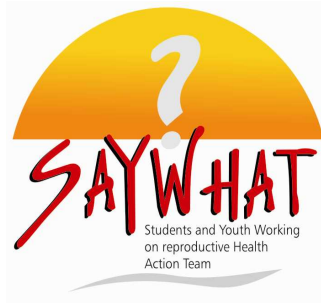




SAYWHAT Agricultural Colleges Sporting Gala Report

Held at
Rio Tinto Agricultural College

On the
11th – 16th of May 2009

‘Building bridges towards reclaiming students’ reproductive health through a gender sensitive response’

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Acronyms

AIDS:	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CWGH:	Community Working Group on Health
HIV:	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
LCC:	Local Coordinating Committee
NCC:	National Coordinating Committee
PSI:	Population Services International
SAYWHAT:	Students' And Youths Working on reproductive Health Action Team
SRHR:	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI:	Sexually Transmitted Infection
VCT:	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WASN:	Women's Aids Support Network
YET:	Youth Empowerment and Transformation

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1.0 Executive Summary

Students and Youth working on reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT) carried on with its annual commitment of participating during the Agricultural Gala. SAYWHAT whose mandate is to enhance participation of youth and students in programs of their sexual and reproductive Health and Rights identifies opportunities like the Agricultural Gala to disseminate information and ensure knowledge sharing as well as establish a bases for advocacy by identifying students reproductive concerns. In conjunction with other stakeholders SAYWHAT partners the Ministry of Agriculture for this annual event.

Rio Tinto College of Agriculture hosted the 2009 gala where more than 1000 students participated. SAYWHAT packaged a comprehensive program that ranged from Voluntary Counselling and Testing, Information provision, Drama and Quiz Competitions, Sanitary Wear campaign to Condom sale and Advocacy. The National Coordinating Committee and the Local Coordinating Committee of the hosting college with technical and financial support from the secretariat planed all the activities that were carried during the one week long sporting gala.

SAYWHAT and Batsirai Support group from Kwekwe ensured that Voluntary Testing and Counselling services were accessible to students and the immediate community. A total of 196 were tested and among them 116 were females and 80 males. This provision was initiated to carter for the service which in most cases lacks in some agricultural colleges. SAYWHAT also takes VCT as an entry point to positive living and the broader management of HIV as well as the central pillar for the ***“Kicking Stigma out of Agriculture Colleges”*** Campaign.

Trained Peer Educators from the Local Coordinating Committee managed the Information Booth of SAYWHAT. The Booth provided Information, Education and Communication materials including T-Shirts on the broad aspects of SRHR. The booth also hosted small group discussions and condom demonstrations.

Under the Sanitary Wear campaign in partnership with Clovit a sanitary wear manufacturer provided sanitary pads for female students at a subsidized price. The price was friendly to students and it increased the uptake of this essential service that most female students complain of not being affordable.

SAYWHAT took the competition to quiz and drama on issues of Gender, Male Circumcision, HIV treatment, care and support and reproductive health and rights. These activities were essential in exploring reproductive health issues in a creative manner that attracted and retained interest from the students. There were edutainment evenings that used tools such as film aided learning to inspire discussions. To enhance interest on its activities with students SAYWHAT continues to sponsor various trophies for competitions.

The Sporting Gala Remains an Important platform to provide services and engage students on SRHR and concerns from such events shall continue to inspire the focus of the institution.

2.0 Introduction and Background

'The Kicking Stigma out of Agricultural Colleges Campaign' seeks to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS through engaging students from Agricultural Colleges in activities that increase their understanding of the pandemic. With increased knowledge levels uptake of HIV services will also rise. Students and Youth Working on reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT) takes advantage of the already organised Agricultural colleges sporting gala to disseminate reproductive health information through various HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns. The annual event involves more than 1000 students and college authorities from 7 agricultural colleges and 6 vocational training centres

The 2009 sporting gala was hosted by Rio Tinto College of Agriculture which is in Zhombe in Mashonaland West Province. Rio Tinto is 57km along Gokwe road off Bulawayo road Highway. The Sporting Gala was held from the 11th to the 16th of May 2009 and more than 1000 students from 12 colleges managed to attend out of the possible 13 colleges. The colleges that took part at this year were Kushinga Phikelela, Gwebi, Esigodini, Mlezu, Rio Tinto, Chibero, Mazowe, Mushagashe, Chaminuka, Magamba, Kaguvi and Rupangwani. These colleges participated in the organised ball games, indoor games, field events and athletics. The Rio Tinto community was also part of the event, as they came to watch the games and took part in the evening edutainment. An average of 200 community members attended the event.

Under the theme 'Building bridges towards reclaiming students' reproductive health through a gender-sensitive response' the 2009 sporting gala was a call for increased participation and support of the Ministries, college authorities, service providers and other stakeholders in promoting the sexual and reproductive health rights of students. The Agricultural Colleges Sports Association acknowledged the continued presence and support of SAYWHAT and commended SAYWHAT's collaboration with Population Service International (PSI) in information dissemination, edutainment, and support services provision in the area of reproductive health rights, gender, HIV and AIDS.

The objectives of SAYWHAT were to:

- Increase knowledge levels on sexual and reproductive health, including HIV and AIDS, through information dissemination activities.
- Create a platform for students, from different Agricultural institutions, to share experiences and discuss reproductive health challenges in search of sustainable solutions
- Encourage students to know their status through Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) and form some college based post-test clubs
- Engage the policy makers and college authorities in order to make them active players in the endeavour to address the reproductive health challenges faced by students.
- Promote correct and consistent use of both female and male condom through increased awareness amongst students

Through these objectives, SAYWHAT expected an increased participation and greater involvement of the college authorities in addressing the student's health concerns and increased levels of awareness on HIV and AIDS and other sexual and reproductive health

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challenges. The increased uptake of VCT services among students is expected to reduce levels of stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV and AIDS.

SAYWHAT partnered with YET, PADARE and WASN on this years sporting gala in order to provide diverse information to the student in the colleges of Agriculture in Zimbabwe.

This report shall outline the proceedings of the event, highlighting the main activities' outcomes and recommendations. The activities drew a lot of attention from the students and we observed an increased participation during the evening activities.

3.0 Know your status campaign

SAYWHAT's initiative to partner with other organisations to facilitate service delivery to students in tertiary institutions led to the accessibility of Voluntary Counselling and Testing services during the gala under the campaign '*Know your status*'. This was implemented with an aim to normalise HIV, encouraging acceptance of those living with HIV and repel stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS among students in tertiary institution. The absence of VCT services in most college communities created a high demand of the services from both the students and community members. Evidence from the focus group discussions placed VCT as an entry point in accessing early treatment, personalization of risk perception, reduction of stigma and normalizing of the pandemic within the student communities. Also noted has been the increased disclosure of HIV status among students and staff.

SAYWHAT partnered with Batsirai Group to provide Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) mobile services. The mobile VCT service was accessible to the students for 4 days of the sporting gala, where 116 females and 80 males went through the counselling and testing. SAYWHAT also gave some IEC materials to those that visited the VCT centres.

During the VCT services, professional counsellors held some group counselling sessions. Trained facilitators also held a number of group discussions with the students as they waited to go for counselling and testing. The participants discussed the advantages of taking up VCT and also discussed the importance of positive living and post test initiatives such as support groups. The discussions cited some of the challenges that students encounter after testing and getting to know their status. Some of these challenges include access to immediate services such as post – test centres and CD4 count tests and the accessibility of resources to undergo treatment.

Recommendations for VCT:

- The number of staff providing VCT should be increased to cater for the high demand of such services during the gala.
- SAYWHAT must establish post-test clubs to initiate positive living programs in tertiary institutions.
- SAYWHAT must partner service providers to increase the frequency of VCT services within tertiary institutions.
- SAYWHAT programming should be responsive and include counselling trainings in its broader peer education programs and broaden counselling services to include other psycho-social challenges such as pregnancies and stress.
- Programming on positive living must include community members, since they were part of the people who received the services.

4.0 Information dissemination and knowledge sharing

SAYWHAT established an information booth that exhibited and distributed IEC materials from different institutions focussing on the broad area of SRH, and specifically on HIV and AIDS and gender. The information booth was manned by trained peer educators from the local coordinating committee of SAYWHAT and some skilled facilitators equipped with counselling skills and comprehensive knowledge on reproductive health information. The booth was functional during day time and it was also available for 5 consecutive days. The materials available at the booth covered a lot of issues that affected the students' sexual and

reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, gender, male circumcision, positive living, sanitary wear and contraception.

The information booth was also platform for interaction, focus group discussions on topical SRHR issues among the students were discussed with peer educators. Students had the opportunity to ask questions on issues of their reproductive including social dimensions that increased their vulnerability to reproductive health challenges including HIV and AIDS. There was also a high demand of resource materials from the students and community members. Students registered at the booth for further communications and networks with the SAYWHAT team. Our Tally recorded close to 719 people who visited the SAYWHAT information booth and about 453 were females.

Group discussions were also used as an information dissemination strategy, were students had small group discussions at the information booth. The issues covered during the discussions ranged from male circumcision, gender, basic health care to HIV and AIDS. The participants deliberated on the advantages and challenges brought about by male circumcision. They also explored on how best the student can effectively be part of the male circumcision initiatives. The condom advocacy focus group discussions drew the interest of most students. Most of them were interested with how the female condom is used.

The peer educators also gave all students a combination of the Red and White Ribbon as a campaign to promote gender sensitivity in all concerns of HIV and AIDS. All the students who visited the information booth were given the White and Red Ribbon and it was clearly explained that they symbolised care and concern over HIV and Gender issues. Students were interested in understanding the combination and how best they can be part of the campaign. SAYWHAT aims to address gender issues and promote female students' empowerment in attaining reproductive health. At the booth, a lot of information was disseminated on the importance of Voluntary Counselling and Testing.

Recommendations on Information Dissemination:

- Community members who came to the booth recommended SAYWHAT to provide information in shona and Ndebele as most of them could not comprehend the content in English.
- Students also requested SAYWHAT to provide more IEC material in the form of flyers for easy distribution.
- Most students called for SAYWHAT to aid college authorities by providing IEC materials for their college resource centres.
- Most students requested SAYWHAT to put up SRHR suggestion boxes at their colleges for them to make enquires on sensitive issues that are difficult to ask in public spaces.

5.0 Edutainment

SAYWHAT provided entertainment synergised with education during the evenings. Participants were given an opportunity to learn and interact on SRHR issues in an entertaining way. A hired Public Announcer (PA) System was used to enhance communication and provide better quality of entertainment. Students' participation was very high as the SAYWHAT evening events did not conflict with any sporting activity. Some of the edutainment activities were done in collaboration with PSI. The activities included drama, quiz, road show entertainment, disco and Mr and Miss Agric Colleges.

5.1 Drama Competitions

Drama competitions were done with the aim of increasing the knowledge on HIV prevention as well as afford students clear understanding of sexual and reproductive health issues that concern them. A platform of edutainment and dramatization (mixing education on HIV prevention with entertainment) was created through the drama competitions running under the theme '*Get it Right, make SRH a priority*'. 12 colleges show cased their 15-minute dramas in the competition, with a total of 84 students participating and 49 of them being females.

The plays highlighted sexual and reproductive health rights challenges and HIV and AIDS issues faced by students in colleges. They brought out typical college life challenges and how students encounter these challenges. The plays amplified the voices of female students as they clearly outlined the disproportionate nature of the challenges that are faced by the male and female students. The dramas went on to emphasize issues of STIs and unplanned pregnancy as greater challenges that remain prevalent in institutions. The plays were coordinated by the SAYWHAT Local Coordinating Committees with the help of their focal persons.

5.2 Quiz Competitions

The thrust of the quiz competition was to assess the knowledge and understanding levels of the students in four thematic areas of reproductive health and rights, HIV treatment care and support, Male Circumcision, Sanitary Wear as well as Gender. 12 colleges took part in the completion of knowledge sharing. Each college was represented by 3 students and their focal person.

The students' participation was well above standard as the colleges did very well in most of the questions. The students proved to be well informed as they reflected a lot of understanding of the SRHR issues. It was clear that the colleges had taken time to prepare for the quiz competitions. The retention levels of the participants can also be their college curricula that now include HIV and AIDS education.

5.3 SRHR Ambassadors

This year the gala hosted yet another educative and entertaining modelling contest of Mr and Miss Agric Colleges 2009. 10 female students and 8 male students contested at this show. The models contested in four categories were they were wearing their sportswear, farm wear, peer educator's wear and evening wear.

The show aimed at creating and identifying college SRHR ambassadors. Each model was asked a question on their understanding of gender and HIV and AIDS issues. The contestants that demonstrated higher levels of understanding and eloquence through their responses did very well. The evening ended with the crowning of the Mr and Mrs Agric Colleges 2009 and their runner ups.

SAYWHAT's focus is to use these now popular figures as SRHR ambassadors in the student communities. The contestants shall be encouraged to participate in a lot SAYWHAT activities to build their capacities beyond being just beauty models and help in the dissemination of information and advocacy through interacting with their peers.

Recommendations on Edutainment:

- Some students felt that SAYWHAT should extend its edutainment programs to cover closed communities like the Scripture Union.
- To train drama actors so as to improve the quality of advocacy.
- The SAYWHAT edutainment programme should be more interactive to allow students in the audience to seek clarification on SRHR challenges raised.
- SAYWHAT to fully utilise and build the capacity of the models for them to become competent ambassadors who can do SRHR advocacy beyond college life.

6.0 Networking

Students from different institutions had an opportunity to network and share experiences. Most of the students participating at this gala had an understanding of the nature of environment being created and encouraged by the SAYWHAT interventions. Student to student discussions on behavioural change especially on reproductive health challenges, positive living and HIV and AIDS prevailed. The issues and challenges that were raised during SAYWHAT's activities continued to be topical even when students were engaged in their informal circles.

SAYWHAT also facilitated a meeting for the Local Coordinating Committees of all colleges present allowing them to learn and share best practices of implementing strategies of how to tackle some of the commonly shared SRHR challenges. Students and staff also engaged each other in discussions and debates on issues of reproductive health, especially after a SAYWHAT activity. College authorities had a chance to understand some of the concerns raised by students as they interacted during SAYWHAT activities.

Recommendations on Networking:

- SAYWHAT must invite college principals to interact more with students.
- SAYWHAT should extensively distribute their findings from SRH activities to inform college programming on such.

7.0 Condom Advocacy

SAYWHAT in collaboration with PSI provided some entertaining road shows promoting the correct and consistent use of condoms. They have been a lot of concern from the sports commission, community and staff members about the distribution, disposal and advocacy of condoms during the galas. There were concerns on how to come up with best strategies to encourage students to protect themselves especially during such events where the students tend to become very excited and vulnerable to a lot of sexual activities. The Condom advocacy was received with mixed feelings from different quarters of the society especially the Christian community that believes in sex after marriage. SAYWHAT and PSI, during the gala, carried out a campaign that advocated for the proper use of female and male condoms. The road shows provided entertaining sessions of condom use demonstrations from the PSI group.

Trained peer educators also demonstrated the correct use of both female and male condoms using artificial models at the information booth. The experiences from previous galas indicate that students have a keen interest in these demonstrations with more than 50% of the students coming to the information booth showing a keen interest to know more about condoms. There was also low distribution of the condoms to students but they were encouraged to visit some special areas such as the clinic, beer hall and toilets to access the condoms when in need.

Recommendations on Condom Advocacy:

- SAYWHAT should put emphasis on other behavioural change strategies like abstinence, faithfulness to one partner and not limit themselves to condom only advocacy.
- SAYWHAT should incorporate the Scripture Union in their HIV and AIDS prevention strategy as they are equally vulnerable.
- SAYWHAT condom advocacy must intensify the campaign for the use of the female condom and drive towards positive attitudes on the use of the female condoms by couples.
- SAYWHAT should use female genital models to enhance understanding of how the femidom really works and protects females.

8.0 Lobbying the Policy makers

SAYWHAT continues to realise the need to network, involve and lobby the college authorities to realise their responsibility of addressing the sexual and reproductive health challenges and arrest the spread of HIV and AIDS in tertiary institutions. Students do not exist in isolation and the involvement of college authorities as key and strategic stakeholders will go a long way in informing institutional programming and the establishment of structures to provide support to students in addressing their SRH challenges. SAYWHAT was also given a platform to interact with the college principals, focal persons and members of the Agricultural Colleges Sports Association during their planning and feedback meetings at the gala.

This was an opportunity to speak out and lobby for their active involvement to promote the reproductive health rights of the students after realising that most of the challenges require

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the intervention of the policy makers. SAYWHAT shall continue with the motto: *Reproductive Health Rights – a shared obligation for healthy futures!* The responsibility has to be shared between the students and policy makers. Both parties have a role to play in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The interaction during the meetings also addressed SAYWHAT as a platform to communicate with the students about good morals, safer sex practices and the adoption of other positive behavioural strategies during the gala. The support and initiatives of SAYWHAT has brought an understanding and appreciation of the need to continuously support the students amongst the authorities. During the SAYWHAT activities students also had a platform to engage themselves in discussions with the college authorities on issues of positive behavioural change and moral issues during the gala and after.

Recommendations on Lobbying the Policy Makers:

- SAYWHAT should work in collaboration with college principals to lobby parliamentarians and other policy makers to alleviate the SRHR plight of students.
- SAYWHAT should continuously and regularly share its findings with college principals for the mainstreaming of SRH into the broader college curricula.
- Colleges to support the training of institutional health minders to build their capacity to effectively and efficiently respond to the greater demand of SRH services by students.

9.0 Sanitary Wear Campaign

The Sanitary Wear Campaign has become an ongoing intervention for the reproductive health rights of the female students in tertiary institutions. There has been a higher demand and concern of the challenges of sanitary wear, such as its availability, its disposal, high costs and the dangers of using other unhygienic materials. This year's gala saw yet another Sanitary Wear sale, where pads were being sold at very low costs by SAYWHAT. 300 packs of pads were sold to female students with 200 being given as hampers to winning female students in their respective sporting disciplines. The demand of the pads was very high from the female students. The students also engaged in a lot of discussions on the accessibility of the pads and their disposal.

SAYWHAT set up a Sanitary Wear Campaign booth where the pads were being sold and a number of discussions were also held. Female students participated at the discussions and contributed very well. Other issues such as condom use, contraceptives, positive living and STIs were brought up by the female students during the discussions. The students also highlighted on the location, environment and unavailability of clinics at the agricultural colleges as a greater challenge that makes such services not immediately available to them and very expensive.

Recommendations on Sanitary Wear Campaign:

- Sanitary Wear provision should be a continuous process, not just a sporting gala event.
- SAYWHAT should collaborate with college authorities to provide incinerators to ease disposal challenges.

10.0 Conclusion

The SAYWHAT partnership with the Sporting Gala has provided a conducive platform for students to deliberate and advocate for the improvement of SRH service delivery within their colleges. The various SAYWHAT activities managed to equip and build the capacity of most students to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health life. The activities also managed to draw the attention of college authorities to programmatic gaps in addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of students.

SAYWHAT as an institution has also managed to identify issues that can be taken up for advocacy to improve the plight of students in tertiary institutions. There is need for gender sensitive packaging of strategies targeted at students for them to provide a central pivot on behavioural change interventions and models that are applicable to students.

11.0 Recommendations

To respond to the challenges raised by the students during the sporting gala and to improve the SRH service delivery system within tertiary institutions, SAYWHAT will uphold the following recommendations:

- SAYWHAT to come up with a comprehensive strategy to address the adoption and adaption of positive behavioural change for students who have undergone Voluntary Counselling and Testing.
- SAYWHAT to establish and revamp college resource centres for students to have access to up to date information about SRH.
- SAYWHAT to train and build the capacity of both actors and SRHR ambassadors so as to improve the quality of the advocacy.
- There is need to regularise meetings and communication between SAYWHAT and college authorities to share SRH findings and inform programming at the same level.
- SAYWHAT to build the capacity of female students for them to adopt behavioural change strategies that enhance self esteem and increased knowledge of sexual education.
- Colleges to support the training of institutional health minders to build their capacity to effectively and efficiently respond to the greater demand of SRH services by students.
- SAYWHAT and college authorities should collaborate for the provision of affordable sanitary wear and information concerning basic health care of students.