Zahra Amiry Selemani is a fiercely independent 21-year-old female entrepreneur – and that’s a big deal in her home country of Tanzania, where, traditionally, women are not valued as independent producers and contributors to the household or the country’s economic activity as a whole. “I want to change that perception about the value of young women like myself. When we are empowered, we can make informed decisions about our lives, our sexual health and ultimately, yes, our futures.”

Starting a business for any young person is daunting, but taking the leap of faith to grow a fledgling business during a global pandemic, takes guts, street smarts and most importantly, the unwavering support of family. For Zahra, this support came from her mother, Salma Juma, the love and connection is tangible. “She has been my role model, most ardent supporter and my champion. I would not be where I am today if it was not for her strength and lessons she taught me about self-value and self-love.”

As a passionate advocate for young women empowerment, Zahra knew that without young girls being able to take control over their sexual health, young girls would not have access to the futures they deserve. “In Tanzania many young women are negatively impacted because they are not adequately educated about SRHR. They are not able to access to SRHR information or contraception services and this leads to high rates of unwanted pregnancies, child marriage or even forced marriages due to the girl falling pregnant.”

Zahra believes that it’s only then that women can truly add value to their communities and society. Known by her friends and family, as ‘DaBoss’, she knew straight away what the name of her business would be, when she started it, just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. “I wanted my business to represent me, my independence and my plans for the future. That’s why it’s called DaBoss Perfume business.”

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The force for good that women across the continent show every day, in a myriad ways – big and small, is a constant reminder of the power of female strength and leadership.

As a passionate advocate for young women empowerment, Zahra knew that without young girls being able to take control over their sexual health, young girls would not have access to the futures they deserve. “In Tanzania many young women are
needed on the ground. As is the case across much of Africa, it is increasingly difficult for young people to access relevant, youth-sensitive information about SRHR, but this is where organisations such as AfriYan and others are making a difference through outreach and Youth desks where young people are able to come and get information and services in youth friendly environment. Her next step though is to find ways in which to approach and educate parents of young people, as they are often the barriers to young people accessing information and services. Zahra believes that if parents are educated about SRHR and proper and appropriate services, it will help give power and control back to young people to be in charge of their own destinies. Moreover, it could even help young girls to feel confident enough to raise their voices about what matters to them and take meaningful decisions about their futures.

Zahra believes that social media will help bridge the information divide as more and more young people are becoming active on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. “It was an Instagram message that I saw about the SRHR training and since then we are finding ways in which to talk more broadly to young girls and women across the country who have lots of questions.” She says that she has been taken aback by the great need that is out there, and is humbled by the appreciation that she has experienced from girls who are grateful for the information, care and youth friendly insights that they now have access to. When asked what she would like her story to say to other young girls, Zahra immediately thinks back to a lesson her mum has drilled into her. “There is no one in the world that does not have a challenge, all successful people take time to sit down and reflect on what they need to do to be overcome their challenges and be successful.” For her this means that the lack of SRHR education and services is not a problem, it’s just a challenge that is yet to be solved and Zahra plans to be part of the growing tide of young people that are focused on solutions that will take them towards the futures they see for themselves. DaBoss lady indeed!

Follow Zahra on:

- Facebook: @ramiideboss
- Instagram: @zahraamiryseleman

Learn more about AfriYan Tanzania:

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