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YOUTH PULSE

PUSHING THE YOUTH AGENDA

Promoting the Core Values of Higher and Tertiary Education

The 2019 International Youth Day is upon us under the theme “TRANSFORMING EDUCATION.” In Zimbabwe, this year, the day falls on the same day when the country is celebrating heroes’ day. Most of the celebrated people sacrificed their lives when they were still students and were young.

This year’s theme of transforming education is a good reminder of the need to achieve a world where young people are inspired and equipped to realise the future they want. The state must take all practical measures to promote higher and tertiary education as set out in Section 27 of Constitution of Zimbabwe.

For an effective transformation of education in Zimbabwe as well as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region, academic freedom and student activism is of paramount importance. Generally, academic freedom is defined as the right of students, academia and institutions of higher learning to pursue knowledge without fear of reprisal. Thus, academic freedom to be fully realized it has to be anchored on a tripod that consist of the government, tertiary institutions and students. Academic freedom in Southern Africa have been limited by serious challenges which include high tuition fees, a lack of educational funding and college accommodation as well as restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. Freedom of association and assembly enhances effective student activism.

Student activism is further depicted as anything that students do outside the confines of a lassroom towards the development of the self and the surrounding community. Singing in the choir is activism, playing a sport is activism, just as much as driving for reforms in both the social and physical academic spaces is also activism. Modern day student activism has immensely evolved and involves complementary roles to different institutions such as the body politic, advocacy movements, humanitarian entities and even businesses. Today activism carries strong political connotations owing to the rising need to speak truth to power, to hold the authorities accountable for pledges of service and services that edify to the socioeconomic rights, liberties and freedoms of students both within and outside the academic spaces.

Students from different tertiary institutions pose for a photo after receiving capacity building from YETT.

The socio–economic and political narrative of most African societies can best be described as adult-centric. This is in sharp contrast to the transformation process of African societies from colonial bondage to free and independent African societies. The transformation was derived from the commitment and determination of African students and young people. Despite the elevated awareness of the immense contributions of students and young people to the positive transformation of colonial African societies, several African countries still do not seem to have developed comprehensive and effective policies that promote academic freedom or to have in place measures that enhances student activism. The size, energy, enthusiasm, innovation and dynamism of students and the youth are assets that should be

harnessed for Africa's development with appropriate policies that deal adequately with the enjoyment of academic freedom. Academic freedom pushes for new knowledge that can improve and transform our communities. from previous years.

One of the greatest challenges facing governments and policymakers in Africa today is how to provide academic freedom safe spaces for student activism so that they (students) can contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities.

In response to the varied challenges being faced by students in their endeavor to enjoy academic freedom and proffer effective student activism, the Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) devised a regional platform to coordinate and equip students with the necessary skills to engage in policy advocacy and ensure academic freedom is realised. This platform brings together students, researchers, academia, government and civil society representatives in order to exchange and share ideas and experiences to promote academic freedom. Since 2018, the initiative has provided critical space to take stock in student activism and academic freedom in Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Zambia. It recognizes the need to redefine the role of students in the promotion and preservation of academic freedom and quality education.

The government of Zimbabwe through the Education 5.0 as espoused by Vision 2030 mantra envisages that students be equipped with skills that empower them to become innovative towards societal development. Indeed, innovation has the potential for skill formation but an absence of academic freedom and effective student activism can stifle the noble idea and reduce it to a mere aspiration.

There are structural deficiencies within the academic arena and there is need to genuinely address various anomalies that exist. The continued objectification of female students and the pervasive sexual harassment that occur within institutions of higher learning is a serious cause for concern. The sexual harassment is configured within the context of gender stereotypes and some of the toxic social perceptions, which are usually supported by misconceptions of religious and cultural beliefs.

It is a well-known fact that academic freedom and institutional autonomy within educational discourse exist within a socio economic and political context. Therefore, it becomes transformational if academic freedom is promoted and allow a situation where young people's opinions are integrated into the public discourse. YETT is equipping students to strengthen policy, advocacy and increase the likelihood of influencing policymakers to accept better policy alternatives. If you are interested in joining the cause and finding out more about how you can plug in visit www.safrap.wordpress.com. YETT's hope is that by convening this platform they can contribute to Sustainable Development Goal #4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all in the region and to align efforts to protect and promote the core values of higher education; equitable access, accountability, institutional autonomy, social responsibility and academic freedom.

#iam4Peace

YETT
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION TRUST

Peace-making is a healing process and it begins with me but it does not end there....

YETT celebrates International Youth Day through Calling for Inclusive, Equitable and More Relevant Education System.

Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) joins the rest of the World in commemorating International Youth Day, a day set aside on the world's calendar to recognise the importance and hard work of the "green leaves' of the world and how youths continue to make a difference in their societies. This year's celebrations run under the theme "**Transforming Education",** it highlights interventions by governments, young people, and youth-led and youth-focused organisations in transforming education. It is our collective duty to make education equitable, more relevant and inclusive for all youth. This theme is also rooted in Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development- "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

As an organisation, YETT's advocacy is strongly guided by its "13 Youth Key Asks to the Government of Zimbabwe" which were developed through the Consultative process with Youth around the country. On Education, YETT's priority is summarised through its **Key Ask 1** which calls for a broader education that includes Civic education, Sexual and Reproduction Health Education, Environment and Climate Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship training compliant with technological advancements to nurture young people's individual talent and provides youth with relevant opportunities according to their strength. **Key Ask 2** also calls for an inclusive formal and non-formal education system that caters for the needs of people with disabilities as well as provides equal access to information and service for both rural and urban youth.

YETT continues to contribute to the transformation of tertiary education in Zimbabwe and the Southern African region even beyond the International Youth Day and brings together students, researchers, academia and government representatives in order to share and exchange ideas and experiences to promote equitable, relevant and inclusive education.

YETT Envisages A Just, Inclusive and Prosperous Society Where Young People Fully Participate and Lead in Sustainable Development.

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INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY | 2019 TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

YETT calls for peace through Music

Progress Sibanda

"…When music speaks, everybody understands"

Music, it suggests, can succeed where language simply can't. It can excite, thrill, console and comfort without the needs for words, and it has the ultimate ability to unite disparate and often opposing communities. Music is an important part of culture, and it plays an important a role in fostering and promoting peace, hence it can be used as an advocacy tool. As such, YETT engaged renowned Mbare recording studio "Chillspot Records" for a "Peace riddim" which encourages young people to be ambassadors of Peace in their communities. The riddim which features an array of Zimdancehall artists like Killer T, Enzo Ishall, Ras Caleb, Nutty O, Bazooker, Poptain, Hwinza, Uncle Epatan, X-Fire and many others was released on the 1st of August 2019 and is already making waves in the country with the clear mission of promoting peace in the country

YETT decided to engage Chillsport Records as Zimdancehall is the fastest and popular music genre in Zimbabwe and among young people. The organisation believes that music can be useful in getting youth together to share meaning, and as such can function as an alternative form of encouraging young people to preserve peace in their communities and in the country. Participation in music-making can also help young people gain self-esteem and reconsider their view of others in a way that can contribute to destabilizing conflict identities.

YETT hosts the Regional Youth Summit in Tanzania

Progress Sibanda

“Young people presents a window of opportunity for the fortunes of our countries and the region to be drastically transformed into greater economic growth, prosperity, and self-determination that is unparalleled the world over”

The Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) convened a Regional Youth Summit at the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) on Wednesday during the 2019 SADC People’s Summit in Tanzania. The Regional Youth Summit sought to give an open space for young people from different countries from the SADC region to come together and have a dialogue on issues affecting them and come up with new ideas and approaches to address these challenges. Young People went on to develop the “Regional Youth Key Asks and aspirations” for onward submission to the SADC Meeting of Ministers responsible for Youth. The Summit attracted more than 500 young people from different SADC countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia,Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and the host country Tanzania.

The 2019 Youth Regional Summit was running under the theme “**Rebuilding Youth Movements within Southern Africa’s Climate, Political and Socioeconomic Emergencies: Towards Radical Democratic Alternatives and a Just Transition**”.

The theme was taken from the main theme for the 2019 SADC People’s Summit “Rebuilding People’s Movements within Southern Africa’s Climate, Political and Socioeconomic Emergencies:Towards Radical Democratic Alternatives and a Just Transition”. Young people came up with possible solutions and recommendations to their challenges “The Regional Key Asks” were incorporated to the 2019 SADC People Summit Communique that was presented to the SADC secretariat.

Young people were divided into five Commissions, each trying to tackle different challenges that the youths from the SADC region are facing and offering possible solutions and recommendations. The Commissions were:

- Education and Skills Development
- Human Rights, Governance and Democracy
- Land and Natural Resources Governance
- Peace Building and National Healing
- Employment, Entrepreneurship and Livelihoods

The Summit noted that youth issues and priorities interrelate and must therefore be mainstreamed and integrated into the different sectors of development of SADC. The main youth issues that were coming out of this Regional Youth Summit were: Unemployment: Poor access to quality education, shrinking civic and political space for young people, Drug and Substance abuse, Gender inequality and many others. Young people therefore made recommendations which call upon governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to provide resources for youth to actively participate in development processes of their different countries and the SADC Region.

Highlights of Regional Youth Summit (Tanzania)