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Raw sewerage causing stink in Lobengula suburb

For more than 8 years, residents in New Lobengula have been forced to endure the unbearable stench from the pools of sewage in their homes and despite contacting Bulawayo City Council (BCC), they feel their plight is falling on deaf ears.

An infestation of flies is now the order of the day and piles of human waste are strewn across the streets a situation that residents believe potentially cause a health scare in the area.

Amina Maphosa, a resident from New Lobengula lives in the section popularly known as 'ema57' cited the manner which the health

disaster is slowly turning into a tragedy and should be looked into as a matter of urgency.

She stated how the concrete wall fell to the ground following full immersion in the swampy sewer which surrounds her house.

"The stench is terrible! Back in the day before I was diagnosed with cancer on my leg and it was eventually amputated, I used to go to the City Council and demand that they fix these blockages. I even delivered a written letter to the engineering department but till today, we still reside in this mess staring at human waste every day," she said.

As an adaptation measure, residents have dug furrows within their yards to allow the sewer to easily flow through their homes into the water drainage trenches and to the middle of the road where pedestrians have to walk on the edge to avoid it.

"Our houses are drenched in the sewer waste and soon enough they too will fall to the ground," she added.

Residents who spoke to Infocus News expressed their utmost displeasure over Council's failure to solve this perennial problem. Infocus News observed that the ground around the affected areas is visibly damp from the pipe bursts and puddles of sewage have become a 'new normal.'

"This is a recurring problem which we think should have been solved a long time ago. The pipes are old



and blocked and some are being damaged by roots. We are in deep trouble as residents because even when we get sick, we are no longer sure if this (sewer) is the cause,” said Albert Ndlovu, a resident from New Lobengula.

Ndlovu who resides in the area popularly known as ‘ema700’ has lived there long enough to know that the population in Lobengula has generously increased and cited that the pipeline is over congested. Ndlovu highlighted that Council should prioritise infrastructural development by replacing old pipes and attending to faulty ones.



“The population has grown and the infrastructure is still the same. Council must act swiftly to address these challenges. As we experience such misfortunes, our desperate calls are not being heard. This problem persists even when they come and unblock the manholes. Now we are forced to divert the stream of sewerage,” he said.

Ndlovu raised his fears that a health hazard is looming in Lobengula as pipe bursts and raw sewage could contaminate drinking water while the local authority drags its feet in addressing this environmental disaster.

Learners to benefit from psychology services in schools

Psychology services are being implemented in all Provinces and Districts to help learners deal with the effects of School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV).

These sentiments were raised by the Director of Communications and Advocacy in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Taungana Ndoro based on the Zimbabwe Education Sector Analysis of 2016 – 2020.

“We are doing everything to protect learners from SRGBV and have already set up psychology service departments throughout the country to ensure that they get all help. We are confident that this robust effort will yield results and help up eliminate all forms of SRGBV,” said Ndoro.

Ndoro said the services include counseling sessions and ensuring that perpetrators are brought to book as the Ministry has engaged different stakeholders like police and community leaders to fight the scourge.

According to a 2016-2020 Zimbabwe Education Sector analysis, frequent cases of sexual and physical abuse of girls were recorded in various schools although perpetrators were not brought to book. The report states that learners engage in sexual activities starting from pre-teenage years, due to social and financial pressures including

lack of parental guidance.

In the analysis, it emerged: “Some schools reported learners attend school showing signs of abuse from home including sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and being denied food. During the study it was also discovered that cases of verbal abuse by both teachers and learners, and that bullying among learners was common in most of the schools visited.”

Betina Mahleka, a parent from Plumtree who spoke to Women’s Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) said SRGBV is a result of family disintegration which has resulted in many children living without elders to protect them.

“Our society that is why anyone can sexually abuse a girl knowing that her parents or guardians are away or are unbothered about her well-being. In as much as we expect schools to protect our children, I believe as communities we should be willing to prosecute all perpetrators including our own relatives whenever they abuse children,” she said.

Mahleka implored police to arrest parents or guardians who accept ransom from SRGBV as a way of ending the practice.

Another parent, Andile Ncube from Bulawayo said teachers no longer have the patience to observe changes in learners when they have problems.

“I think teachers nowadays are frustrated and cannot be trusted as we know that some of them are the ones who abuse our children. We need to ensure they get refresher courses so that teachers help pupils who may be abused.

At times I feel teachers are to blame for these abuses that our children suffer from while at school,” added Ncube. Ncube added: “Responsible authorities should implement conducive solutions that ensure learners

open up whenever they are abused as more cases go unreported because of many factors. If we do not address this problem, we will breed a damaged lot of future leaders who will not be able to speak out about abuses in the community.”



Picture Credit: www.reuters.com

COVID-19 Vaccine scare on women’s Menstrual Hygiene

Statistics from the Ministry of Health and Child Care’s daily situational report shows that by Tuesday, more than 600 000 Zimbabweans had received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The same report states that about 231 375 of those had received their second jab of the Sinopharm and Covaxin which are currently being rolled out in the country.

As the numbers continue to grow daily, so do unfounded anecdotal theories on side effects that one may suffer after getting vaccinated.

One of those stories is around changes in women’s menstrual cycle which was documented on different social media pages over the past couple of days.

Some claimed that getting the COVID-19 jab led them to experience heavier, lighter, or varied menstrual flow in terms of duration but so far, Science has no proof that indeed it can affect one’s menstrual cycle or fertility.

Infocus News caught up with a local gynecologist, Professor Solwayo Ngwenya who said if uncontrolled, such unfounded myths can

deter the country from achieving herd immunity.

“People should understand that COVID-19 vaccines are fairly new and we have not learnt much about them so anything is possible. However, what is possible is that these reactions are minor and temporal and once the vaccination period settles women will revert back to their normal menstrual cycles,” says Prof Ngwenya.

“These reactions being experienced by some women may be a result of inflammation of the womb or thinning of the blood

due to the vaccine which causes bleeding.”

He urged citizens to take note of any changes they note after being vaccinated so that they are documented and noted by health care authorities.

“We continue to urge people to get their vaccine and watch out for side effects as every treatment in medicine has side effects. It is crucial that the policy makers also work on stating all possible side effects before rolling it out to members of the public.”

In an interview after receiving her second dose at Maqhawe Clinic in Bulawayo’s Nkulumane suburb, Miss Priscilla Molefe said she had heard about such rumours from friends on WhatsApp and yet to experience any of the alleged changes.

“I have people claiming that this vaccine could alter one’s menstruation cycle but honestly I am yet to come across anyone who experienced that. I believe that such rumours are good to keep us alert but may also discourage many who already believe in conspiracy theories about COVID-19,” added Molefe.

“I also think it will be good for our clinic and hospital authorities to do massive awareness campaigns in our communities so that they address the hanging myths and misconception which may affect people’s uptake of the vaccine,” she added.



Picture Credit: www.leafbuyer.com

Economic effects expose young women to crime

Youths in Zimbabwe make up about 67 percent of the population and remain the hardest hit by unemployment, a development which has exposed young women to crime.

Speaking to Infocus News, a representative from Bulawayo Unemployed Youths Association (BUYA), Givemore Mangena stated that high unemployment rates especially among youths was detrimental to economic development.

The organization has over 300 members per ward in Bulawayo and the numbers keep growing as more youths are registering for employment and economic development opportunities.

“We have a number of young women who end up joining criminal gangs due to unemployment and are used during robberies, carjacking and break ins,” added Mangena. “We have Honda Fit

gangs wreaking havoc in Pumula and other suburbs and sadly they have taken advantage of young women who normally entice unsuspecting prey for these criminals.”

According to Mangena, girls tend to opt for risky sexual relationships in search for financial freedom and that exposes them to harmful behaviour.

“In this environment, girls easily lose themselves and they become a fertile ground for drug abuse, promiscuity and sex work becomes a paying job that enables them to buy necessities like sanitary wear.”

“So as an Association we are advocating for employment creation and we recently engaged Haulin Investments, a company that was given a site to do quarry mining to employ local youths, young women and people with disabilities. We are encouraging youths to create jobs and start their own projects in

order to get a decent income and to be involved in social activities such as sports and so that we stay out of crime and trouble.”

Nokuthula Moyo from Mpopoma cited that many young women are willing to work their way out of poverty but there are limited

opportunities. She said accessing loans is difficult for people like her who are not in a position to run a business.

“I completed my studies and even did a Diploma in Accounting with the hope of getting a job to help my family meet daily needs. The challenge is we know we should

create jobs and be innovative but many of us are stuck as we do not know where to go,” added Moyo. “The struggle of finding a decent job is real and makes it so difficult for us to continue aspiring to be powerful women because we cannot afford basics.”

Women implore Councils to improve on access to clean water

Young women have implored on Councils to avail running water as means of restoring their dignity which was lost since the day, they started sourcing water from alternative points.

Speaking during a Water Indaba organized by Women’s Institute of Leadership Development (WILD), young women described perennial water challenges Bulawayo and surrounding areas as a constant reminder of a crisis they must face during their monthly menses.

“Water is really a big crisis in our community, as we have a few boreholes located far from where we stay. We are forced to drink water from a nearby river and when it dries up you have to walk about 3km to the nearest borehole,” said Sanele Mathobela from Pumula East suburb.

“The water situation has taken away all our happiness and is the

main source of discord in both our homes and communities. We are even experiencing domestic violence which is fueled by constant water shortages,” said Michelle Dlodlo. Contacted for comment, Bulawayo City Council Corporate Communications Manager, Nesisa Mpfu said Bulawayo’s challenges were due to lack of raw water.

“Raw water provision is the responsibility of the Zimbabwe National Water Authority. You may wish to check with them on the budget provisions for providing adequate raw water or the City of Bulawayo. We are aware that they have started working on the long-term solution which is the Gwayi/Shangani Dam,” she said.

Sukoluhle Mhlanga added that alternative water sources are not friendly to young women with disabilities. “Normally the points are always congested making it difficult for PWDs to access them. I think responsible authorities should engage PWDs so that we share the suitable models that suit us as the fraternity,” said Mhlanga. The World Health Organisation states that each person needs 20 to 50 litres of water free of contaminants a day for drinking and hygiene. In her presentation, WILD program officer Portia Madzivire said safe drinking water, sanitation



Picture Credit: urbanupdate.in

and good hygiene are fundamental to health, survival, growth and development of any community. “The lack of improved water supply and sanitation therefore severely impacts the human capabilities of all Zimbabweans, because, without clean water and proper sanitation, human beings are more prone to contracting illnesses, and therefore suffer greater rates of morbidity and mortality due to these illnesses,” she said.

“Women experience hormonal fluctuations as well as bloating during menstruation and this has an impact on the digestive system and causes constipation, gas, and bloating. Drinking at least 9 to 10 glasses of water a day during your period is said to help in fighting the bloating as it flushes waste out of your system.

Madzivire added that women require more water during menses hence a crisis worsens their unending challenges.



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