

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT ON ADOLESCENT DRUG USE AND ACCESS TO SRH SERVICES IN MBARE, ZIMBABWE

OVERVIEW

Mbare and Epworth are densely populated urban settlements with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and limited access to healthcare services. Adolescents and young people face barriers to accessing SRH services, including limited knowledge, and socio-economic challenges. Adolescents are using substances with direct impact on mental health and risk behaviours and vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections.

Results:

- *Drug and substance use driven by availability, poverty, unemployment, and lack of future prospects*
- *Transactional sex as survival strategy, closely linked to drug use—for endurance and income*
- *Managing health under the shadow of substance use*
- *Substance use shaping SRH choices and behaviors*
- *AYP face multiple barriers in accessing healthcare*
- *Free services as key motivators for AYP to seek care*

Conclusions

This assessment reveals how drug use, poverty, and sexual health risks intersect in the lives of adolescent and young people in Mbare and Epworth, underscoring the need for holistic, youth-centred support grounded in dignity, resilience, and inclusion.

Recommendations:

- *Promotion of truly youth-friendly staff*
- *Expanding safe spaces and harm reduction*
- *Empowerment through lived experience*
- *Collaboration and integration with broader networks*
- *Breaking the cycle of idleness*
- *Injectable PrEP access*
- *Involve ambassadors from the bases*
- *Promote self-care through community distribution*

Methodology:

- *Desk and literature review*
- *Qualitative and participatory methodologies*
- *20 individual in-depth and 5 paired interviews*
- *29 FGD, informal talks and observations*
- *Data validation statement*
- *Limitations: not all the study sites could be visited by the assessment team*

QUOTE

“... here, in this area [Mbare], sex work goes hand in hand with drugs.”

FGD in-schoolgirls, 18-21y