JUNE. 2019 • ISSUE NO. 2

YOUTH PULSE

PUSHING THE YOUTH AGENDA

Youth Inclusion on Peace and Peace Building: A panacea to Community Development

Progress Sibanda

Youths have a critical role to play when it comes to peace and peace building that is from grassroots level to provincial, national, regional, continental and global level. However, young people still suffer from stereotypes, myths and policy that harm their agency and affect realizing their full potential for peace. They are often viewed as "a problem to be solved and threat to be contained and it often leads to their marginalisation and stigmatization. As a way of encouraging young people to take an active role and be ambassadors of Peace in their communities and the nation at large, YETT went on capacitate them through conducting Peace and Access to Justice Trainings around the country. This is in line with the organisation's #iam4Peace initiative, which seeks to motivate young people to play an active role in keeping peace in their communities and the nation at large despite the current state of affairs in Zimbabwe.

YETT through its partners working in different parts of the country continues to engage young people looking for a better world where PEACE is possible. YETT as a youth-networking organisation that is committed to the full participation of young people in sustainable development through advocacy and capacity building of youth and youth organisation in Zimbabwe saw it as a necessity to conduct these Peace trainings. This is because Peace is everyone's responsibility and everyone has a role to play in keeping peace from the local to the national level, including young people. Peace within a community enhances community development.

The training focused on "Conflict Mapping", "Access to Justice" and "Online Citizen Journalism". The organisation engaged various experts from different fields like Lawyers and renowned journalist from various newsrooms. The conflict mapping sessions helped the Peace Ambassadors to be able to identify different types of conflicts that are found in their communities and in the country. "For me the Conflict mapping training was of

YETT Peace ambassodors having a group disscussion.

great importance as a young person because it is essential to know that each conflict has got its own history andeveryone has to understand it. I was also able to identify various types of conflicts that exist in my community," noted one of the beneficiaries of these trainings from Harare.

The conflict situations listed by these Peace ambassadors were those where communities were experiencing or recovering from and these are the Land Reform Programme, Gukurahundi, Murambatsvina, tribalism, past socio-political injustices, vendors and city council conflicts, miners and the natural resource governance issues etc

"For me it was important to note that National Healing is a post conflict process of dealing with the wrongs of the past and ensuring peace, unity and peaceful coexistence. As young people we also have a role to play in Healing and Reconciliation process and we have to be aware of that role," noted another Peace Ambassador from Odzi.

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““The Access to Justice Trainings were carried out to enlighten young people on different types and forms of Human Rights (from the definition, characteristics of Human Rights and knowing where People’s Rights come from.) The training also involved assessing the level of knowledge on Human Rights among young people and identifying various barriers to Access to Justice. For the trainings to be a success, YETT engaged the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA), Christian Legal Society (CLS)“I enjoyed the Access to
Justice Training because I now know that Rights are things we are allowed to be, to do or to have simply by being human. I am also now aware of First Generation Rights and Second Generation Rights something which I did not know before this training” noted another Peace Ambassador from Bulawayo.

Online Citizen Journalism trainings helped the beneficiaries to know the basics of story writing and different ways of storytelling. It facilitated an overall understanding of citizen journalism among young people and knowing the principles and ethical considerations when conducting citizen journalism.

YETT Peace ambassadors making a presentation.

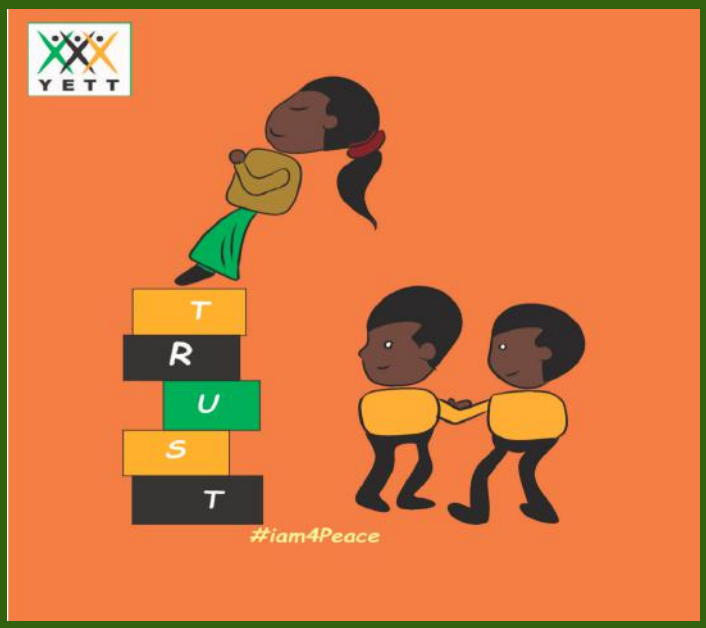
Are you interested in writing articles?
YETT is calling upon interested young people to write articles to be featured in the next newsletter - The Youth Pulse.
Email us @ progress@yetzw.net
or
call us on 263 242-496889

The NPRC Provincial Peace Committees Gathers Pace amid the call for Youth Inclusion

Owen Dhliwayo

The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) has been moving around the country setting up Peace Committees. The NPRC was stablished under Sections 251 to 253 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013. Section 252 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013 states that the NPRC's functions are to ensure post – conflict justice, healing and reconciliation. In January 2018, President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa signed the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Bill into law. The enactment of the law operationalized the Commission that was appointed in 2016.The establishment of the peace committees is in line with the Commission's strategic priority to enhance the resolution of the country's conflicted past and healing process.

The Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) believes that young people are critical stakeholders if genuine peace and reconciliation is to be achieved, therefore they have to be included in the Peace Committees that are being set county-wide. Youths are central to the solution of the multifaceted crises that have engulfed Zimbabwe's economics, politics and society. Young people in Zimbabwe very often find themselves at the centre of conflicts usually as the pawns of power-hungry manipulators. The success of peace including conflict prevention, management and resolution depends greatly on the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women and youth. Effective youth inclusion requires the engagement of young people at all levels and sectors of society, including those who are marginalized due to their gender, ethnicity and educational background. Young people are key players in contributing to the success of building the peaceful and inclusive communities necessary for sustainable development.



The setting up of the peace committees commenced on 28 May 2019 in Harare. According to Philemon Shereni, the NPRC Spokesperson, the Commission will begin conducting hearings once the peace committees are in place. At these hearings, people will be expected to share their experiences on Gukurahundi and other political disturbances, and also on how the country can heal and move forward. "The peace committees are a platform within the Commission to deal with issues of peace – building in communities. What they will do is that they will use local knowledge and local resources in dealing with conflicts and peace – building initiatives in their localities." NPRC Commissioner Patience Chiradza said. She went on to say that "the provincial peace committees consist of various stakeholders representing government, civic society, Church, business, academia, political parties, youth, people with disabilities and war veterans."

The Zimbabwean context of conflict is rooted in disputes over national power, economic hardships, unstable political landscape and pre – colonial disputes which have not been resolved. However, with the establishment of Provincial Peace Committees, it becomes clear on the need to have young people on the epicenter of peace and security as key actors and contributors to peace and national healing. Thus, the combination of socio-economic deprivations and socio-political exclusion informs the nexus of youth despondency, and peace and security challenges in the country.

On December 9, 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved Resolution 2250, which is the first resolution that specifically addresses the role of young people on matters of peace and security. The resolution is a historic milestone for its recognition of the role that young people can play in the prevention of conflict, the promotion and consolidation of peace. This resolution captures the legacy and contributions that have been made by some provisions such as the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding, the Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security.

The UN Resolution 2250 is affirming that young people are instruments of change, and if well supported, they have great potential to contribute in peace building. The fact that young people endure suffering in politically motivated conflicts since 1980 demands their appropriate engagement in peace processes.

YETT believes that it is important that the government invest in the capacities, agency and leadership of young people so that they may fully reach their potential to contribute to peace and national healing. Thus, providing an enabling environment for young people to promote a culture of peace and prevent counter violent tendencies. The political processes underway in the country under the "Second Republic", the social and economic environment is expected to be geared towards helping young people contribute meaningfully on peace and national healing. The mere recognition of the role of young people as key actors in peace and national healing is not enough, but the inclusion of young people from the stages of conceptualization, design and implementation process of the peace committees will go a long way in achieving real peace and social cohesion.

Day of the African Child, a Springboard For Transforming Young People's Lives

Progress Sibanda & Owen Dhliwayo

On 16 June 1976, close to 10 000 black school students in South Africa protested against poor quality of education and at the same time demanding the right to be taught in their own language. Hundreds of young students were killed in what was later known as Soweto Uprising protests. Subsequently in 1991, the Organisation of African Union (OAU), now known as the African Union (AU) designated the event as the "Day of the African Child". In adopting the Day of the African Child, the AU has drawn attention to the plight of children across Africa making the commemorations a platform for African societies to examine and raise awareness on education justice and equality. Every year, a theme for the Day of the African Child is decided upon by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). The 2019 theme was; "HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN AFRICA: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FIRST."

Humanitarian action is centrally focused on saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining dignity, and it is usually short – term help. Humanitarian crises often lead to violations of children's rights and these include failure to provide education, health or adequate standard of living for children to enjoy their rights. This goes on to affect children differently. The action of black school students on 16 June 1976 was a clear indication that children have Rights of their own and that thes e rights are not just derivative or a part of the parents' rights. In the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013, the Rights of Children are enshrined in Section 81 and it states that:

"Every child, that is to say every boy and girl under the age of eighteen years, has the right-

e) to be protected from economic and sexual exploitation, from child labour, and from maltreatment, neglect or any form of abuse.

f) to education, health care services, nutrition and shelter."

DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD HIGHLIGHTS

However, 43 years after the 16 June events, many social ills like the one condemned by the Constitution sadly have found their place in society. Education is still more of a plea rather than a reality in most African societies including Zimbabwe. Children in Zimbabwe currently face serious cultural and social practices that affect their development. The cultural and social practices consist of early marriages, child prostitution and labour, sexual abuse and rape through religious and cultural practices. In most rural communities, children are asked to herd cattle during school periods as well as working in fields. At the same time, some children are found practicing gold panning. Humanitarian action configured within the principles of education justice and equality is an area that can help in cultivating and instilling a sense of tolerance and harmony. Therefore, education becomes a systematic effort in building up a community that promotes knowledge, value, positive attitude and skill development for children.

At independence, the Zimbabwean government was quick to prioritize education on its development agenda. The 2017 Zimstat Inter-Censal Demographic Survey collected information on the highest level of education completed among the population aged 3 years and above. Out of the 11 million people aged 3 years and above, about 85 percent had completed either primary or secondary education. Despite the success of school enrollment and literacy levels, inequalities and inefficiencies remain critical in this sector. Thus, the expansion in enrollment in the Zimbabwean society masks huge disparities and system dysfunctionaries and inefficiencies in the education sector. These disparities and inefficiencies expose children to serious rights violations. Again, there is low transition from primary to secondary and tertiary education due to the inability of our national institutions to ensure equity across geographical and gender boundaries.

Human dignity is considered a core value of humanitarian action. This means that shaping African societies according to the values and principles of the Day of the African Child requires realising justice as enabling the children rights framework. Thus, humanitarian action demand that education should do justice both to the needs of African societies and individual children.

YETT as a youth networking organisation that is committed to the full participation of young people in sustainable development through advocacy and capacity building of youth and youth organisations in Zimbabwe continues to raise awareness of the situation of children in Africa as well as shape issues of advocacy for improved welfare for children. Good quality education, with its content focused on the children's academic, social and personal development is of paramount importance. It can prepare children for preventing and dealing with-or responding to- humanitarian crises, by equipping them with practical skills to enhance their protection and survival.