank you for your invaluable contributions to CEAA's mission. Your accomplishments resonate across civic engagement, gender equality, and youth development. As these projects conclude, we eagerly anticipate future collaborations, building on the foundation of our shared commitment to creating positive change.



### Remembering Trish Spencer

#### A Woman of Strength, Perseverance and Solutions

Our dear colleague and friend, Trish Spencer, recently lost her courageous battle with cancer. Though we are devastated by this loss, we choose to honor Trish by celebrating the incredible spirit she embodied every day.

Trish was the epitome of inner strength and perseverance. Even as she endured intense pain, she never allowed the disease to define her or extinguish the light within. She continued pushing forward, battling the physical pain while maintaining her positive mindset. Trish remained solution-oriented too, diligently working right up until her last days as our Office Manager.

Her motivation was ensuring her beloved son Costa could continue with his university education. As a single mother, she selflessly worked tirelessly to support him. Trish always prioritized Costa's future and wellbeing, constantly seeking solutions to pave his path to graduation.

That embodied who Trish was - a devoted mom, a problem-solver, an organizer, a woman of grit who motivated those around her to excel. She'd always have an answer or know someone to call - whether it was printing brochures, booking hotel rooms in distant cities or troubleshooting any work crisis. If there was a need, Trish found a solution.

We miss our dear friend and colleague tremendously. Her passing leaves a void in our team and our hearts. Yet Trish's fighting spirit, perseverance in hardship, and commitment to family continues inspiring us. May we honor her blessed memory by embracing the best parts of who Trish was - a woman of grit, solutions and strength.

