

# Transforming toxic behaviour

Preventing HIV by improving gender relations at a Zimbabwean university

A case study of the Combined Oxfam Gender and HIV and AIDS Program in Zimbabwe.





ABOVE: SHAPE gender activists, from left, Lawrence, Salome and Tafara discuss gender issues before heading out to speak with other students on campus. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

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FRONT COVER: SHAPE peer educator and gender activist Willard Barure is studying second-year marketing at Midlands State University in Gweru, Zimbabwe. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

# INTRODUCTION

Sustainability, Hope, Action, Prevention, Education (SHAPE) Zimbabwe Trust is a university-based organisation that offers HIV prevention programs to university students in Zimbabwe.

Established in 2000, the organisation operates in four state universities and has a combined student membership of about 1,000.

This case study documents SHAPE's experiences in implementing its Gender, Masculinities and HIV project at the Midlands State University (MSU) in Gweru. The project, which attempts to improve gender relations between male and female students and influence their sexual behaviour, is funded by Oxfam Australia through the Combined Oxfam Gender and HIV and AIDS (COGENHA) program.

In the Gender, Masculinities and HIV project, SHAPE takes a very strong gender stance, arguing that inequitable gender relations need to be transformed in order to effectively respond to the HIV epidemic. Unlike other gender programs that focus solely on empowering women, the SHAPE approach also targets men for change. It is this male component which is unique about SHAPE's intervention and which forms the basis of this case study.

This project has been selected as a case study for its innovative approach to behaviour change strategies with young people. Aspects of the SHAPE project that will be explored in this study include:

- the process by which this project has been established and the involvement of university students in its design, implementation and evaluation;
- ways in which female and male student behaviour changed as a result of the intervention messages; and

- learnings that can be drawn from the SHAPE experience with regards to HIV programming for youth.

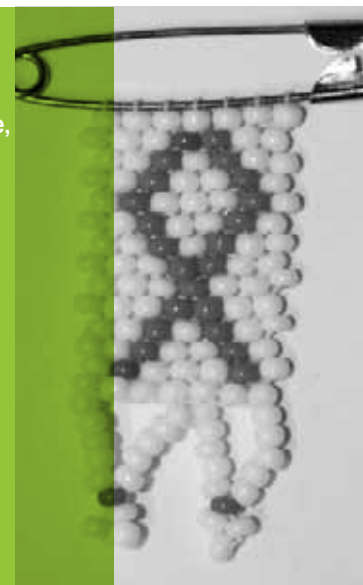
Oxfam supports this project because of its good practice model for HIV programming which is innovative, participant-driven and systematic and which targets the transformation of inequitable gender relations as a core strategy to prevent HIV. It is hoped that other organisations and individuals working in the area of young people and HIV will find the SHAPE experience informative and useful for their own work.

## COGENHA

The Combined Oxfam Gender and HIV and AIDS Program (COGENHA) based in Harare, Zimbabwe, supports community-based and non-government organisations that are responding to the HIV and AIDS epidemics.

COGENHA provides funding and technical support to organisations that focus on:

- reducing the risk of young people and women to HIV infection by promoting sexual behaviour change and improving gender equity; and
- Improving integrated care and support services for people living with HIV and AIDS and their carers.



RIGHT: Photo: Robert McKechnie/OxfamAUS.



## YOUNG PEOPLE AND HIV IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has the fifth-highest HIV prevalence in the world, with one in five adults, or 20.1% of people aged 15–49, living with HIV. It also has the second lowest life expectancy in the world – 36 years for women and 37.2 years for men<sup>1</sup> – largely due to the country’s HIV and AIDS epidemics.

But despite these alarming statistics, Zimbabwe is the first country in Southern Africa to show a drop in HIV prevalence, down from 24.6% of adults in 2003 to 20.1% in 2005<sup>2</sup>.

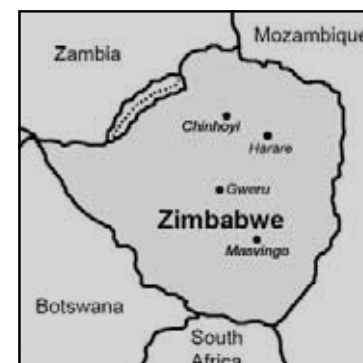
Young people between the ages of 15–24 are at greatest risk of being exposed to HIV. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that this age group accounts for at least half of all new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa – a figure which reached 2.8 million in 2006.

In Zimbabwe, government statistics reveal that 16.2% of young people aged 15–24 are living with HIV. Women are most at risk of being infected, with 18.5% of young women aged 15–24 living with the virus, compared to 8.9% of young men.<sup>3</sup>

UNAIDS knowledge and behavioural indicators for 2005<sup>4</sup> provide greater insight:

- 45.9% of young women aged 15–24 and 43.7% of young men do not know how to prevent HIV.
- 78.6% of young men had sex with a casual partner in the previous 12 months, compared to 23.3% of young women.
- Of those who engaged in casual sex, about half (57.4% of women and 43.5% of men) did not use condoms.
- 8.5% of young men and 8.1% of young women have had sex before the age of 15.

Zimbabwe has responded to the HIV youth crisis in various ways: by investing in health and education, establishing the National AIDS Council and AIDS Trust Fund and focusing on behaviour change programs such as mandatory HIV and AIDS education in schools, anti-AIDS clubs, life skills training and peer education. Unfortunately these efforts have had little impact on reducing young people’s vulnerability to HIV, with infection rates remaining high.



Many HIV and AIDS programs targeted at young people fail because they are based on the romantic and idealistic notion of sexual abstinence, rather than taking into account the realities of young peoples’ lives. Many programs:

- tend to be moralistic and to focus on abstinence-only messages;
- are often adult-led and do not actively involve young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of activities;
- rely on lectures which young people find boring and alienating;
- are rarely designed to help young people develop the necessary communication, negotiation and decision-making skills to protect themselves from infection; and
- assume that young people constitute one large homogenous group which will benefit equally from “one-size-fits-all” activities.

OPPOSITE: MSU First year law student Privedge Mvundla and second year English student Belinda Zinyuke with the gender activist bags they use when speaking with other students about gender and HIV issues. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

## HIV AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

University students in Zimbabwe have remained largely invisible in HIV dialogue and programming. This is partly due to the mistaken belief that they are well informed on the epidemic and know how to protect themselves from infection. This group is also not considered to be “at high risk” of infection when assessed against other young people, such as out-of-school and rural youth.

However, a Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices (KAP) survey, which SHAPE conducted at MSU, challenges the classification of university students as a “low-risk” group relative to other young people. In the survey, 83% of female and male students were sexually active while 38% of students had not used condoms at their last sexual encounter.

The university environment is especially conducive to sexual risk-taking by students. On most university campuses, students enjoy a new-found freedom, living with virtually no parental or adult control over their behaviour, for the first time.

In many universities, students can entertain guests of the opposite sex in their rooms until late at night; they can have intimate relationships – a practice which is banned in high school and is often a punishable offence; and they can experiment with drugs, alcohol and sex to keep themselves entertained.

These specific circumstances need to be taken into account when designing and implementing HIV interventions targeted at university students.

It is against this background that SHAPE was founded in May 2000, with the intention of “revolutionising” HIV interventions targeted at young people.

**“SOME 110 ZIMBABWEANS UNDER THE AGE OF 15 WILL BECOME INFECTED WITH HIV AND AIDS TODAY. ANOTHER 110 WILL BE INFECTED TOMORROW, 110 MORE THE DAY AFTER THAT. YET DESPITE THESE HORRENDOUS NUMBERS ZIMBABWEANS HAVE THE DETERMINATION AND THE EDUCATION TO DEFEAT HIV AND AIDS AND OTHER CAUSES OF CHILD MORTALITY.”**

CAROL BELLAMY, UNICEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MARCH 2005

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: MSU students check the campus notice board. TOP RIGHT: More than 180 female students have completed SHAPE's assertiveness training for women, designed to challenge traditional female stereotypes and ideologies. BOTTOM: SHAPE peer educators and gender activists regularly take the opportunity to share information about gender equality and HIV and AIDS with fellow students at popular spots like the campus cafeteria. Photos: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



**“ MORE FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS NOW OPENLY ASSERT THEIR CHOICE TO ABSTAIN FROM SEX WITHOUT FEAR OF RIDICULE FROM OTHER STUDENTS. I FEEL THE TRAINING, DIALOGUE SESSIONS AND NEWSLETTERS ARE WORKING IN ASSISTING US TO ACQUIRE SKILLS THAT ARE SAVING OUR LIVES.”**

LORRAINE, SECOND-YEAR STUDENT.



# SHAPE ZIMBABWE TRUST

SHAPE Zimbabwe Trust is a non-profit organisation that was founded in May 2000 by 13 students studying at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. The group was concerned that university students seemed oblivious to their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS and, instead of protecting themselves, were continuing to take personal risks.

SHAPE wanted to end this student apathy and make HIV prevention everyone's responsibility. The group began by implementing an HIV intervention at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, the oldest and largest tertiary institution in the country. In the seven years since its formation, SHAPE has extended its HIV work to three other state universities – Chinhoyi University of Technology in Chinhoyi, the Masvingo State University in Masvingo and the Midlands State University in Gweru, which is the focus of this case study. SHAPE has also

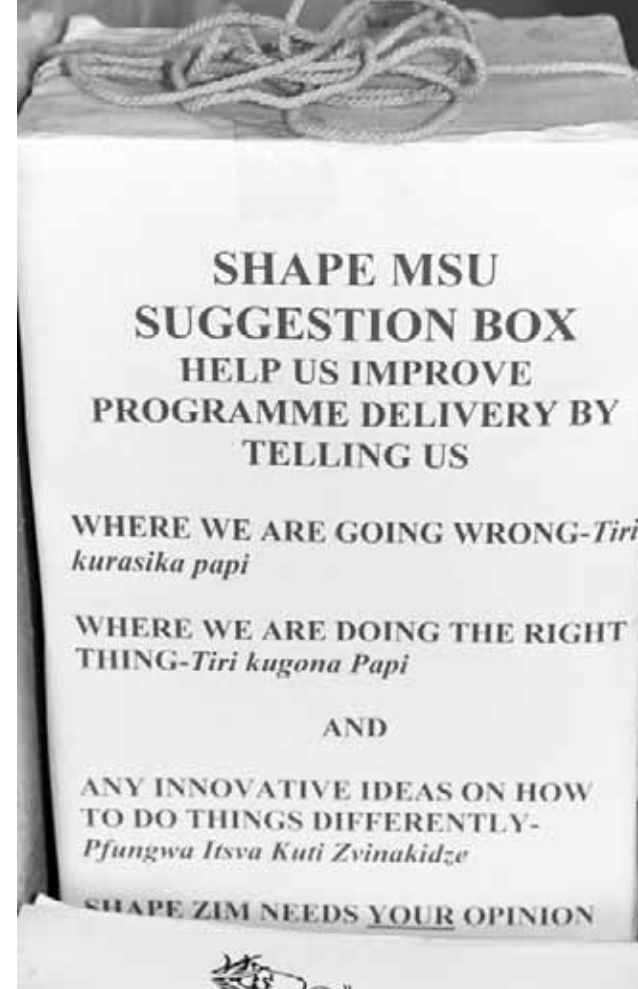
established itself as the only non-government organisation in Zimbabwe specifically targeting university students in HIV prevention.

SHAPE has 10 staff members, who include the Founder and Executive Director Shepstone Musiyarira, a finance officer, development manager, four program managers, a project officer, bookkeeper and messenger. All but three of the SHAPE team were actively involved in SHAPE activities while they were still students. SHAPE also has a team of student volunteers on each campus.

## SHAPE'S OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- increase the proportion of first year female and male university students who take protective action against HIV by being mutually monogamous, having fewer sexual partners, using condoms correctly and consistently and abstaining from sex;
- promote equality in sexual decision-making in students' relationships;
- encourage open discussions on HIV and AIDS in order to reduce the fears and misconceptions that reinforce high risk behaviours and foster gender role stereotypes; and
- encourage female and male university students to learn their HIV status so that they are able to live positively, access available treatment options and reduce the risk of transmission to others.

LEFT: Female students are encouraged to speak out at SHAPE discussions, workshops and talk shows. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



“ AT THE TIME OF SHAPE’S FORMATION, THERE WAS A LOT OF STIGMA ATTACHED TO TALKING OPENLY ABOUT HIV AND AIDS. HIV EDUCATION WAS CONFINED TO THE SMALL GROUP OF TRAINED PEER EDUCATORS WHO WERE LABELLED AS ‘THE AIDS PEOPLE’ AND WERE NOT A VERY POPULAR GROUP. IT WAS THIS SILENCE, DENIAL AND APATHY AROUND THE EPIDEMIC THAT WE WANTED TO CHALLENGE AND ELIMINATE COMPLETELY. ”

SHEPSTONE MUSIYARIRA, SHAPE FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



# SHAPE AT MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

SHAPE began its HIV work at MSU in late 2004. MSU is the third-largest state university in Zimbabwe and is situated in the Midlands provincial capital, Gweru, 232 kilometres south-west of Harare. About 10,300 students attend MSU, with 52% being women.

MSU is well-known in Zimbabwe for its progressive approach to gender equality and the high level of women in leadership roles, including a female Dean of Students and a female Student Executive Council president. It was because of this strong stance on gender equality that SHAPE chose to pilot its Gender, Masculinities and HIV project at MSU.

“We felt that it would be much easier to nurture a group of visible male gender activists here at MSU than it would be in the other universities,” SHAPE’s MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka explains. “The university was already open to the idea of addressing gender equality and were more likely to support our work.”

The project ultimately seeks to reduce female and male students’ vulnerability to HIV infection by challenging existing gender role stereotypes that condone sexual risk-taking among men while reinforcing women’s subordinate status. One of the main ways it does this is by engaging female and male students in meaningful and constructive discussions around gender issues.

In previous mixed-sex workshops, SHAPE had observed that discussions were often polarised along gender lines. The men would take a defensive stance, trivialising women’s concerns and deliberately making sexist remarks to upset their female peers.

The women, meanwhile, would adopt one of two approaches – the very few energetic ones took a militant, radical feminist stance while the majority retreated into injured silence, opting not to engage with the men at all.

SHAPE also noted that while women were constantly targeted for gender training to improve their assertiveness, there was no parallel sensitisation process for men. As a result, many young men resisted women’s empowerment because they did not understand gender equality, not because they were unwilling to change or share power.

These experiences led SHAPE to find ways to respond to the needs of both men and women. This included creating separate spaces for the male and female students to safely and freely voice their views without feeling attacked, embarrassed or violated, and involving both men and women in gender training.

PREVIOUS PAGE, TOP LEFT: Feedback from training participants helps SHAPE continuously improve its activities and workshops. Photo: Jane Willey/OxfamAUS. TOP RIGHT: SHAPE Founder and Executive Director Shepstone Musiyarira. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS. BOTTOM: First and second year students, from left, Rumbidzai, Willard, Penelope, Tungamirai and Brighton discuss an assignment during a study session. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT: SHAPE gender activist Tafara, a first year information systems student at MSU, talks about the dangers and consequences of exhibiting “toxic” behaviours. TOP RIGHT: SHAPE MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka talks to a student about SHAPE’s masculinities workshops. Photos: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



“BEFORE [SHAPE], STUDENTS WOULD ENGAGE IN SUCH RISKY BEHAVIOUR, IN GOING TO THE LOCAL [BAR] AND PICKING UP WOMEN THERE AND SLEEPING WITH THEM. BUT AFTER SHAPE CREATED THAT PLATFORM FOR DISCUSSION AND DEBATE, I HAVE SEEN A HUGE LEAP IN TERMS OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE — WHERE STUDENTS ARE BEGINNING TO BE CAREFUL, THEY ARE BEGINNING TO USE PROTECTION AND BEGINNING TO VARY THEMSELVES.”

CORLEN, FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT.

# THE GENDER, MASCULINITIES AND HIV PROJECT

SHAPE's Gender, Masculinities and HIV project seeks to prevent the spread of HIV among young people by shifting the gender imbalances and misconceptions that result in students engaging in high-risk behaviours.

The project aims to empower university students to make informed choices about safer sex practices; improve students' attitudes towards gender and sexuality by encouraging equality in sexual decision-making; help students understand the importance of determining their HIV status; and reduce the stigma and misconceptions around HIV and AIDS.

## KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS

The project comprises four key components.

1. A two-day "positive masculinities" and HIV training workshop for male students.
2. A two-day assertiveness and HIV training workshop for female students.
3. The implementation of gender and HIV advocacy plans designed by the trained female and male students.
4. Post-training follow-up activities which consist of talk-shows, seminars, pressure groups and edutainment to raise awareness around gender and HIV issues.

## TARGET GROUP

The project initially targeted female and male first-year students who were just beginning their university experience and were therefore more accessible over a longer period of time. These students were identified as being at a higher risk of HIV infection due to their unfamiliarity with campus life.

The target group has since expanded to include other students, such as those in leadership positions and those in their second, third or final year of studies. This change came about for two reasons – returning students requested to be included in the training and secondly, SHAPE realised how difficult it was for trained first-year students to influence the behaviours and attitudes of more senior students.

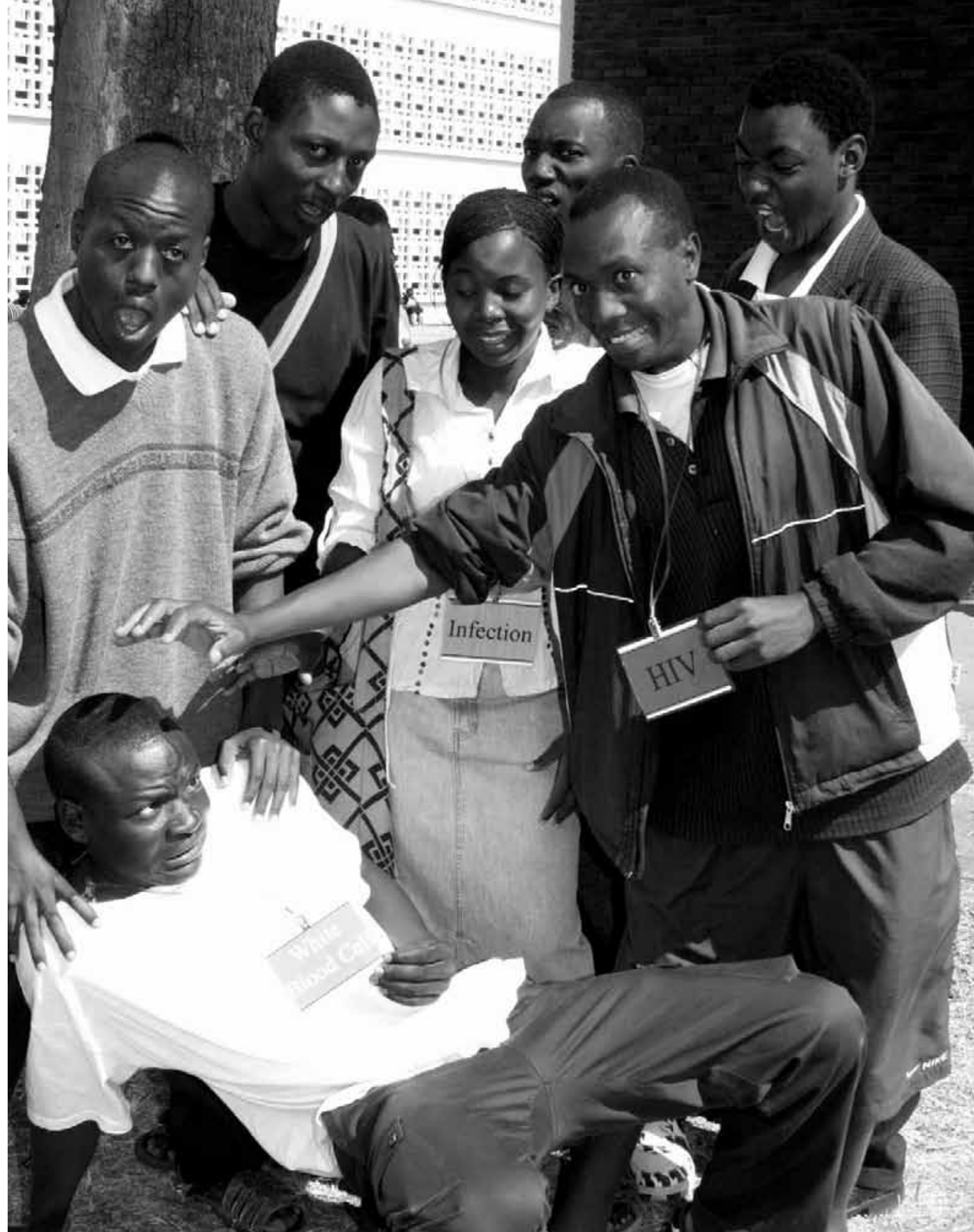
Since the project's inception at MSU in 2004, 180 women have completed the assertiveness training workshops and 120 men have completed the masculinities workshops. Participation in the SHAPE project is voluntary and interested students are encouraged to register for the training on a first-come,

first-served basis. SHAPE deliberately targets a higher number of women than men for the training sessions because they are at higher risk of HIV infection and stand to benefit most from program activities. In addition to the 300 trained students, SHAPE MSU has a further 200 student members.

As the project has evolved, its target groups have expanded to include:

- the broader MSU community – to transform the university culture as a whole and create an environment supportive of behaviour change; and
- secondary school students from Gweru town – to reach those young people not yet at university, but still facing many of the same risks which make them vulnerable to HIV infection.

In its first three years at MSU, SHAPE has reached out to more than 5,000 members of the university community (both academic and non-academic) and to more than 2,000 members of the wider Gweru community including secondary school students.



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### 1. Transforming toxic masculinities – gender training for male students.

The masculinities workshops aim to improve male students' attitudes towards gender equality and to encourage them to support women's empowerment. By training male students, SHAPE hopes to cultivate a new breed of men who are non-violent, respect women, challenge gender role stereotypes, influence culture and are tolerant of others.

UBA is an acronym that stands for University Bachelors Association and is commonly used to refer to male students at MSU. One workshop participant described the key traits of an "ordinary UBA" as:

- not considering other people's feelings;
- rudeness and obscenity;
- having multiple sexual partners;
- forcing oneself on a woman; and
- the excessive consumption of alcohol.

These negative behaviours, or "toxic masculinities" as SHAPE calls them, are the focus of the workshops. During the training, male students explore the issues of power, violence and society and how their behaviour places them at risk of HIV infection and contributes to sexual harassment. Rather than listening to lectures, the young men take part in interactive exercises which show them how they learn these socially-constructed gender roles and are pressured into adopting and exhibiting these 'toxic' masculine behaviours.

One exercise uses popular men's sports such as soccer as a basis for discussion about masculinity. The students identify the traits that characterise these sports — competitiveness, aggression, power and strength — and then draw comparisons to their own lives, reflecting on how they exhibit these behaviours and use them to reinforce and uphold social norms. The students then discuss alternatives to these behaviours such as compassion, cooperation, negotiation and communication.

The workshops are held over two days, mostly on weekends, and are facilitated by a male trainer. Training groups are kept small, usually about 20–25 students, to allow for deeper and more meaningful discussions.

The success of the workshops is largely due to the character and calibre of the trainer. SHAPE has identified three essential qualities that a trainer must possess to successfully engage men in meaningful dialogue around gender issues:

- a) The trainer must be male.
- b) The trainer should be a skilled facilitator, able to make use of participatory approaches and not just moralistic lecturing.
- c) The trainer must be a gender activist who firmly believes in gender equality and women's empowerment.

The workshops are not meant to be information dissemination forums; rather they are about altering deeply entrenched beliefs and behaviours and helping participants to personalise gender issues. They provide an important entry point for the male students to be more introspective, challenge cultural, patriarchal and social assumptions about masculinity and gender roles and redefine their masculinities by adopting more appropriate and effective behaviours and lifestyles.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Edutainment and role plays are an important part of SHAPE's work. SHAPE peer educators and gender activists act out how HIV is transmitted and then subsequently attacks the body. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS. OPPOSITE PAGE: Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

### DAVID, A SECOND YEAR STUDENT, SUMMED UP THE 11 TRAITS OF A "REAL MAN" WHO DOES NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THE PATRIARCHAL AND TOXIC TRAITS ASSOCIATED WITH DOMINANT MASCULINITY.

"A 'REAL MAN' IS:

1. ABLE TO SAY NO TO PEER PRESSURE.
2. A PRACTITIONER OF ABSTINENCE; A CONDOM IS A LAST RESORT.
3. RATIONAL RATHER THAN EMOTIONAL.
4. NOT SHORT TEMPERED.
5. DOES NOT ARGUE FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUING.
6. IS RESPONSIBLE.
7. USES REASONING POWER RATHER THAN PHYSICAL POWER.
8. PROVIDES FRUITFUL SERVICE TO SOCIETY.
9. IS NOT EGOCENTRIC.
10. IS CONSIDERATE.
11. IS GENDER SENSITIVE."



## IN PROFILE

### Willard Barure, SHAPE peer educator

Willard Barure, 23, is from Kwe Kwe, east of Gweru. He is studying marketing at MSU and is in his second year.

Willard joined SHAPE in 2004 and is now a peer educator, gender activist and counsellor. He helped to organise the Miss BIG pageant, which was part of a students' campaign against gender violence and he also belongs to a SHAPE pressure group that focuses on youth, drugs and substance abuse.

"I first became involved with SHAPE during Orientation Week. They held a talk show and then afterwards they asked for volunteers who wanted to go through masculinity training, so I took the opportunity.

"There was a time when I would not do certain things, just because I'm a guy. In my family we are two boys ... we would not do dishes, just because we were boys. We would not play some other games, which are mainly associated with females. There was a time when you would just want to have sex just because you are cut (circumcised).

"Being trained by SHAPE was like an eye-opener for me. In Zimbabwe, ... in the cultural bodies and the family structures, you would not talk freely on AIDS, on sex, on other things like that.

I was not aware of the risks that are around me. I did not think of how AIDS affects me as an individual. But here...we would talk openly about that...There was new information that was being passed on. So it was a different approach to what I had been exposed to.

"[The] masculinity workshop changed a lot of the attitudes and perceptions that I had. It made up for all my information inadequacies. So, with all that information having been brought up on the table, I had to choose whether I still wanted to do that and I chose not to pursue those toxic masculinities...I welcomed the SHAPE team reaching out to me, so I decided to give something back.

"The most important thing that I do with SHAPE, is being a counsellor, when I actually get to share my life testimonies with other people and I get to listen to what they say. You need to not prescribe solutions for them, but actually to help them focus on their lives. Sometimes, people get here, but they don't have a vision about themselves. They are kind of lost within the system. They

are not sure of their purpose here and so you want to give them that.

"SHAPE is unique because it is more involving, the atmosphere is informal and it teaches you to see life from a different perspective. We are a family at SHAPE. You get to meet new people; you get to get new information and new ideas and just be a person of compassion.

"My involvement with SHAPE saved me. It provided me with an escape route where I could focus on myself and on my strengths, rather than on my limitations. I now feel useful and important as an individual.

"SHAPE has given me an opportunity to make a difference in my own life and in other people's lives. I've become more of a person who doesn't live for money anymore, who doesn't live for many other things. I would just be fulfilled having somebody to talk to, somebody to touch...I think I'm becoming more of a person who is into people; it is the most important thing in my life now.

"All in all I am now the architect of my life."

“ TO START OFF I HAVE LEARNT TO BE AN ASSERTIVE PERSON DESPITE THE CONSEQUENCES I HAVE TO FACE. I NOW KNOW HOW TO STAND UP FOR MY RIGHTS NOT ONLY AS A HUMAN BEING BUT AS A WOMAN. IN THIS ERA WHERE THE STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY IS RIFE, I HAVE MYSELF AS ONE SUCH WARRIOR IN THE FIGHT TO REPOSITION WOMEN ON THEIR RIGHTFUL THRONE AS LEADERS IN THE HOME, AT WORK AND IN ALL SPHERES OF LIFE.”

SANDRA, FIRST-YEAR STUDENT.



## 2. Grooming strong, assertive women – gender training for female students.

While male students undergo masculinities training, female students take part in assertiveness training that focuses on gender roles and their link to women’s increased vulnerability to HIV infection. Workshops are held over two-days and are facilitated by a female trainer.

During the training, female students discuss and challenge female stereotypes and ideologies such as being subservient to men, being confined to the kitchen and being unable to say “no” to sex or to ask men to use condoms. Participatory exercises are used to make young women question the various messages they receive about being a “good” or “proper” woman. Often women have internalised their subordinate status to such an extent that they firmly believe it is natural and due to the biological differences between men and women. These exercises help them understand the social basis of

gender inequalities and realise that these can change. The first group of female students to complete the assertiveness training in 2004 developed the slogan “Strong, Assertive Women” to capture the essence of the workshops. The slogan has stuck ever since. Female students proudly wear t-shirts bearing the slogan at all SHAPE functions and this has proved to be an effective educational tool. The t-shirts attract attention from both female and male students and provide an easy entry point for peer education around gender and HIV issues.

The assertiveness training is helping to change the culture at MSU and increase women’s confidence to participate in university activities. Several women who have completed the training now hold leadership positions on campus, including the Student Representative Council; they are taking part in previously men-dominated sports such as volleyball, soccer and chess, participating in academic discussions, organising SHAPE events

and facilitating dialogue around condom use, HIV and gender issues. Female students are also now standing up for their rights on campus. They have begun a strong campaign against sexual harassment and sexual abuse both on campus and in the wider community through their pressure group Fire and Ice.

This increase in self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness creates the space for female students to negotiate mutually beneficial relationships with male students and not succumb to peer pressure.

TOP: First-year finance student Catherine and second-year media studies student Melissa do their homework in their room in the female hall of residence at MSU. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.  
OPPOSITE PAGE: Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



## IN PROFILE

**Grace R Chirange, Culture Society President**

Grace Chirange, 23, is from Harare. She is completing a Bachelor of Arts Honours in African Languages and Culture and is in her fourth year.

Grace joined SHAPE soon after it was established at MSU in 2004 and is currently a peer educator and President of MSU’s Culture Society. In 2006 she helped organise a Culture Celebration Day at MSU that explored HIV and AIDS, gender and culture.

“I became very actively involved in SHAPE early this year because I became the President of the Culture Society and... we worked in collaboration with SHAPE Zimbabwe in order to raise awareness about gender, HIV and AIDS and culture.”

“Before I came to MSU, I noticed that in my background, women are marginalised. My mother didn’t get to have the same education that I did, whilst her brothers were taken to school. And you find that many women in the community at large were not offered the same opportunities as their male counterparts. So I found it rather interesting – why does our culture do that? Is it because they lose us (women) in the process when we get married?”

“SHAPE is helping us as peers to interact at a deeper level. Before SHAPE there was less

student-to-student interaction. Now, I find I can go to the next guy and approach and tell him ‘risky behaviour is not good’, because already there is that platform that we have gained from SHAPE Zimbabwe.

“Actually, just the day before yesterday, two guys came to me and were asking about sex and they were roughly between 19 and 21. And they were talking about sex, the myths involved, what are the truths and things like that. I think if you find a discussion between a male and a female so openly, that’s good because they get to understand how the females feel and we get to understand how they feel and we can help each other work towards positive behaviour in terms of HIV and AIDS. Also, it breaks [down] that cultural barrier whereby it is taboo in African culture to talk about sex, condoms with males; but now we can. It is helping us to just develop as a student body.

“This year we managed to hold a Culture Celebration Day and we were able to talk about gender, HIV and AIDS and culture. We also took it province-

wide. We took it to the city of Gweru and then we had a sort of roadshow...we are also planning on taking this nationwide, whereby we are going from province to province and highlighting the issues of HIV and AIDS, gender awareness and maybe culture and how it affects the community.

“It’s our hope that by using culture, culturally-based gala shows and things like that, we will be able to capture the general public, not just the elites of society, but the general person that is affected by HIV and AIDS.

“SHAPE has really touched this community...relationships are being built and conflict resolution has improved because people... are able to talk and help other students solve their personal problems. You notice that even the risky behaviour has changed. People now are so open about condoms. It’s not a rare thing to hear someone say ‘where are the condoms?’ Also SHAPE works with the Christian groups and that’s good because people get to also lean on the Christian spiritual beliefs so as to stop the bad behaviour.”

### 3. Nurturing a team of visible gender activists.

Students who have completed the masculinities and assertiveness trainings are expected to be gender activists around campus. They take part in follow-up training on facilitation skills, reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, counselling and interpersonal communication, so that they can share their knowledge with other students in a supportive environment and become agents for change.

Each activist develops an action plan which identifies specific gender issues they wish to tackle at the campus and maps out how they are going to achieve this.


The action plans have two functions:

- a) to be avenues through which the wider university community is sensitised on pertinent gender and HIV issues; and
- b) to nurture a core group of male and female students who are willing to work with each other to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

Activities in the action plans may include one-on-one visits, campaigns, peer education informal discussions at halls of residence, talk shows, gala events, sporting activities, newsletters, fact sheets, action clubs and edutainment (drama, dance, music and poetry).

By developing and implementing action plans, the students are able to devise their own solutions to gender and HIV issues on campus and learn important skills such as project planning, project management, advocacy, reflection, adaptation and negotiation. They also help to give the students a feeling of ownership over the program, which is integral to the success and sustainability of SHAPE's work.

BELOW: SHAPE peer educator Albert Kagande is in the third year of a Bachelor of Geography and Environmental Studies at MSU. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS. OPPOSITE: A SHAPE talk show in progress at one of MSU's lecture halls. Photo: Bridgette Thorold/OxfamAUS.



“AFTER THE TALK SHOW I WAS KIND OF EXCITED, AS IN THE LEVEL AT WHICH WE WERE HOLDING DISCUSSION WAS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE USED TO GET AT HIGH SCHOOL. AS IN AT HIGH SCHOOL, YOU USUALLY HAVE THE TEACHERS LECTURING AT YOU; THEY TELL YOU THE FACTS AND THAT'S IT, YOU DON'T CONTRIBUTE ANYTHING. BUT HERE IT WAS A DIFFERENT PLATFORM ALTOGETHER. IT WAS A STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION, WHERE WE EXCHANGED EVERYTHING THAT WE KNOW; SHARING INFORMATION AS IT IS, HAVING NO FEARS...”

ALBERT KAGANDE, THIRD-YEAR STUDENT.



## IN PROFILE

### Talk show

SHAPE uses talk shows, or dialogue sessions, to get students to start talking about HIV and AIDS and gender issues.

“The talk shows are discussion points where students begin to see the real issues,” SHAPE MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka says.

A small team of male and female SHAPE members determine the theme of each talk show by examining issues that have come out of workshops, discussions and training sessions such as stigma and discrimination, HIV prevention, treatment, gender stereotypes, pre-marital sex, traditional roles of men and women and positive masculinities and femininities.

The themes are often controversial to generate lively debate, for example: “Pre-marital sex is a problem and increases the risk of HIV transmission” or “Men assuming leadership is part of our tradition, women do not respect us otherwise.”

The talk shows have two facilitators, usually one male student and one female student, both from SHAPE. The facilitators start the debate by introducing the topic, outlining some key ideas and presenting arguments for both sides of the topic. They encourage contributions from the audience, either for or against

the topic, trying to continuously stimulate discussion and dialogue. They facilitate the comments and steer the discussion, by offering alternative views, challenging stereotypes, posing questions and trying to link the comments and issues to HIV risk and vulnerability, for example: “So why do we need to be talking about men and leadership in the context of HIV and vulnerability?” “Why is it a problem for men to be leaders and women to be submissive?” Everyone who wants to contribute to the discussion must wait their turn and speak into a roving microphone, so that the debate is orderly and respectful. Each talk show runs for about an hour, with the facilitators finishing the event by trying to synthesise the discussion into a single strong position.

About 50–60 students attend each talk show, with some being mixed sex discussions and some single sex discussions, depending on the topic, objectives and desired outcomes. They are open to any students at the university, and are held on campus, either in lecture theatres, auditoriums or in halls of residence. Most talk shows take

place in the evening, with special ones being held for new students during Orientation Week.

SHAPE sees the talk shows as the students' first step along the path to behaviour change. They are a means to challenge students' assumptions and stereotypes, expose them to more diverse views, get them thinking and leave them wanting to know more. Students will often approach SHAPE after attending a talk show to seek further training, advice or involvement

After a talk show, SHAPE usually holds a follow-up seminar that targets specific information, misconceptions or issues that have arisen from the discussions. For example, female students in a particular hall of residence may believe certain myths about virginity or have misconceptions around condom use and want to find out more information. In this instance, one of SHAPE's peer educators will return to the hall of residence to hold a seminar dedicated to this issue. In other cases, students will approach SHAPE after attending a talk show, wanting to learn more or take part in masculinities or assertiveness workshops.

#### 4. Sustaining behaviour change.

SHAPE's Gender, Masculinities and HIV project is designed to facilitate attitude and behaviour change among students around gender equality, women's empowerment and HIV and AIDS. SHAPE recognises that while the masculinities and assertiveness training workshops may trigger the behaviour-change process, they will not bring about sustainable behaviour change unless complemented with other longer-term strategies. As such, the project has a strong post-training component which is dominated by student-initiated and student-managed activities.

These follow-up activities provide opportunities for male and female students to process newly-learned concepts and practise new attitudes, behaviours and skills with other students. Furthermore, these activities provide a platform for students to advocate for gender equity within campus life.

Part of the way SHAPE measures its effectiveness is by the number of post-training activities students organise and the number of female and male students actively involved in the planning, organising and implementation of these activities.

It is also through the post-training activities that female and male students are able to influence and determine the agenda of SHAPE's intervention. For example, it is the students who come up with topics for discussion at talk shows and seminars; it is also the students who decide on the approach to be used to disseminate information to the different groups on and off campus. The benefit of taking this approach is that students often come up with unconventional, innovative and bold ways of talking about gender and HIV which appeal to their peers and other young people.

The post-training strategies take many forms — pressure groups, seminars, events and edutainment activities — which the students design to engage their peers in discussions on gender equality and HIV and AIDS. The activities include:

- dialogue sessions or “talk shows” on gender and HIV and AIDS issues in MSU residence halls;
- a regular newsletter *Shaping Times* which is also printed in Braille form.
- a gender and HIV awareness gala;

- a HIV network comprising male and female peer educators who lead small mixed-sex groups which discuss gender and HIV issues in an informal setting;
- student-produced fact sheets on gender equality, HIV, stigma and discrimination and coping with rape;
- action-orientated clubs such as Students Against Drug and Substance Abuse, SHAPE Drama Association and Culture Society that address underlying causes of HIV infection among students such as substance abuse, financial stress and peer pressure; and
- events such as sporting events, quiz shows, talent shows and advocacy campaigns.

One student initiative involved a march in the Gweru city centre to protest against the high rates of child sexual abuse in the local community. The march brought together more than 2,500 members of the Gweru community, including police, social workers and representatives from child rights organisations, and was considered a resounding success.

Another student-organised activity was a secondary schools' theatre arts festival that was spearheaded by the SHAPE Drama Association. Five secondary schools in Midlands province participated in the festival by writing and performing a play which promoted gender and HIV and AIDS issues. The winning school was judged on the extent to which these issues were addressed in its play. More than 300 secondary school students and their teachers attended the festival.

LEFT: SHAPE members discuss how they will promote an upcoming event designed to increase awareness among students about gender violence. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



## IN PROFILE

### Including differently-abled students

SHAPE is reaching out to students with disabilities as part of its HIV and AIDS and gender work”

SHAPE realised that its project was not reaching “differently-abled” students (students with disabilities) on campus due to a lack of accessible information and their non-participation in campus social activities. This lack of information, coupled with misconceptions and myths about people with disabilities and an absence of targeted interventions, makes “differently-abled” students extremely vulnerable to HIV infection.

To counteract this, SHAPE established a partnership with the university's Disabilities Resource Centre to produce literature on gender and HIV issues in Braille for visually-impaired students. It is also advocating for condom instructions and information on sexually-transmitted infections and healthy living be made available in Braille, so that visually-impaired students can access services and information to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection. SHAPE has also held two “talk shows” to highlight the views of “differently-abled” students on gender and HIV issues.

Students with disabilities indicated a lack of assertiveness in intimate relationships because

of their physical limitations and marginalisation by other students. As one visually-impaired female student said: “...if a guy approaches me and proposes [sex] and I know he can see, I will love him because I consider myself lucky to even have a boyfriend.” Of particular concern was the myth that sexual intercourse with a visually-impaired person could cure AIDS.

SHAPE's MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka notes that gender and HIV issues are very complex among students with disabilities. “Male students with disabilities often feel frustrated because their physical limitations force them to depend on others and deny them the opportunity to partake of ‘manly’ activities. Therefore, they are not seen as ‘man enough’ in their peer circles. It is also difficult for female students to be truly assertive when they have to rely on others for their upkeep while on campus.”

Despite these challenges, SHAPE promotes an approach that calls on all students to work together on gender and HIV behaviour change strategies, regardless of their physical abilities. SHAPE recognises that its interventions

must fully cater for students with disabilities and that it must devise specific strategies to reach them.

One student-initiated activity was a sports gala for students with disabilities from MSU and the University of Zimbabwe. The gender-and-HIV-themed gala had two parts — the first involved sporting events such as goal ball, soccer and shot-put, while the second was a one-day workshop in which students with disabilities examined the unique ways in which they are affected by gender inequality and HIV and AIDS.

“OF PARTICULAR CONCERN WAS THE MYTH THAT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A VISUALLY-IMPAIRED PERSON COULD CURE AIDS.”

TOP: SHAPE gender activists Johannes Marufu and Carter Capwanya discuss the bridges of hope tool for educating fellow students about HIV stigma and discrimination. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



## DEFINING FEATURES OF SHAPE'S INTERVENTION

SHAPE has attempted to design an HIV intervention that appeals to its core target group – university students.

“ I FEEL A LOT OF STUDENTS INCLUDING MYSELF HAVE DEFEATED THE SELF-IDENTITY CRISIS THAT HAUNTS MANY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BECAUSE OF LACK OF ASSERTIVENESS. THE TALK SHOWS AND INTERACTION WITH PEER EDUCATORS HAVE HELPED GREATLY IN PROMOTING ASSERTIVENESS AMONG ALL STUDENTS; MALE STUDENTS HAVE ALSO BECOME MORE ASSERTIVE AND LESS AGGRESSIVE. ”

TALENT, FIRST-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT.

Below are some of the features that set SHAPE's Gnedor, Masculinities and HIV project apart from other HIV interventions targeted at young people:

### 1. Activities that are student-driven.

SHAPE believes that young people are energetic, full of creative potential and not afraid to try out new ideas. What they often lack is the space and platform to do this. SHAPE provides them with the space to come up with their own solutions and ways of responding to gender inequalities and the HIV epidemic. The project is therefore not externally influenced. SHAPE also has a bias towards hiring recent university graduates to manage its various offices as a means of reducing the social distance between SHAPE staff and its beneficiaries. As a result, the majority of SHAPE staff members are aged between 21 and 26 years.

### 2. Responding to the specific needs of students.

Students find the SHAPE project relevant to their situation and responsive to their actual experiences. Students find SHAPE'S strategies and activities appealing and its messages realistic. SHAPE does not prescribe solutions to the students, but rather equips them with information, and communication, decision-making and problem-solving skills, which enable them to make their own informed choices.

SHAPE recognises that university students come from diverse backgrounds and that prevention messages have to appeal to all types of students; there cannot be a “one-size-fits-all” approach to HIV prevention for such a diverse target group. SHAPE members are trained to be non-judgemental and to understand that their role is not to make choices on behalf of young people, but rather to empower them to make their own informed choices.

### 3. An inclusive approach.

SHAPE programs are open to all interested students and membership is free. SHAPE maintains an “open door” policy — students can visit its offices whenever they want and do not have to make an appointment to see a SHAPE officer or the SHAPE Program Manager. This has proven to be one of the organisation's key strengths as evidenced by the large numbers of students who visit the SHAPE offices daily, either to work on their various post-training events or simply to socialise with fellow SHAPE members or SHAPE officers. Many students regard SHAPE as a “second family” and a “home-away-from-home”.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: SHAPE peer educator and counsellor Willard Barure talks to biology students Tendai and Nothando at the campus cafeteria. TOP RIGHT: Sister Matunhu, Chief Nursing Sister at MSU, shows first-year archaeology student Fortune the correct way to use a condom. BOTTOM: First-year computer science student Madamombe (foreground) and second-year English student Enellia (background) act out the role of culture in shaping societal relations. Photos: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



**“IT’S AMAZING HOW WE (MEN) THOUGHT THAT GENDER WAS ABOUT WOMEN BUT NOW WE CAN ACTUALLY DESCRIBE HOW GENDER DEFINITIONS CHANGE OVER TIME AND FROM PLACE TO PLACE.”** FIRST-YEAR MALE STUDENT.

**4. Addressing HIV and AIDS from a gender perspective.**

Transforming inequitable gender relations and promoting gender justice is at the heart of SHAPE’s work and is what sets it apart from many other HIV interventions. From the outset, SHAPE acknowledged the different impacts HIV and AIDS were having on men and women and therefore designed its intervention to bring about behaviour change in gender specific ways. The project’s main objective is to understand the different contexts in which risky behaviour takes place for male and female students and to address these specific female and male concerns. By doing this SHAPE has made gender issues prominent on the HIV prevention agenda in universities and the wider community.

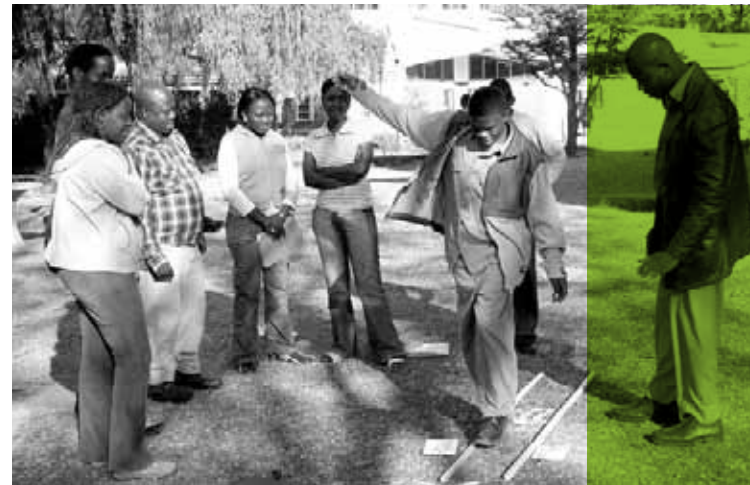
**5. Using behaviour change theories to inform the program.**

SHAPE has successfully grown its intervention to a point where it now offers ongoing, year-long activities rather than once-off events. Through its post-training activities, it is able to walk students through a behaviour change process and provide continuous support aimed at sustaining long-term behaviour change. The SHAPE project is also designed to respond to three key factors, as outlined in the PRECEDE Health Model (Predisposing, Reinforcing and Enabling Constructs in Ecosystem Diagnosis and Evaluation):

- a) pre-disposing factors such as particular attitudes and beliefs that facilitate risk-taking behaviour;
- b) reinforcing factors such as peer pressure or religion, which make an individual willing or unwilling to change; and
- c) enabling factors within universities, such as the lack of recreational activities, which provide a conducive environment for risk-taking behaviour.

The SHAPE intervention is therefore designed to influence both individuals and these social factors.

TOP LEFT: SHAPE’s masculinities workshops aim to improve male students’ attitudes towards gender quality. OPPOSITE: Students take part in “The bridge of hope” activity, designed to educate students about HIV and AIDS. Photos: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



**IN PROFILE**

**The bridge of hope:**

The purpose of this activity is to educate students about different ways to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Participants try to cross a narrow bridge, over a river infested with crocodiles, hippopotamuses and other dangers, to the future which awaits them on the other side. For those who fall off, a second bridge is later added, enabling them to cross safely.

The bridges are represented by two sticks, each about two metres long and 2–3cm wide; one is painted yellow and the other painted half blue and half white. The bridges represent the ways to avoid HIV and AIDS in order to go through life safely. White stands for abstinence – no sex or delaying sex – blue represents faithfulness or monogamy and yellow represents using a condom or receiving support from peers, parents and others.

First the blue and white stick is laid down on the ground and various “dangers” are placed on both sides of the stick. These “dangers” are pieces of paper with pictures of crocodiles, hippopotamuses and other dangerous animals on them and represent the dangers that people can see.

Participants are then invited to try and cross the bridge, heel to toe, all the way from the white end to the blue end. When someone succeeds, everyone claps and cheers and is congratulated. The peer educators then reassure those who fell off the bridge that another bridge will be added to help them get across safely.

The yellow stick is then laid on the ground, about 30cm parallel to the other stick. This time “hidden” dangers are added to the river – things such as HIV. Photos of ordinary men and women are used to represent these hidden dangers.

Now, with the yellow stick in place, participants are invited to try and cross the white and blue bridge again, using the yellow bridge as support to get across safely if needed. When each person gets across everyone celebrates.

After the exercise, peer educators and participants come together to discuss their experiences and what helped them to cross the bridge safely – receiving encouragement and support from others, focusing on what they were doing and

where they wanted to end up, and making use of the different choices available. They then link this back to HIV and AIDS and real life.

Peer educators also use the photos of men and women to initiate discussions about stigma and discrimination around HIV and AIDS. They ask participants to look at the photos and try and identify which people are living with HIV; this helps them realise that people living with HIV look no different than those who don’t have the virus.

This simple exercise creates a real, physical experience of life and how to protect oneself from HIV and AIDS. The journey from white to blue and then yellow represents the path of a relationship – starting out with abstinence, and then moving onto faithfulness in a long-term, committed relationship. Yet, not everyone can abstain or be faithful all the time and so must use condoms or turn to the support of friends and family to go through life safely and avoid the dangers, both visible and hidden, which are always close-by.

# CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN

As SHAPE'S Gender, Masculinities and HIV project continues to grow, it faces several key challenges – namely, extending its circle of influence, evaluating the effectiveness of its work and addressing the complexities and realities of daily life in Zimbabwe.

## 1. Involving the wider university community including academic and non-academic staff.

SHAPE realises that it needs to engage the wider university community, especially academic and non-academic staff, more actively in its activities. This is recognised as a key step towards transforming the university's institutional culture to be more responsive to gender equality issues. SHAPE has started targeting university administrators in its activities after realising that several sexual harassment complaints raised by female students involved male university staff members. SHAPE has introduced friendly weekend soccer matches for university staff during which issues such as toxic masculinities and gender are discussed in a friendly, informal environment. This approach helps to raise awareness about these issues in a non-confrontational, non-accusatory way. This project is still in its infancy and yet to be fully developed.

## 2. Involving student leaders and Christian student groups.

SHAPE has also had limited success in attracting particular groups of students, especially those from the Christian community and those in the Student Executive Council. The latter offer a rich opportunity to utilise student-recognised leadership, while Christians comprise the largest and most organised community on the various campuses. Religion is often used to justify gender inequalities, and the churches on campus are still relatively silent on issues surrounding HIV and AIDS.

## 3. Defining "non-toxic" masculinities.

SHAPE has a clear understanding about what behaviours constitute toxic masculinities and this has been a vital first step in its project. However, it is grappling to define what "non-toxic" masculinities look like in practice, which is important to the development of an alternative masculine identity. Without this, male students are only confronted with the behaviours they shouldn't display, rather than understanding what behaviours are actually appropriate.

## 4. Evaluation and documentation to enable project expansion.

The SHAPE Gender, Masculinities and HIV project has not been evaluated since its inception and this makes it difficult to identify whether student attitudes and behaviours have actually changed and in what ways. The experiences of female and male students who have been, or are involved in, the project have not been systematically documented. Collecting this information will enable SHAPE to improve and expand project components beyond the present scope.

## 5. Ensuring students continue behaviour change beyond university.

Sustaining students' behaviour change beyond the confines of university is one of SHAPE's greatest challenges. The project lacks continuity for students when they go on vacation, are on their year-long work-related placements or when they graduate. This means that students who have completed the masculinities or assertiveness training experience a major disruption to the behaviour change process during these periods.

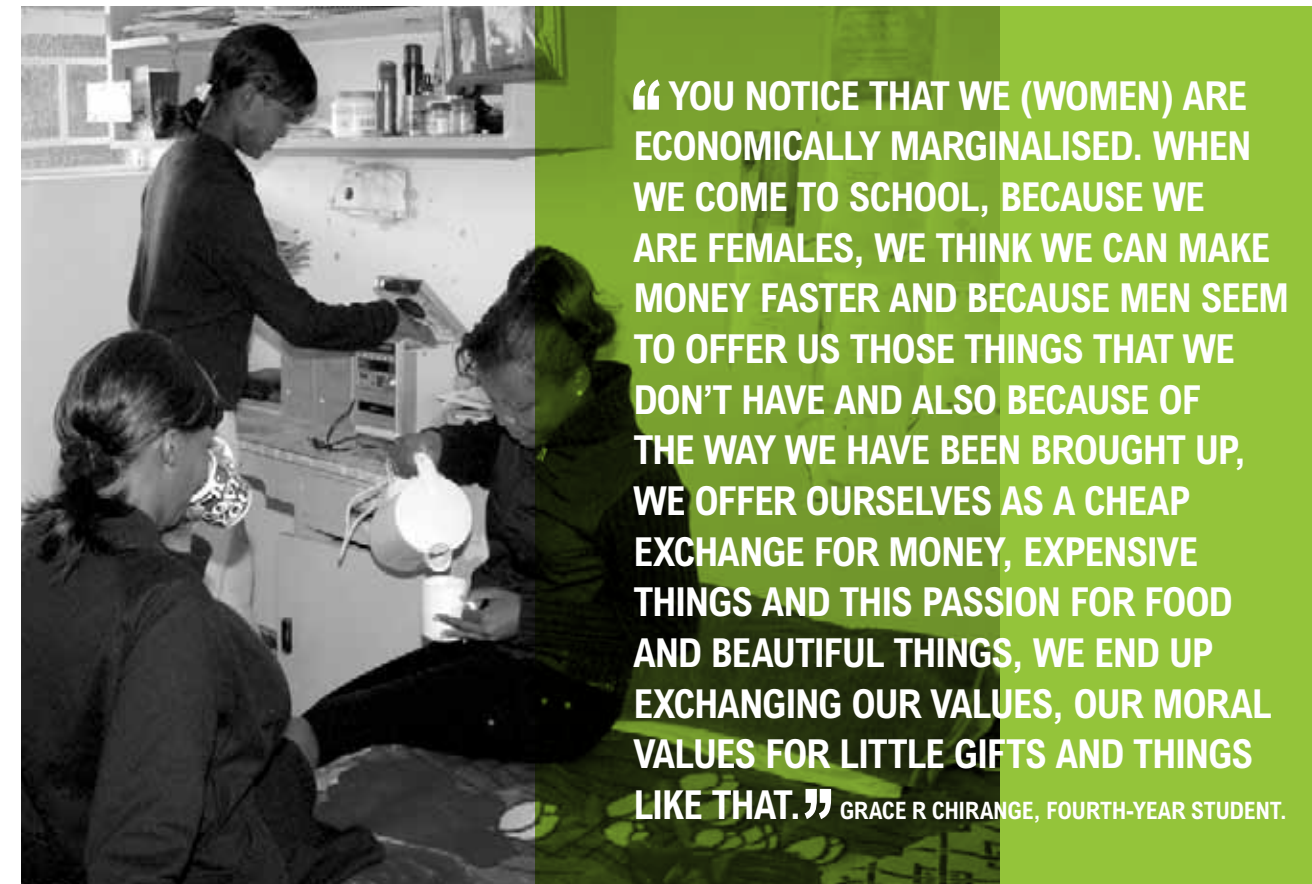
To compound matters, they are often confronted with stereotypical gender roles and face resistance from family, peers or work colleagues to their new behaviours.

It is particularly important for SHAPE to find ways of continuing to engage with students who are away from campus during their third year, on work-related learning. At MSU, all students are expected to spend one year in the field, working with relevant organisations in order to gain work experience related to their degree courses. SHAPE currently has no way of knowing if, and how, these students are sustaining their new behaviours and attitudes beyond the university environment and beyond the SHAPE influence. SHAPE is currently setting up an alumni program that will enable it to keep in touch with former students and use them as resources in future activities.

## 6. Addressing the effects of Zimbabwe's economic crisis on students.

Zimbabwe's worsening economy and increasing poverty levels present huge challenges to SHAPE's HIV prevention work. Spiralling inflation rates, daily increases in commodity prices and soaring unemployment mean that basic necessities such as food and clothing are beyond the reach of most people. These diminishing resources can undermine HIV prevention work at MSU as students are forced to make choices which place them at great risk of contracting HIV – for example, female students trading sexual favours for food and clothing. In these circumstances, students place immediate survival above their long-term health.

BOTTOM: MSU students Privilege, Belinda and Gloria catch up over a coffee in the female hall of residence on campus. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



**“ YOU NOTICE THAT WE (WOMEN) ARE ECONOMICALLY MARGINALISED. WHEN WE COME TO SCHOOL, BECAUSE WE ARE FEMALES, WE THINK WE CAN MAKE MONEY FASTER AND BECAUSE MEN SEEM TO OFFER US THOSE THINGS THAT WE DON'T HAVE AND ALSO BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UP, WE OFFER OURSELVES AS A CHEAP EXCHANGE FOR MONEY, EXPENSIVE THINGS AND THIS PASSION FOR FOOD AND BEAUTIFUL THINGS, WE END UP EXCHANGING OUR VALUES, OUR MORAL VALUES FOR LITTLE GIFTS AND THINGS LIKE THAT.”** GRACE R CHIRANGE, FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT.



“ WE REALISE IT IS EASIER FOR STUDENTS TO SUSTAIN POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR WHEN THEY ARE IN A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND THAT THEY FACE EVEN GREATER CHALLENGES WHEN THEY LEAVE THE UNIVERSITY WORLD TO START WORK OR GO ON VACATION... WE SEE THAT IT'S PART OF OUR SUSTAINABILITY PLAN, TO KEEP THAT MOMENTUM, THAT POSITIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOUR, GOING, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER HERE. ”

LEO WAMWANDUKA, SHAPE'S MSU PROGRAM MANAGER.

## THE WAY AHEAD

Based on its four years of implementing the Gender, Masculinities and HIV project, SHAPE is now working towards strengthening the project further.

### 1. Alumni centres.

Some of the changes that are in progress include the establishment of alumni centres that former SHAPE students can join in order to retain their link to SHAPE. Key to these centres is SHAPE's observation that some of its former members have gone on to work for and occupy strategic positions in the private and public sector. A notable example is Tawanda, who is working as a personal assistant to Dr Stamps, the Health Advisor to the President of Zimbabwe and a former Minister of Health. SHAPE plans to invite former students back to campus to be involved in future activities.

### 2. Increasing circle of influence.

SHAPE is continually increasing its circle of influence beyond MSU students. All men and women who complete the masculinities and assertiveness training are encouraged to become active agents for change among the younger generations in local secondary schools and primary schools.

SHAPE-trained students have become peer educators in five secondary schools in Midlands province and the SHAPE Drama Association has held a successful secondary schools' theatre arts festival focussing on gender and HIV and AIDS. These outreach activities not only engage the non-university community, but also provide opportunities for students to practise new behaviours — an important step in the process of behaviour change. SHAPE is exploring ways it can engage more with the wider community to address gender inequality and HIV issues.

### 3. Broadening of project scope.

Another transformation in the SHAPE project is the broadening of the scope to include reproductive health issues more generally. The current project has focussed almost exclusively on HIV issues and yet students are ill-informed on general reproductive and sexual health matters.

Pregnancy, safe motherhood, contraception, sexual dysfunctions, fatherhood, reproductive tract infections and sexually-transmitted infections are some of the issues that students urgently need information on, and which is presently not being provided systematically in the universities.

### 4. Student forums.

SHAPE has recently introduced a men's forum and a women's forum at the university. These are meant to strengthen student advocacy around gender issues as well as reinforce ongoing student-led and student-managed activities. The forums were established because students often had nothing to do once they had finished implementing their action plans.

OPPOSITE: SHAPE MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka discusses male condom effectiveness with MSU students Terence, Nyasha, Mercy and Beauty. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

# CONCLUSION

This case study has attempted to show how one organisation, SHAPE Zimbabwe Trust, is responding to HIV among a very specific group of young people, namely university students. The case study has highlighted the unique strategies that SHAPE is using to engage university students in dialogue around HIV and gender issues and some of the challenges that it continues to face in this work.

The key learning points to be taken from the SHAPE experience are that HIV programming for young people must be flexible, participatory, ongoing

and moulded around a specific behaviour change model. As the case study has shown, there is need to challenge young people to think differently as well as provide them with the space to actually implement activities in their own unique ways and using their own strategies. This allows young people to be involved at their own pace and to influence each other in a non-threatening manner. HIV prevention programs must also address underlying gender inequities that fuel risk-taking behaviour among men and increase women's vulnerability to infection.

SHAPE continues to modify its Gender, Masculinities and HIV project in accordance with emerging issues on the ground. It is this responsiveness and flexibility that makes SHAPE a popular choice for university students, not only at the MSU but also in all the other campuses where it is working.

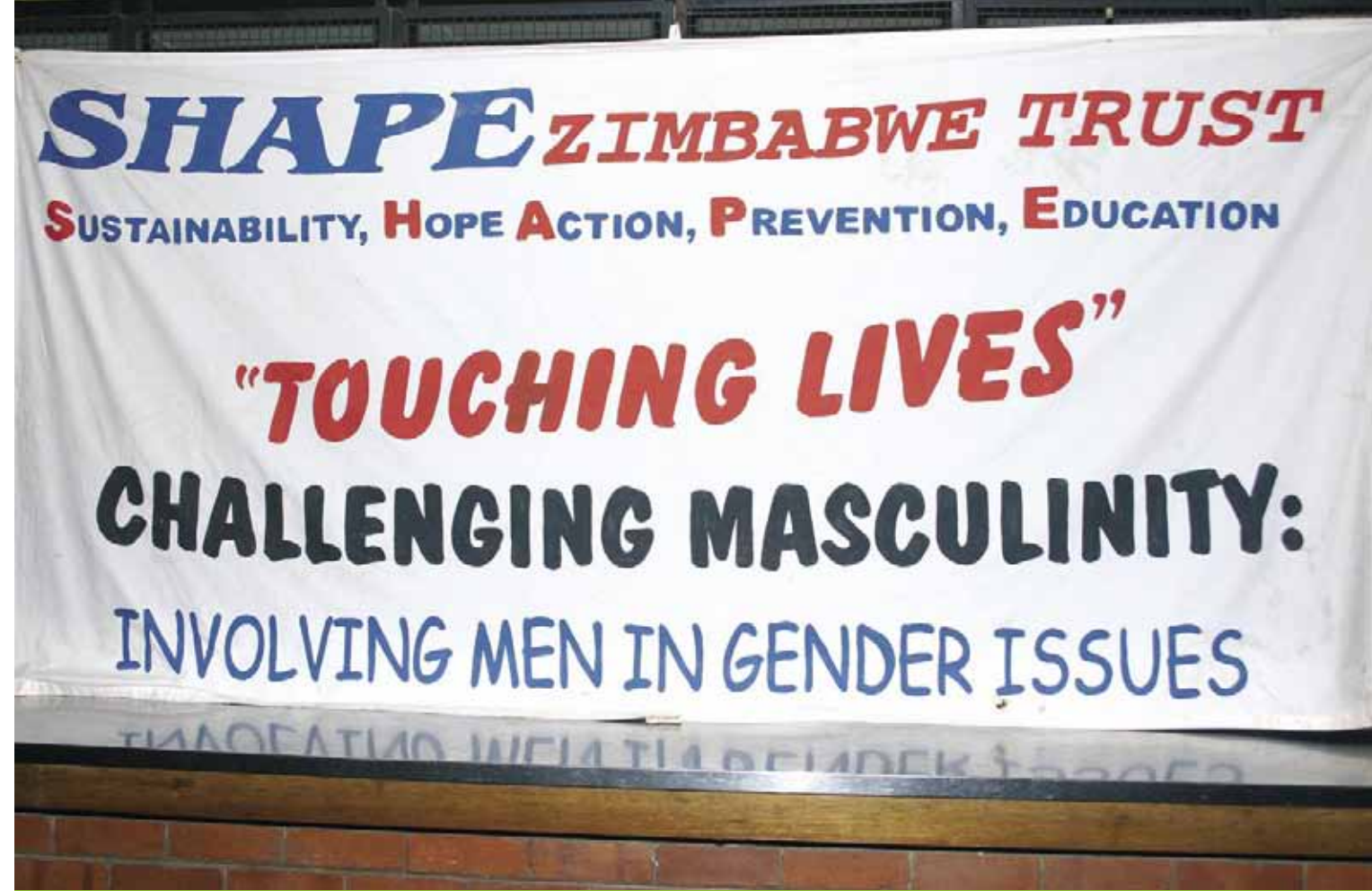
As SHAPE MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka notes, "rigidity does not work with students at all".

BELOW: Chinzou, a second year media student at MSU, acts out how men take advantage of girls and young women affected by poverty. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.



**“AS A MAN I THOUGHT THAT WOMEN WERE NOTHING BUT CREATURES THAT WERE CREATED AFTER MEN AND ARE THERE TO SATISFY OUR EROTIC DESIRES, BUT I WAS PROVED WRONG. I REALISED THAT THIS WAS TOXIC MASCULINITY. SHAPE ZIMBABWE PROGRAMS EQUIPPED ME WITH INFORMATION ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD RELATE TO OUR FELLOW COUNTERPARTS (WOMEN). WE ARE EQUAL AND ALWAYS EQUAL.”**

OWEN, FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT.



ABOVE: A SHAPE banner promoting positive masculinity. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

## Acknowledgements

This case study was produced through the skills, knowledge, cooperation and hard work of many dedicated people.

Firstly, thank you to SHAPE Founder and Executive Director Shepstone Musiyarira, SHAPE Midlands State University Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka and the entire SHAPE team for their time, energy and cooperation in the development of this case study.

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The opinions of authors or participants in this document do not necessarily reflect those of Oxfam Australia, Oxfam affiliates, COGENHA or its staff.

BACK COVER: SHAPE MSU Program Manager Leo Wamwanduka and SHAPE peer educator and gender activist Willard Barure take part in a role play to show students how the HIV attacks the body's immune system. Photo: William Nyamuchengwa/OxfamAUS.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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