

Urban youths vows to tackle COPAC head on

YOUTHS in Harare and Bulawayo have vowed to confront the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) outreach teams head on when they visit their communities on the 18th and 19th of this month.

The youths said that they were sick and tired of continued marginalization from socio-political and economic processes of the country and said the time was ripe for them to take a leading role in national planning activities.

They said that they were concerned that they continued to be viewed as second class citizens in their country of birth. They said that it was saddening to note that the older generation continues to hold fort at the helm of national planning despite the fact that the decisions that they make have future implications way after they are gone.

Youths in Epworth lamented the failure by the government to meaningfully develop their community in line with other urban set-ups countrywide.

Silas Musekiwa (22) of Overspill said that he wanted the new constitution to address the issue of employment as millions of youths are grappling with economic hardships mainly because they are jobless.



We want jobs: Silas Musekiwa

“We want jobs because we are sick and tired of roaming the streets, so when COPAC comes I am going to tell them to address this. We also want to live in a democracy where we are free to express ourselves and at the same time we also want decent housing especially here in Epworth,” said Musekiwa.

Yolanda Mushore (25) of Rugare

said that she had not heard enough of the COPAC process but said she would make her way to the venue when the outreach teams come. She said she was mainly concerned with the plight of orphans and their access to national documents.

“The new constitution should protect orphaned children and should allow them easy access to national documents such as birth certificates. I would also like to see the new constitution giving every child affordable education,” Mushore said.



Yolanda Mushore of Rugare

Angela Zimunda (24) also of Overspill said that the constitution should address the issue of the suppression of human rights saying that giving out her views to journalists was likely to land her in serious trouble. She also said that the constitution should take care of teen mothers because they were being disadvantaged after having been subject to sexual abuse.

Elderly Isaac Shambira (49) of Solani also in Epworth said that he was aware of the ongoing constitution making exercise but said that it was not being properly advertised. He said that he hoped that the new constitution would address issues to do with marriages and the domestic violence law.

“It is my hope that the new constitution will address the issue of forced marriages where young girls are being forced into premature marriages when they are under age. It should also address the issue of abortion and the domestic violence law,” Shambira said.

“The constitution that you are talking about should make sure that youths do



Respect children's rights: Isaac Shambira

not abuse drugs and that our young daughters uphold their moral values. It should also deal with polygamy, the first wife should be respected so that some opportunist women will not squander what they have not worked for,” said Mai Mutore of ward 4 in Solani.

In Bulawayo, youths there called for the devolution of power to provinces but reiterated the need for the government to offer them sustainable livelihoods.

Chantelle Ndiweni (16) of Sekusile said that it was news to her that there is a constitution that is being written and urged COPAC to up their awareness campaigns to ensure that youths will not miss out.

However, she said that she was not going to participate because she did not want to be involved in politics.



Chantelle Ndiweni of Sekusile

Nicholas Ngwerime (11) also of Sekusile said that he had never had about the constitution and thanked Youth Agenda Trust for bringing the constitution awareness to their door steps.

“I have not heard about the constitution because our teachers have never told us about it. But if we are allowed to go and participate when they come then I will

take part,” said Nicholas.

Phillip Nkomo said he wished the new constitution would bring in employment through ensuring that all limping industries are resuscitated. He also said that he was concerned with the incessant power outages and hoped that the new legislation would address such issues.



Resuscitate industry: Phillip Nkomo

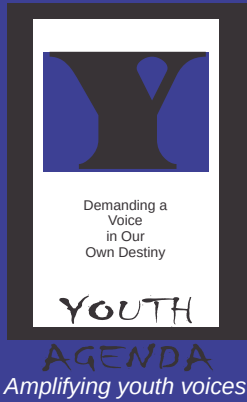
Mhlesto Nhlisto (28) of Luveve hoped the new constitution would restore democracy in the country so that the rule of law is respected and also called for the devolution of power to enable their province to develop.

“We want the constitution to restore democracy in our country and it should also ensure that we get jobs so as to reduce cases of thieving among youths.

“I have heard about COPAC and we are prepared to face them when they come. This constitution should make sure we have access to this hard to get US dollar, we just can't lay our hands on it. It should also make sure that rentals are affordable and that everyone has access to basic education and should take care of vulnerable groups,” said Mhlesto Nhlisto of Luveve.



Mhlesto Nhlisto of Luveve



The New Age Voices

A newsletter published by Youth Agenda Trust website: www.youthagendazim.org.zw.

For feedback please email Youth Agenda Trust on youthagenda@gmail.com Issue 4 : 13 September 2010 Cost: Free

ZBH bows down to pressure

ZIMBABWE Broadcasting Holdings Chief Executive Officer Happison Muchechetere last week bowed down to pressure from civic groups and the Constitutional and Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) to allow the State broadcaster to air advertisements aimed at increasing awareness on the ongoing constitution making exercise.

Two weeks ago, *The New Age Voices* revealed that ZBH was refusing to flight constitution related advertisements due to reasons better known to officials at pockets hill.

Some of the flimsy excuses for their refusal to flight COPAC advertisements were that they were not comfortable in taking up the US\$4 million that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was offering them for the adverts because COPAC had not settled a US\$130 000 debt.

Muchechetere had also

refused to allow Youth Agenda Trust (YAT) to submit advertising material that is meant to increase awareness on youth participation in the constitution making process saying that they should approach COPAC for approval.

COPAC distanced itself from ZBH's cat and mouse games saying that it was not the duty of COPAC to authorize what may or may not be advertised on ZTV.

However, due to incessant pressure and the shallowness of his arguments, Muchechetere last week finally allowed COPAC to have their advertisements flighted by the broadcaster.

On Wednesday, Muchechetere met with YAT officials at his pockets hill office where he eventually bowed down to pressure and allowed YAT's adverts to be screened on national television.

However, ZBH has come under immense criticism from both

the public and private sectors who have accused the state broadcaster of deliberately stifling information dissemination on the constitution making process to the public because they have only allowed the advertisements to go through when the exercise is past the 90 percent mark.

It is quite clear that ZBH is still controlled by a clique of authoritarian hardliners who are not yet ready to liberate the airwaves. Had it not been for the timeous intervention of lawyers from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZHLR), Muchechetere was not willing to budge to our demands to have the adverts flighted. We however believe that we have been victorious and we would like to warn the cabal at ZBH that as young people we will continuously aim and hit at the remaining outposts of tyranny in this country,” said YAT Coordinator Arnold Chamunogwa.

Meanwhile, COPAC co-

chairperson Munyaradzi Paul denied everyone the opportunity of getting adequate education on the constitution making exercise.



STANDING FIRM : YAT Coordinator Arnold Chamunogwa

Byo civic group launches local governance programme

BULAWAYO based civic group National Youth Development Trust (NYDT) has launched a local governance programme called **Young Voices in Local Governance**.

In an exclusive interview with NYDT programmes manager Mmeli Dube said that the programme has been designed to lobby youths to take an active role in local governance issues in their communities.

He said that the initiative was tailor made to challenge youths to claim their rights in local governance, in issues such as budgeting and policy related processes.

“This programme that we have designed seeks to empower young men and women so that they claim their rights in governance issues and to actively participate in policy formulation,” Dube said.

Dube said that they had set up a mock council through local youth councils in Bulawayo and Lupane, which is a civil platform for the youths to participate.



TALKING GOVERNANCE : NYDT Programmes Manager Mmeli Dube

He said among some of the ways that NYDT uses to drum up youth participation were through public speaking competitions in schools around Bulawayo and Lupane and through presenting policy position papers.

“We do policy position papers where we gather views through policy dialogue meetings and focus group meetings that are targeted at the youths,” said Dube.

NYDT has already served the local authorities with position papers so that they take on board the views and proposals of youth outlining how they want the local authorities to function and how they want to be governed.

Dube said that the general perception of youths in these areas was that youths were not being afforded the opportunity to participate in important local

governance issues.

“Youths here are concerned with issues of participation but they also want things such as recreational facilities for example to be refurbished because they are in bad shape.

“They are also concerned with issues such as devolution of power, they want to retain full control of their resources because they are being exploited, so generally there is frustration,” said Dube.

NYDT said that there is no network signal in Lupane hence the people there felt marginalized because they are not in a position to interact with the outside world.

There are also calls for peace building in the areas because of the conflict caused by the June 2008 runoff election and the need to enhance national healing citing that the perceived perpetrators continue to hold high offices.

“The politicians are leading national healing and we can't have transitional justice in such a scenario. National healing goes beyond the beatings, it goes

back to the issue of marginalization.

Dube said that his organization was also concurrently running an HIV and AIDS programme in border towns such as Beitbridge and Plumtree targeting young people through mobile cinemas and civic education so as to change their attitudes and habits.

NYDT said that it was also carrying out a leadership programme which is a fellowship programme with an intake of 50 people where youths will be taught leadership, public sector, cabinet and parliament issues where they get to learn by observing national issues. The leadership programme has two intakes.

“In this programme, the participants will be taught the principles of public policy. It is a two year long project where participants will be drawn from all the country's provinces,” Dube said.

NYDT was formed in Bulawayo in 2002 to create public sector policy space and for young people's participation in governance and processes of decision making.

Our constitution, our future roadshows: Epworth



Rising up for a new law: Children raise up their hands to answer questions during a question and answer session at the road show at Solani shopping centre in Epworth



CHABVONDOKA Theatre Productions go through their paces as they thrill crowds who gathered for the Our constitution ,Our future road show at Reuben shopping centre in Epworth

Zim youth scales dizzy heights

ZIMBABWEAN youth leader and one of the country's leading youth activists and motivational speaker with keen interests in HIV/AIDS and developmental issues, Tatenda Songore was recently selected to be part of 12 young people who were chosen to review proposals from youth organisations all over the world.

He was part of the HIV Young Leaders Fund selection committee that gathered in Amsterdam in the Netherlands to look at applications from different youth organisations across the globe.

Songore is the director of Victors In Motion (VIM) youth organisation now called Youth Advocates Zimbabwe.

The HIV Young Leaders fund comes from the Tides Foundation and seeks to fund the unfundable youth organizations and other members of society who are always at risk of contracting HIV.

"I was selected to be part of a panel of 12 people who were chosen from youth organisations dealing with HIV and AIDS across

the World. We awarded over \$300 000 in all the regions of the globe. The trip was work intensive and all composed of young people with expertise working in grassroots HIV interventions. This was also a milestone not just for the organization but the nation as it shows that we have young people who have the capacity to choose and award grantees," Songore said.

Songore said that his organisation has been actively involved in advocating for the rights of youths and last month, in collaboration with the Chitungwiza Junior Council, held a march and gathering in honour of the United Nations International Year of Youth at Chitungwiza Town Centre.

The gathering was youth driven and saw over 500 youngsters participating in music, dance and public speaking.

The aim of the event was to raise awareness on the Millennium Development Goals whilst inspiring youth to become the ideals of innovation, enterprise, peace, respect for human rights and freedoms, as well as solidarity. The

slogan for the event was "Our year, Our Voice, Together we can".

"Victors in Motion is a grassroots youth advocacy organization working with marginalized grassroots communities inspiring young people to take up what is rightfully theirs through disseminating information on rights based comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and fostering a culture of small to medium enterprise, said Songore.

He said that VIM has initiated various successful community projects in youth enterprise development and he is also an active member of the World Aids Campaign National organizing committee.

Songore is currently training young people in Zimbabwe on Gender and Entrepreneurship after being successfully trained by the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the International Labour Organization ILO in GET AHEAD April 2010.



BREAKING NEW GROUND: Tatenda Songore founder of Young Advocates Zimbabwe

Govt turns back on National Youth Service

THE notorious National Youth Service training institutions otherwise known as the Border Gezi training camps will remain closed until proper mechanisms are put in place, the Deputy Minister of Youth, Indigenisation and Empowerment has said.

The youthful graduates from the dreaded camps have since the days of the late overzealous and controversial Zanu PF Commissar Border Gezi, been used to intimidate, maim and kill innocent civilians at the behest of the former ruling party.

At many a times, Zanu PF

has taken the opportunity of using the hugely unpopular youths as security for their activities such as national events and rallies and also as sentinels to thwart voices of democracy in the country.

Speaking to The New Age Voices last week, Deputy Minister of Youth Indigenisation and Empowerment Tongai Matutu said that the youth training programme has been put on hold because it was not properly set up.

Matutu said that since the inception of the Inclusive government, the programme was suspended as government was

having a relook at how to properly structure it.

He said that it should be the desire of every youth to join national youth training service because of what it offers as value addition to an individual and not a situation where youths are coerced to join.

"There is a problem with the set up of the programme. It should come from someone's heart that he or she wants to join the youth service. The situation of forcing people to join is disastrous.

"The minister and my predecessor (Thamsanqa

Mahlangu) actually went to countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Ghana looking at how these countries have managed to set up similar programmes as opposed to what has been happening here," Matutu said.

He said the ministry was working in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education to see that proper proposals are put in place and forwarded to the Principals to the Global Political Agreement (GPA) namely Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara.

"The principals need to

have a look at the proposals and all the formalities should be completed and be implemented in the most ideal situation. The final proposal should have a way of motivating everyone to join the programme," said Matutu.

The youth brigade ever since its inception, has been used to terrorise communities by a desperate Zanu PF regime that continues to cling on to power by the skin of its teeth as its political fortunes has taken a nose dive since the Movement for Democratic Change led by Morgan Tsvangirai joined the political fray.

Bulawayo Youths call for devolution

YOUTHS in Bulawayo have called for the devolution of power to provinces because the current centralized set up has created unnecessary bottlenecks caused mainly by red tape in government offices which has frustrated youths and ordinary people in Matebeleland's efforts to access important state documents and the general development of the area.

The youths said that they were tired of being constantly referred to Harare to have access to national documents such as birth certificates, national identity document and other important state services.

In a series of interviews organized by Youth Agenda Trust (YAT), the youths castigated the current Lancaster constitution for failing to relinquish power to provinces, a situation which they said has caused unfair distribution of resources.

Portia Ncube (19) of Nkulumane

said that she was concerned that most of the important government business is conducted in Harare despite the fact that Bulawayo is the second largest city in the country.

"The problem is that if you want anything despite its simplicity, you are referred to Harare. We want the power to be devolved to provinces," said Portia.

Seluleko Ndlovu (24) said that she wanted the new constitution to be able to distribute resources evenly because some areas were getting a bigger share of the national cake as compared to others.

"We have a situation whereby some areas are being developed each and every time at the expense of other areas. Let's have the national cake shared evenly across the country so that everyone benefits. The constitution should also get rid of corruption," Seluleko said.

In Luveve, youths were united in

denouncing the current centralized state, saying it did not represent the interests of the nation as a whole.

Lovejoy Mathe said that there should be no visible difference between a government school in areas such as Tsholotsho and Lupane as compared to schools in other areas but instead the level of development at the schools should be the same.

Others said that because the various provinces of the country are endowed with different resources, priority should be given to inhabitants of the provinces to harness the resources found in their areas other than for them to be expropriated to areas of political influence.

"Here in Matebeleland we have so many cattle, therefore beef should be cheaper here than anywhere else, same as in areas such as Chiadzwa, the diamonds that they

have should develop their area. The fiscus should be a common pool, it should not be the parent pool because it creates problems, politicians will take advantage," said Mkhululi Sibanda.

The youths also said that politicians were taking advantage of the flawed Lancaster constitution to deprive them of national resources by channeling them to other areas for political reasons.

The youths also said that politicians were taking advantage of the flawed Lancaster constitution to deprive them of national resources by channeling them to other areas for political reasons. The constitution making exercise is now in its twilight stages but youths across the country have lamented the failure by COPAC to solicit views from them owing to poor publicity and politicking.

Miss Tourism Harare takes lead in environmental awareness

MISS Tourism Harare Samantha awareness, I will be undertaking a tree planting program within all the raising environmental awareness 32 Council Primary Schools in among school children by Harare aimed at increasing awareness and addressing bio-planting week that is set to begin today until the 17th of this month.

The programme is meant to raise awareness and addressing bio-diversity issues and it is targeting Harare's 32 Council Primary Schools and it coincides with the tourism month that is under the theme, **Tourism and Bio-diversity**.

The launch of the Miss Tourism Harare tree planting programme will be conducted today at Kuwadzana 1 primary school and will see the distribution of 1024 plants among the council schools.

"In line with my advocacy program, as we cannot separate ourselves or our work from the

environment in which we live and work.

"The planning process has been smooth so far because of the continued support I am getting from the Housing and Community Development Department of the Harare City Council," said Samantha.

The programme will be launched by the minister of environment and natural resources management Francis Nhema and graced by Harare Mayor Muchadeyi Masunda.

Samantha has also been involved in various other community projects which saw her visiting hospitalized patients in Harare's referral hospitals donating goodies and offering words of encouragement.

She said that the project had receiving support from the corporate world such as Speciss College, Athienitis Spar, UTC Travel & Tours as well as Nyati Travel.

"I am still appealing to other corporates to support the



BEAUTY WITH A CAUSE : Samantha Dika

Stigmatisation scares away teens from HIV treatment

AT a local maternity clinic in one of Bulawayo's high density suburbs, midwives are at pains to explain to a pregnant 15-year-old girl why she must be tested for HIV before she gives birth.

But the teenager, who lightly beats her chest in an effort to pacify what seems like a painful cough, will not hear of it. She is afraid that her worst fears will be confirmed as she already suspects she could be HIV-positive.

The nurses are worried about the teenager's health and decide to call in the girl's grandmother who is given the task of explaining to the teenager why she must be tested.

Getting tested is the only way she will be prescribed the medication that will not only treat her cough, but also give her longer life to see her unborn child grow up, the grandmother assures her. Only then does the HIV test go ahead.

It is a scene Nontando Siziba, a 53-year old midwife, has seen many times. Though she does not provide ready figures, Siziba says rather bleakly this is not an isolated case as a growing number of pregnant young girls are visiting the maternity clinic.

Siziba explains that some

young mothers are still unwilling - and afraid - to access antenatal health care under the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programmes.

"We now test all pregnant women for HIV as part of attempts to protect the health of both the mother and child but this is sometimes very difficult when we are working with teenagers," Siziba explained.

A 2002 ministry of health and child welfare national antenatal surveillance found attendance at antenatal programmes was 25.7 percent, with the ministry noting that this increased the transmission of the HI virus to infants when proper antenatal health care could have avoided this.

There are also concerns among HIV/AIDS activists about the early initiation of young girls - some as young as thirteen - into sexual activity. This is being blamed on gender power dynamics where older men are in total control of sexual relationships and tend to decide whether they have protect or unprotected sex.

Experts say the circumstances of these adolescents are also being exacerbated by the non-

utilisation of PMTCT programmes especially among teenagers who seek antenatal health services.

Siziba says this has also been fed by the continued HIV/AIDS stigma among sexually active teenagers who, she says, feel isolated by the perceived public knowledge that they are not only sexually active but also HIV-positive.

"Though they are sexually active, not all are willing to take the responsibility to take precautions," Siziba said.

"We have had cases where these young people are told not to breastfeed but do so anyway saying if members of the community know they are not breastfeeding their child then they will know they are living with the virus. It has become that frustrating."

The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) recently issued a report where researchers noted with concern that many young mothers only discover they are HIV-positive when they are pregnant, and sometimes only learn their status when their children fall ill. REPSSI is an NGO that works toward the psychosocial care, support and well being of children

affected by HIV/AIDS in East and Southern Africa.

"We feel there are gaps around psychosocial care and support for adolescents," said Brighton Gwezera, REPSSI Knowledge Development and Exchange Manager. "They (adolescents) are still failing to handle issues relating to stigma and this has seen them failing to fully benefit from antenatal health care."

The interaction of adolescents living with HIV has been identified as one of ways that seeks to demystify the link between pregnancy and HIV, ironically in an age where young people are bombarded each day by a deluge of information.

"What we are doing is working with adolescents living with HIV through support groups so they can easily communicate their concerns and decisions surrounding being HIV and pregnant and also their future," Gwezera said.

There are also concerns about cultural considerations that have denied adolescents access to both formal and informal support, which researchers say is hindering efforts to provide relevant

reproductive health assistance.

"The fact that they are pregnant marks them out as sexually active which itself carries its own stigma. So when you throw in being HIV-positive, these young people would rather keep this to themselves," said Jerome Siyasiya a youth counsellor with the Roman Catholic Church's Sibambene AIDS Trust. He adds that this is a time when young mothers need support the most.

Gwezera agrees: "There is little information getting to adolescents about HIV and pregnancy that is why we see resistance in accessing proper antenatal health care. What needs to be done is the setting up of more support groups for young people where they can freely discuss issues relating to their circumstances."

With the poor understanding of HIV/AIDS and its relation to antenatal care, it could be time before adolescents and other young people fully embrace antiretroviral therapy as the country moves toward the implementation of the health for all ideal. "Young girls fail to utilise protection against HIV, now they are failing to protect their unborn children. I do not

Our constitution, our future roadshows :Bulawayo



AMAZING STARS of Bulawayo thrills the crowd that gathered for the Our constitution, Our future roadshow in Luveve



11 year old Nicholas Ngwerume of Sekusile poses for a photo after winning a T-shirt in one of the constitution awareness competitions