

# READY

RESILIENT & EMPOWERED  
ADOLESCENTS & YOUNG PEOPLE

#WeAreREADY #READY4UHC

## CELEBRATING READY+



This newsletter is dedicated to **Mangaliso Dlodlu** and **Richard Mutenga**. Mangaliso, who sadly died last year at the age of 24 in Mbabane, Eswatini, was a community adolescent treatment supporter (CATS). He was a fighter and an inspiration to his colleagues. Richard, who died in January 2021, aged 47, was Zvandiri's Finance Manager. Richard was kind-hearted, dedicated and a team player. Richard and Mangaliso will be greatly missed.



Cédric

### Welcome to this 8th edition of the newsletter!

We are celebrating the last four years of the READY+ programme and looking forward to the future. We're delighted to have secured funding to support our vital work with adolescents and young people living with and affected by HIV for the next six years. Read on to find out more.

We've achieved so much, but above all we honour the brave and passionate young people we lost along the way. We will always remember them - they remain our heroes and the reason why READY+ exists.

Join me in celebrating CATS, who are on the frontline, supporting their peers to manage their HIV status and stay on treatment. Without their leadership, READY+ wouldn't be the same. We share young people's pride in their emerging leadership from the country to global level. And let's not forget collaboration between young people and healthcare providers. Thanks to the READY+ to care scorecard, youth-friendly services delivered to adolescents and young people living with HIV have vastly improved. During the COVID-19 pandemic, health workers and CATS have supported young people in many ways.

Our achievements go beyond Eswatini, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The READY movement, led by the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+ Global), with support from the READY+ consortium, has reached many young people across the globe. I'd like to thank everyone who trusted in youth leadership. Together, we've changed the narrative and proved that young people can deliver.

We're excited to expand the movement: creating space and opportunities for youth innovation in service delivery and advocacy. Watch this space!

Cédric Nininahazwe

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE, Y+ GLOBAL

## Celebrating CATS



Rennet interviewing READY+ stakeholders © Africaid/READY+/2020

BY RENNET MPOFU, BULAWAYO CATS

Last November, CATS across all four READY+ countries celebrated and in turn were celebrated for their hard work as peer supporters and educators. I took part in an event, attended by CATS and READY+ partners, at the Holiday Inn in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. This was one of many special events and activities aimed at sharing learning and collaborating with CATS from other countries. CATS set the agenda and helped organise it all. I was proud to be reporter for the day.

Ntombikayise Ncube from Y+ Global said,

**"The amount of work they do, it's a good thing they're being celebrated because they are the backbone of the community, dealing with beneficiaries at the community level. They know the struggles, challenges and advocacy issues of young people living with HIV."**

There was a session on impact that mapped how CATS gained not only knowledge but also confidence and self-esteem, overcoming stigma and discrimination.

"They influence others to live positively and accept themselves as they are," said Sister Virginia Matthew from the Mpilo Centre of Excellency."

All around me, CATS looked mesmerised and happy, and took lots of pictures. There wasn't a dull moment. Later on, we connected online with CATS from other cities and READY+ countries. We listened attentively and watched, eager to know more, and enjoyed songs in different languages.

"I got more than I expected," said Thandekile, a CATS from Bulawayo District. "I learnt that even with challenges, as long as we work as a team, we can withstand it all."

Everyone was grateful to READY+ and the whole Africaid team for bringing us together. It made me think that we don't need to be negative about being HIV-positive.

## The sky is the limit for Ntsiki



Ntsiki © Frontline AIDS/Sydney White Smith/2017

Ntsiki Shabangu, a 25-year-old from Eswatini, features in the film, *The sky is the limit*. She began her career as a CATS, providing peer support, information and counselling to young people living with HIV. We caught up with her recently.

**How did you feel when you were asked to be in a video that would be seen around the world?**

**“**At first, before shooting the video I was scared to disclose my HIV status so publicly and I wasn't sure how my relatives and boyfriend would react. But I quickly realised that the video would help a lot of young people living with HIV to accept themselves and I was excited to do it.

**You are now a READY+ country focal point, advocate and mother. You've inspired and helped so many young people living with HIV. How has your life changed since you became involved with READY+?**

**“**My life has changed for the better because now I'm recognised and meaningfully engaged in national, regional and global activities for young people living with HIV. READY+ has opened many doors for me as a country focal point to advocate for the rights and needs of my peers. And thanks to READY+ I'm pursuing my dream of becoming a qualified psychologist at the University of Eswatini.

**What challenges have you faced and what have you learnt?**

**“**At first, sensitising young people living with HIV was difficult as most aren't ready to find out their status. Within communities, some young people living with HIV are reluctant to learn about HIV, claiming that they know everything about it, yet they don't.

**Finally, what advice would you give to a young person who had just become a CATS?**

**“**I would love to advise and encourage my peers who had just become a CATS. Working with young people isn't easy and sometimes you need to be patient and calm, but it's exciting at the same time because you can share ideas. Being HIV positive doesn't mean it's the end of the journey - you can still live a healthy life.

# Expanding our impact

BY TUMIE KOMANYANE, LEAD: PROGRAMMES, FRONTLINE AIDS

READY+ started four years ago with an incredible sense of hope that the programme would place young people's health and agency at the forefront and enable them to realise their potential as vibrant, resilient and empowered members of society. This is what we achieved: across the consortium we reached over 30,000 adolescents and young people living with HIV through evidence-based interventions that clearly demonstrate a positive social return on investment. We learned that building the capacity of young people translates to supportive, safe spaces for impactful programming. Our work with healthcare providers and CATS has resulted in youth-friendly services. Importantly, engaging families and communities through dialogue and advocacy has shifted attitudes towards adolescents. Thanks to the young people who are at the centre of READY+, we've achieved everything we set out to do.



I am pleased to announce the next phase of READY+, which builds on the gains from the last four years and seeks to deepen our youth-centred response. We are excited to launch a programme that will focus on young people in their diversity across seven countries. Mental health and gender equality are prioritised. The programme will reach 35,614 adolescents and young people living with and

most affected by HIV, supporting them to become more resilient, empowered and knowledgeable and have the bodily autonomy, freedom and agency to realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

# Meaningful youth engagement in practice



BY JANET BHILA, FRONTLINE AIDS TRUSTEE, ADVOCATE AND MENTOR

As an advocate and representative of young people in the READY movement (an awesome initiative), I was privileged to chair a session on READY during a Frontline AIDS Board meeting in the UK. A representative from the Dutch Embassy was present: this demonstrated Frontline AIDS' willingness to include young people in such important spaces. I really like the way that every READY publication and tool is done by and for young people. The READY+ consortium listens to young people because it is in listening that action takes place.

As a black African young woman living with HIV, I've learnt a lot in my role on the Frontline AIDS Board, reinforcing the notion that young people's voices matter. In some spaces, it's difficult to contribute as I was brought up in an African setting where you're taught not to speak until spoken to and not to talk while your elders are speaking. Although I'm the youngest on the Board, people take my suggestions seriously, mentor me and make sure I feel comfortable speaking up.

I have four suggestions to strengthen the Board – these apply to Frontline AIDS as well as other organisations working with and for young people:

1. Include at least two more young people since being the youngest in the room is intimidating.
2. Assign the young person to a committee made up of hands-on implementing organisations.
3. Include team building sessions to ease the tension in group dynamics and help a new member join.
4. Have more virtual meetings every quarter, while maintaining the two face-to-face meetings.

Overall, I can make a strategic contribution because I bring issues raised on the ground to the Board meeting. This means I have the power to ask about youth participation in the organisation and relay directly what young people feel should be done to achieve meaningful involvement.

## LISTEN UP!

Africaid will be launching two radio shows in June: Investing in the mental health of young people on 5th June and CATS – Understanding my work in the community on 12th June. Both will be streamed live on the READY movement Facebook page.

## Dates for the diary FOLLOW THE MOVEMENT!

Many national, regional and international meetings have been cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 and many are now virtual.

16 June	International Day of the African Child
26 June	Support. Don't Punish: Global Day of Action
30 June – 2 July	Generation Equality Forum, Paris
11 July	World Population Day
12 August	International Youth Day
28 September	International Safe Abortion Day
6-8 October	International Workshop on HIV and Adolescence
11 October	International Day of the Girl Child

Support the READY movement by following these events and posting to:



using #WeAreREADY #READY4UHC #YouthAgainstCOVID19. Also visit <https://frontlineaids.org/our-work-includes/ready/> for news and updates.

# WHAT DOES READY+ MEAN TO YOU?



"It has been very exciting and fulfilling being a READY+ implementing partner. The echo of the good work READY+ is doing is heard near and far in our community. Increasingly, young people are realising that sexual and reproductive health information and services are their rights – and they are demanding them."

Willbrord Manyama, READY+ M&E Officer, Kimara Peer Educators, Tanzania



"The highlight of my work was seeing how young people talked more openly about issues such as their sexuality, and the changes in their behaviour."

Rosa Massango, Maternal and Child Health Nurse, Boane Health Centre, Paediatric – Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA) Mozambique



"READY+ brought comfort to young people in knowing someone cares. Engaging with someone who gave time and attention and provided them with counselling support helped young people realise they're important. This gave them hope that a brighter day would come."

Vongai Munatsi, Mental Health Specialist, Africaid, Zimbabwe



"I've seen young people become role models in the community. Sometimes people come to them seeking solutions to their health issues."

Dr Jane Shelutete, Temeke Regional Referral Hospital, PATA Tanzania

# On the frontline with CATS

BY DR FÁTIMA ALY, POLICY OFFICER FOR SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS AND HIV/AIDS, EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS, MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Mozambique is pleased to renew support for READY+. We value the work of the READY+ consortium, implementing partners and CATS in supporting marginalised adolescents and young people living with and affected by HIV.

When I visited the READY+ project in Beira after the devastating Cyclone Idai, I was amazed to see how active the implementing partners and CATS were. Even with the building almost destroyed, OASIS didn't stop work and they managed to set up a temporary building in the garage of their office.

I noticed that the CATS were an essential part of the health facility. The director said that READY+ is a good, well integrated project and that the results are very promising because the CATS help staff to improve adherence to treatment among adolescents and young people living with HIV. They also help staff to actively look for clients who don't come back for refills.

The impact of the CATS' work isn't limited to young people living with HIV: parents also become more adherent to treatment. As one 15-year-old girl said,

"Before READY+ I felt lonely, I didn't have any friends and didn't want to go to school because of stigma and discrimination. My mother was also very unhappy and we cried a lot. Now that I have support from CATS and Auntie Leo (OASIS), I feel confident and I have friends locally and at school. My mother is happier and she and my stepfather are more adherent to treatment too, just like me."

# Resources

Over the years, the READY+ consortium has produced a wide range of facilitating resources, reflecting the rich diversity of our work and promoting sustainability of the programme. See our READY resources here.



## Thank you!

Y+ Global and Frontline AIDS would like to thank our current READY partners: Africaid, Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO), Eswatini Network of Young Positives (ENYP+), Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), ideiaLab, World Services, Network of Young People Living with HIV and AIDS in Tanzania (NYP+), Paediatric – Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA), Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSI), REJUSIDA Mozambique and Zimbabwe Young Positives (ZY+).

We would like to thank the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support.