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# **Educators' Perspectives of HealthWise Zambia: An evidence-based, life and leisure skills programme in Zambian high schools**

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# Background

- HealthWise is an evidence-based, risk prevention, life skills programme
- Implemented by trained educators in high schools (Grades 8 and 9 students)
- Three previous studies in Cape Town, South Africa
- 65 high schools involving 17 000 Grade 8 and 9 students
- First school-based, longitudinal, randomised control design studies conducted in South Africa to report any positive findings on substance use and sexual risk

# The next step ...

- Lack of evidence-based programmes in Africa
- Need to determine if HealthWise would be beneficial in other African countries
- Explore how HealthWise might be adapted
- Zambia



# Zambia – a ‘least developed country’

(The DAC list of ODA Recipients, 2012)



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- Green = Zambia's agriculture
- Red = Zambia's struggle for freedom
- Black = Zambia's people
- Orange = Zambia's copper industry and mineral wealth
- Fish eagle = the Zambian people's ability to rise above the nation's challenges

# Challenges facing Zambian Youth

(United Nations Population Fund, 2016)



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- 4.8 million young people aged 15-35 years (37% of population)
- High child marriage prevalence rates (32% women married by 18 years)
- Teenage pregnancy: 29%
- HIV prevalence rates: 8% of youth aged 15-19 years
- Low contraceptive use among young people (28% married adolescent girls using modern methods of contraception)
- Low condom use: 40% girls and 49% boys aged 15-24 years used a condom
- 58% girls drop out of school (teenage pregnancy and child marriage)
- 41% adolescents reporting having ever drunk alcohol (Swahn et al., 2011)

- Clear need for effective risk prevention programmes
- Established partnership with Lusaka Apex Medical University to implement HealthWise Zambia





# HealthWise: Grade 8 Lessons



1. Self-Awareness
2. Managing Anxiety
3. Managing Anger
4. Exploring Free Time
5. Free Time in my Community
6. Beating Boredom & Developing Interests
7. Overcoming Roadblocks
8. Decision Making
9. Managing Risk
10. Avoiding Risky Sexual Behaviour
11. Myths & Realities of Drug Use
12. Avoiding & Reducing Risk



# Methodology

- Aim
  - Implement and evaluate HealthWise in Lusaka, Zambia
- Objective of this study
  - Understand educators' perspectives of the usefulness and relevance
- Six high schools randomly selected
- Twelve educators participated in a one day training workshop (April, 2016)
- Implemented HealthWise with Grade 8 students (May to November 2016)  
Participated in school-specific, focus groups (2017)



# Theme 1: Relevance of HealthWise

Theme 1	Categories
Relevance of HealthWise	<p>Created a supportive environment</p> <p>Teaches values</p> <p>Most useful lessons: anger management, decision making, avoiding risky sexual behaviour (activity: how sexually transmitted diseases spread)</p> <p>Lesson “gave permission” and enabled educators to give students correct information about sexual issues</p> <p>Able to apply HealthWise to situations happening in the class room and at home; therefore it changes behaviour</p> <p>However, some parents and other educators questioned the relevance of HealthWise as they regarded content as “non-academic”</p>

# Theme 2: Cultural Conflicts

Theme 2	Categories
<b>Cultural conflicts</b>	<p>Traditional cultural norms are conservative: made teaching sexuality in school a challenge for educators. Cultural norm is not to talk about sex to children, as this is regarded as taboo</p> <p>Religious conflicts (eg. Symbols/icons used in student work book – “the eye”)</p> <p>Conflict with traditional cultural norms: traditionally for some Zambian people, beer is given to children as it is believed to be nourishing</p> <p>Cultural differences (eg. traffic light symbolising risk recognition – unfamiliar in some parts of Zambia)</p>

# Theme 3: Environmental Characteristics

Theme 3	Categories
<b>Environmental characteristics</b>	<p>Lack of resources - the costs of printing the student work books</p> <p>Quality of printed workbooks was poor</p> <p>Limited time to teach HealthWise</p>



# Theme 4: Programme Design and Delivery

Theme 4	Categories
<b>Programme design and delivery</b>	<p>Educator training: two day training would be better</p> <p>Student work books were useful</p> <p>Educator training manuals were helpful</p> <p>Educators requested assessment tasks to be included as part of HealthWise</p>

# Implications

- Community participatory approach to programme adaptation is vital to ensure cultural relevance
- The leisure focus provides opportunities for occupational therapy involvement in mainstream high schools in Zambia



# Conclusion

- Educators felt that HealthWise was useful and relevant for Zambian adolescents
- Challenges provide insight into how to adapt HealthWise for future use in Zambia
- Strengthened south-south research collaboration and promoted internationalisation between researchers and universities on the African continent



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# Thank you!

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