

PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING



We are worried about Esther. She is late for school and tired in class. She has not completed her homework for weeks. Are there any problems at home?

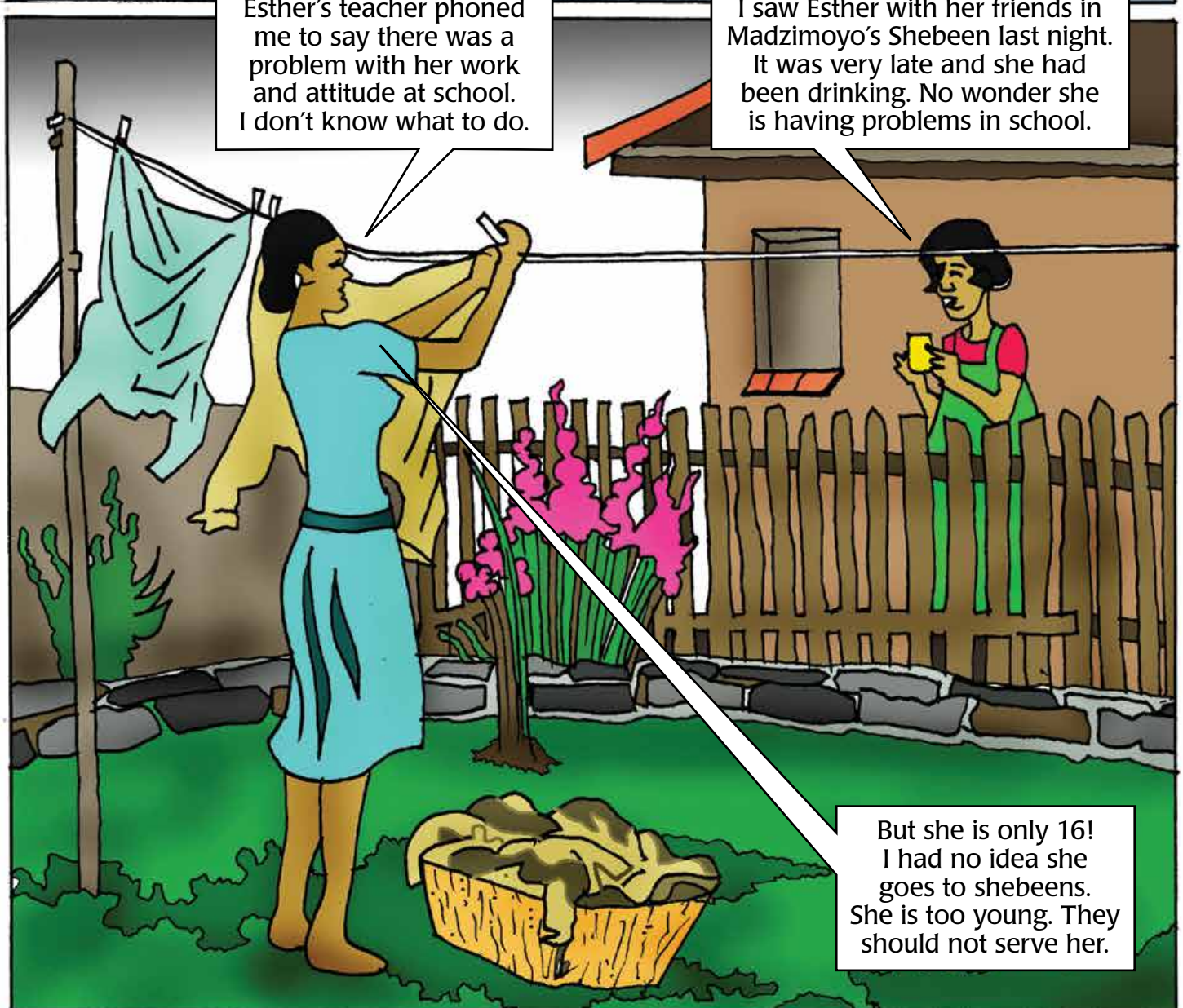
I had no idea! She doesn't ask for help with homework and she is always out with friends in the evening. I thought she had done her homework before she went out.

I will have to find out the reason for Esther's behaviour...



Esther's teacher phoned me to say there was a problem with her work and attitude at school. I don't know what to do.

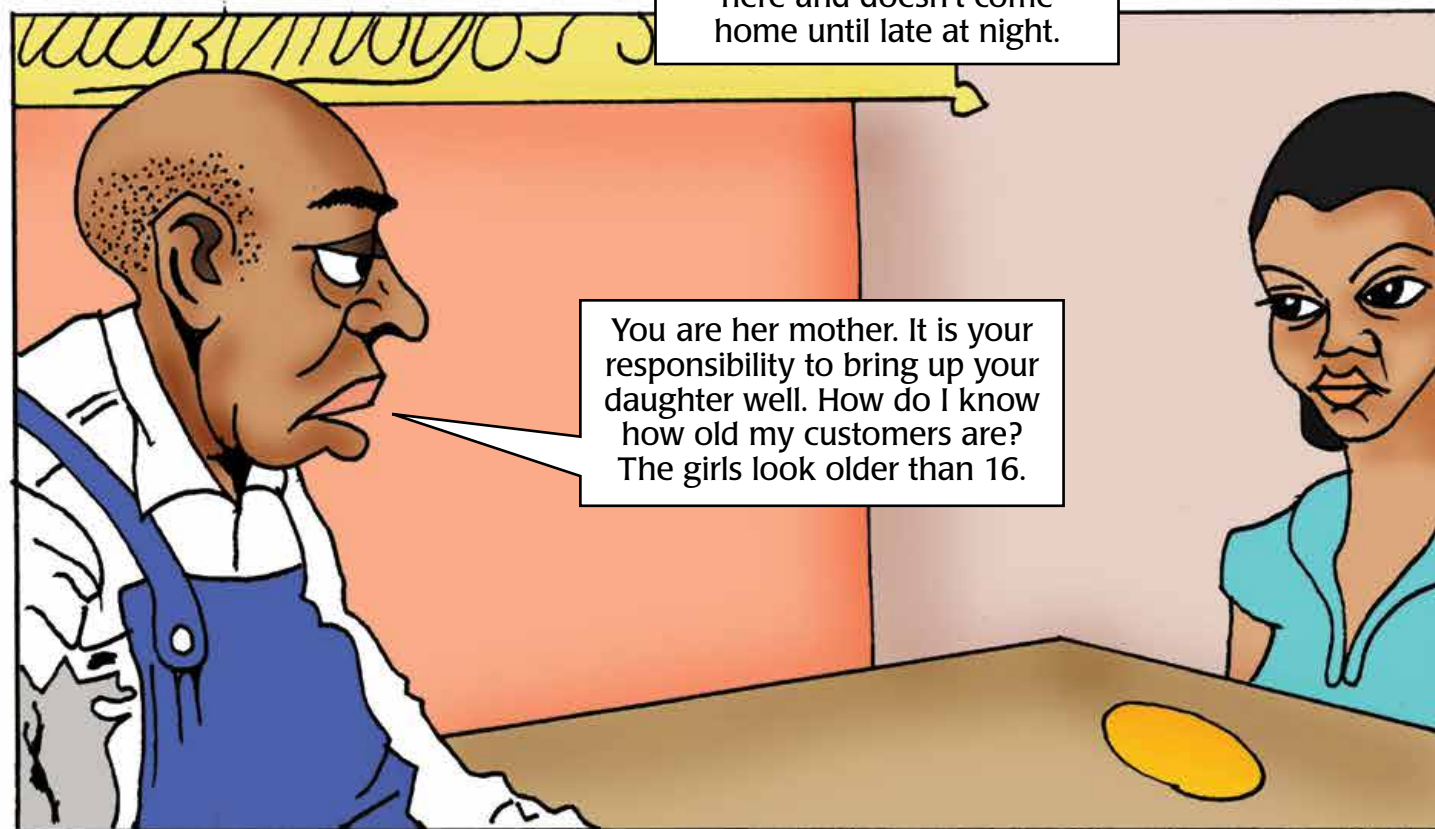
I saw Esther with her friends in Madzimoyo's Shebeen last night. It was very late and she had been drinking. No wonder she is having problems in school.



But she is only 16! I had no idea she goes to shebeens. She is too young. They should not serve her.



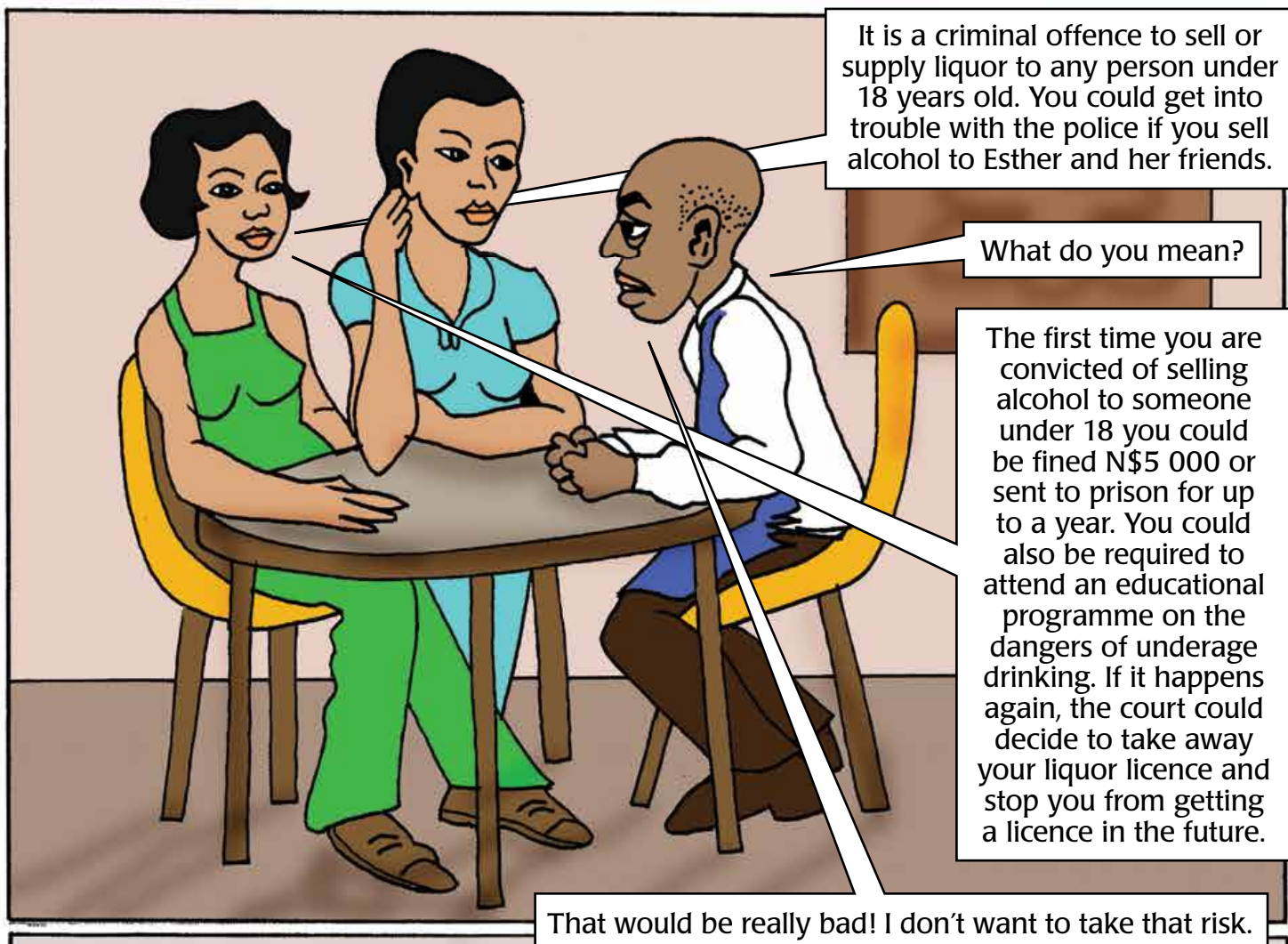
You should not serve alcohol to Esther – she is only 16. My daughter is getting into trouble at school because she drinks alcohol here and doesn't come home until late at night.



You are her mother. It is your responsibility to bring up your daughter well. How do I know how old my customers are? The girls look older than 16.



You both have responsibilities here. The law says that any person selling alcohol must take reasonable measures to determine the age of the buyer.



Madzimoyo was right when he said you have responsibilities too. You are Esther's mother – you have a moral duty to discipline her so she will be a responsible young woman.

But I cannot lock her in the house. How can I make her understand that going to shebeens and drinking alcohol is bad at her age?

Explain the problem to her. Talk to Esther about the effect drinking alcohol can have on her health and her schoolwork, and how she might get hurt or into trouble if she drinks too much. Then she will understand.





So do we agree on what should be done?



I will speak to my daughter. I will encourage Esther to behave responsibly and I will ask her to invite her friends to our home instead of going out in the evenings. If she continues to misbehave, I will use punishments such as taking her cell phone away. That will make her change her behaviour!

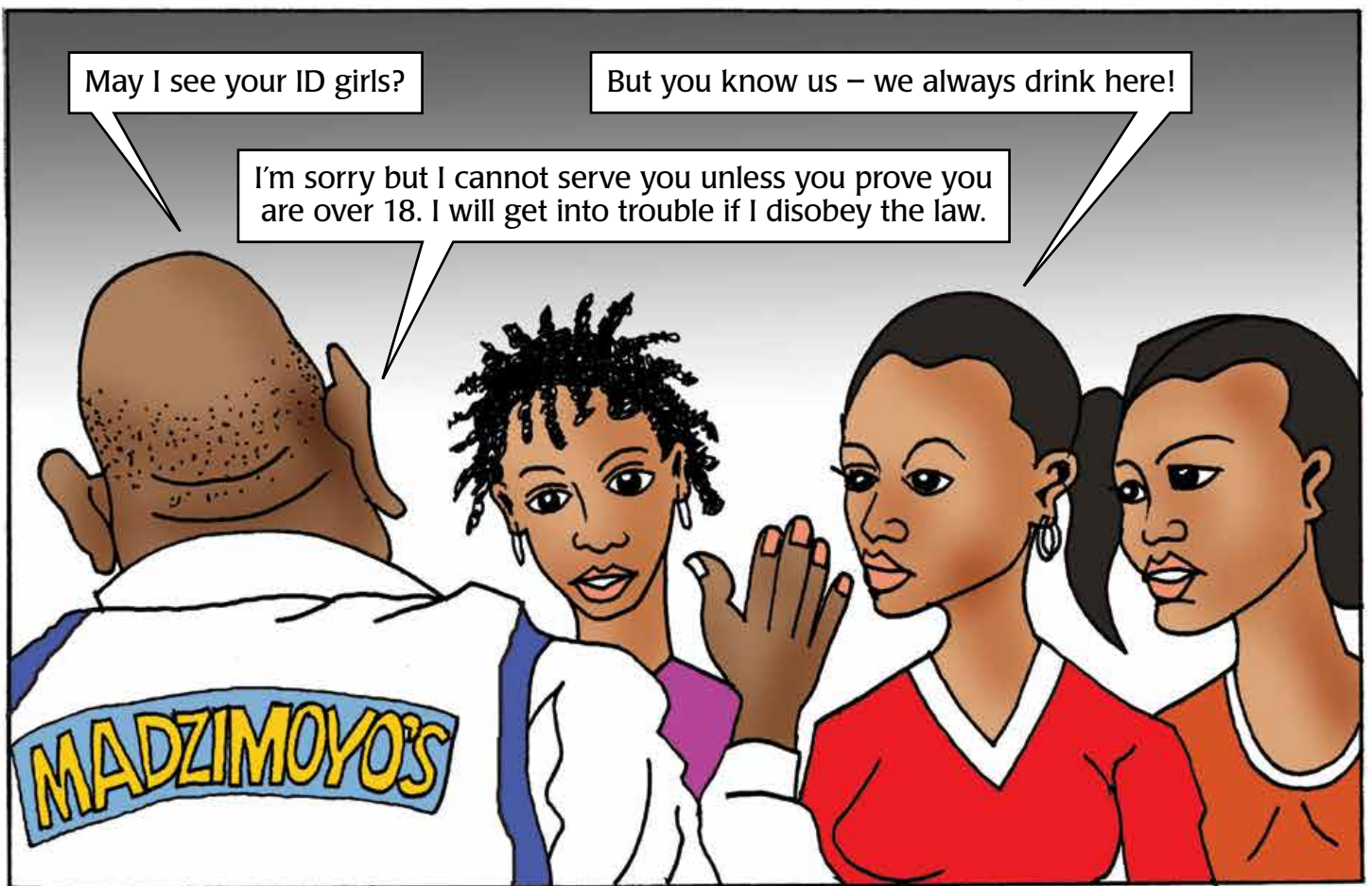


I will put a sign outside saying that I will not serve people under 18 years old. I will also ask for ID when I am not sure how old my customers are. That way I will protect myself and help my community prevent underage drinking.



There are people we can contact for help if we find that young people in our community have serious drinking problems, such as the Etegameno Rehabilitation and Resource Centre in Windhoek. We can also speak to someone from Alcoholics Anonymous. Their phone numbers are in the telephone directory.





May I see your ID girls?

But you know us – we always drink here!

I'm sorry but I cannot serve you unless you prove you are over 18. I will get into trouble if I disobey the law.

AT HOME ...

You should not be going to shebeens and drinking alcohol – you are too young. You need to focus on your schoolwork.

But I want to have fun with my friends.

Drinking alcohol at your age can be dangerous. You should read this article from the newspaper.



DANGEROUS DRINKING AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Research has shown alcohol can have severe consequences for young people.

HEALTH

Drinking liquor can affect young people by damaging brain development and memory processing. This can harm learners' chances of doing well in school.

"Alcohol consumption can also damage the liver and heart", a medical professional explained to *The News*.

Jacob, 17, from Keetmanshoop discussed other common health concerns,

"I used to go out drinking with my friends.

But I would wake up the next day with a headache and feeling sick. Sometimes I couldn't remember what I had done the night before. It wasn't worth it."



Jacob (17) – Keetmanshoop

BEHAVIOUR

After drinking alcohol, young people are more likely than adults to engage in risky behaviour. For example there is a greater likelihood of unplanned, unprotected or unwanted sexual activity. When young people are less careful during sexual activity there is also an increased risk of contracting HIV.

Research has also shown a link between excessive alcohol consumption and aggressive or violent behaviour in young people.

Nadima, 16, from Okahandja told us, "Some people think underage drinking is cool but I don't. I used to be in trouble all the time at school because I was tired after a night of drinking with my friends. I feel more alert now and find it easier to concentrate in class. I also have a better relationship with my family. I know my parents are proud of me for changing my behaviour."



Question: If I see someone under 18 years old purchasing alcohol, what should I do?

Answer: If you see someone under 18 years old purchasing alcohol, you can report the seller to the police.

Question: What will the consequences for the adult be?

Answer: On a first conviction, an adult who breaks the rules might have to pay a fine of up to N\$5000 or face imprisonment for up to one year. The offender might also have to attend an educational programme on the dangers of underage drinking. On a second conviction the court may take away the adult's liquor licence and prevent him or her from obtaining a licence in future. A child under 18 who breaks the rules can be fined up to N\$300 and might have to attend an educational programme on the dangers of underage drinking.

If you are worried about alcohol abuse in your community, there are organisations which can help. Contact a social worker or one of these groups – some have branches or activities outside Windhoek:

- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** 081-3256144
- **Etegameno Rehabilitation and Resource Centre:**
Rehabilitation and Drug Control Unit 061-269348/250404
- **Blue Cross Namibia:** 061-400473

DO YOU

... have a question?

... have a comment?

... need more information?

CONTACT US!

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We would like to hear your feedback about this comic.

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