

Youth Perspectives and Solutions on COVID-19

#POSTCOVIDSADC

Southern Africa

16 April 2020

Initiative powered by the **African Youth Networks Movement (AYNM)**



Context

- The spread of COVID-19 has challenged most African nations
- It is the recommendation of the World Health Organisation and the African Union Centre for Disease Control and Prevention that, if you have any signs or symptoms you should immediately self-isolate. There is also an emphasis on social distancing and recommendations to #stayhome as a preventative measure from both organisations.
- What does this mean in the life of a typical African, especially a young African? According to a study by the International Labor Organisation, nearly eight out of ten employed persons in Sub-Saharan Africa were in vulnerable forms of employment. Accordingly, the vulnerable employment rate was estimated at 76.6 per cent in 2014.
- According to the same study, non-agricultural employment in the informal economy represents 66% of total employment in sub-Saharan Africa and 52% in North Africa. In a continent that is not at the cutting edge of telecommunications or wireless communications this often means that informal income activities rely on interpersonal interactions
- It is in this context that the African Youth Networks Movement convened a meeting of youth networks in the SADC region to find ways to balance to gain a perspective on youth lives in COVID-19 and how best we can highlight their work and combined solutions.



Background



The African Youth Networks Movement (AYNM) convened a virtual meeting with **45 leads representing 42 youth networks and organisations in the Southern African region** to discuss the effects of COVID-19 in their constituencies. Among the topics discussed were the measures that governments of respective countries have taken in response to the pandemic and how it has affected the lives and livelihoods of the youth in the region. We also wanted to highlight the work which the networks were implementing and planning to collaborate on. The network leads chose the hashtag **#PostCOVIDSADC for advocacy and to amplify the work of those tirelessly addressing the direct and indirect effects of COVID-19.**

Meeting Objectives:

- increase youth participation and conversations on the impact of COVID-19
- enhance collaboration amongst Regional Youth Networks in Southern Africa
- consolidate actions, goals, and aspirations of youth interventions/organisations/networks in Southern Africa
- Highlight the interventions by youth in addressing the pandemic in their communities



MPIILO SHABANGU
GRAÇA MACHEL
TRUST
MODERATOR



TUMISO CHEPAPE
SOUTHERN AFRICAN TRUST
MODERATOR



MISHECK GONDO
NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS
(NAYO)
SPEAKER



BUSI SIBEKO
INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC
JUSTICE



Misheck Gondo, director of the National Association of Youth Organisation (NAYO) and the regional coordinator of the Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) spoke extensively on the economic effects of the COVID-19 interventions, especially on the disproportionately large informally employed youth in Zimbabwe.

Those who were going to school must delay entering into the work force. The unemployment and delay of employment very often means that they can no longer take care of their families which in many cases falls on the youth. Buying food in the house, taking siblings to school, looking after elderly parents and/or grandparents all hangs in the balance.

- Although governments, particularly Zimbabwe, have shown commendable efforts in combating the economic effects of interventions against the pandemic, there is a rise in demands for food and essential goods in the country. Combined with the growing inflation means that the buying power of many is very low.
- The effects of the economic burden which weigh heavier as restrictions get tighter and national lockdown is implemented is leaving a lot of youth unable to cope. He fears that this may lead to destructive behavior due to mental health issues.

KEY ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS



Impact on youth in the informal economy

- *Of Africa's nearly 420 million youth aged 15-35, one-third are unemployed and discouraged, another third are vulnerably employed, and only one in six is in wage employment. 263 million young people will lack an economic stake in the system by 2025 (AfDB,2015)*



Impact on youth's mental health

- School closures, loss of income and uncertainties have negatively affected the mental health of many young people
- Networks agreed on the effects to mental health, some even speaking the programs International Youth Parliament has been doing regarding mental health. They offered to work together with Misheck agreed to work together to broaden the impact of their respective work.



Misinformation on COVID-19 and language barriers

- Education around Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, hand sanitiser, etc. was a topic that was widely discussed. It was found that many people, especially those without a formal education, are not fluent in the languages that COVID-19 information has been disseminated in, this predominantly being English in the SADC region. The translation of information around COVID-19 into local languages is a resolution many networks leads were interested in.



Busi Sibeko, researcher at the Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ) spoke on her work with the [Budget Justice Coalition](#) which aims to collaboratively build people's participation in and understanding of South Africa's budget and planning processes. The Budget Justice Coalition has proposed: universal basic income, an increase in social grants (*2.5 million women have lost informal jobs*), an increase in food parcels, an introduction of a payment holiday and guaranteeing wage payments for temporary workers through an employer relief scheme in order to mitigate the economic effect of the lockdown which has been implemented.

- They had to utilize the power of the media for advocacy efforts. Open letter [here](#) to finance and health ministries for above demands
- Ms Sibeko spoke widely on the need for organisations to engage the government, business and whoever else can make change and bring up the concerns of the youth. That ultimately, participation is what is needed in times of crisis.



KEY ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

Weak social security systems



50%+ of youth are unemployed in South Africa, similar trends are reflected in other Southern African countries. Increasing social grants can alleviate some effects

- By targeting recipients of social grants we can directly provide funds to young people who also receive e.g. unemployment funds.

Transparency in economic relief methods



Accountability is essential in disbursement of funds e.g. Solidarity funds. Our governments cannot make decisions outside of consultation with the citizens. The funds that governments, business, etc. have collected in response to the pandemic must have a rationale in how they are distributed and why they are distributed in that way. When discussing how money will be spent it is fundamental that youth formations are in those rooms.

Food insecurity



- We need to understand the barriers, e.g. in SA large scale farmers continue operations while small scale ones are limited in operations. We need to understand both supply side and demand sides to food security.

Increase in Gender Based Violence



- Cases of Gender based violence have increased exponentially. Increase in the methods on prevention need more investment, including education, funds to women's shelters and more visibility to methods addressing this issue.



Solutions by youth networks across S. Africa

The youth of eSwatini has volunteered to help those affected by COVID-19 directly or indirectly by reaching out to families who needed electricity because they no longer had a source of income and need the little, they must buy food during this lockdown. Also, to encourage hand washing, we have started paying water Bill's for those who have their meters closed due to nonpayment- *Nomathemba, Eswatini*

- Conducting a bucket drive to provision for access to water in rural areas -*Thelma, Malawi*
- Assisting youth entrepreneurs who are not listed as essential *services-Lungelo, Eswatini*
- Running programmes on WhatsApp and eLearning platforms. And delivery of food parcels on a bi-monthly basis -*Thuba, Namibia*
- Focusing on mainly women affected in mining communities who are displaced through the Disaster management Unit and Vice President's office. Also lobbying for more test centers, rural communities do not have access to centers-*Maggie, Southern Africa Youth Forum, Zambia*
- Sharing correct messaging with regards to COVID. Hosting Twitter discussions on COVID-19. Celebrating Youth Health Workers on social media-*Ronald, Southern Africa Youth Forum, Malawi*
- Our organisation rely on-one-on one or gatherings to disseminate information. With COVID-19 we have challenge to reach these communities with information. because of the social distance. As an organization we are using megaphones to spread messages- *Faith, Malawi*
- Partnered with policymakers in 4 constituencies to distribute sanitary products as well as deliver messaging against GBV-*Womba, Zambia*
- Working with MWF to ensure differently abled young people are not left behind in the fight against COVID-19. -*Thelma, Zambia*
- Deliver animations on social media, demystifying information on COVID-19 and breaking down language barriers-*Khadija, Malawi*
- Create videos on mental health issues stemming from the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown-*Esther, Zambia*
- Our CSO has partnered with the NDA (National Development Agency: South Africa) in providing volunteers to create awareness and assist the Department of Social Development with their social relief programmes-Kholofelo, South Africa
- Phalombe Youth Arms Organization we are currently working hand in hand with the district health office on issues of SRHR and Youth Friendly Health Services. We are trying to work with Youth Champions to sensitize the community on COVID-19 as well as Family Planning methods.-Joseph

Effective tools:

Media

For example utilizing open letters. Backed with messaging that must be evidentially based. Channels such as radio, publications are crucial to advocacy.

- Open Letter example [here](#)
- Tag media in your engagements, get your name on the radar

Coalitions

facilitate collective action and allow all parties to input their strengths and reduces replication of action. Check out the work of the [Budget Justice Coalition](#)

Social media

Most youth are on social media in Africa and the platforms have been effective in organizing and unifying youth voices:

- Run effective campaigns in collaboration with other youth networks. Check out the campaign [here](#)
- Document experiences e.g. via blogging, please see Swaraj's report on youth experiences in Mauritius. You can read it [here](#)

Network Asks

Young Politicians Union-Malawi

- Assistance in translating information about COVID-19 into different languages
- Getting information distributed through different forms of media with emphasis on radio.

Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator-South Africa

- Disseminate the information they have on their [website](#) regarding youth unemployment and ways of alleviating it.

Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation-Malawi

- Assistance disseminate family planning information especially to the rural masses

Women for social change- Malawi

- Getting material to make reusable sanitary pads and
- Distributing disposable pads

Beyond limits-Uganda and Malawi

- Calling on networks in Uganda and Malawi to join the bucket drive for better access to water

Youth Cooperative Alliance and Youth chamber of commerce - Eswatini

Have a discussion around food security

Physically Active Youth-Namibia

- Help brainstorming around how to gain connectivity in the rural areas or provision of low cost internet packages

Southern Africa Youth Forum-Zambia

- Help sourcing PPE for activists and health workers

Centre for Environmental Justice- Zambia

- More testing centres especially for women in mining areas

Generation alive – Zambia

- Assistance disseminating information on COVID-19 and child marriage (fallen economies often leave young girls vulnerable to exploitation)

YALI – Malawi

- Partners with which to create content that's easy to disseminate and translating it to different languages

Zambian Deaf Women and Youth

- Looking for partners who will work with the disabled in disseminating information around COVID-19, formulating new ways to keep them safe



How can the SADC Secretariat support/ work with youth in the region?

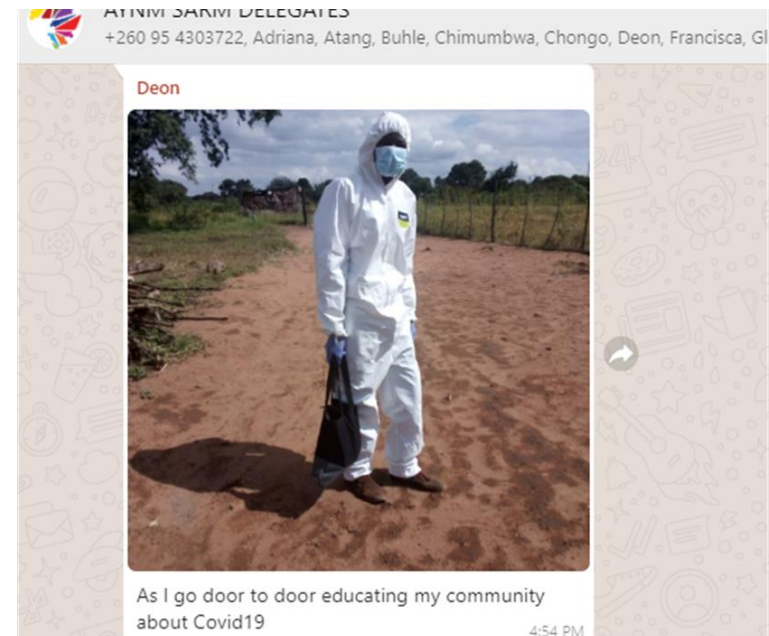
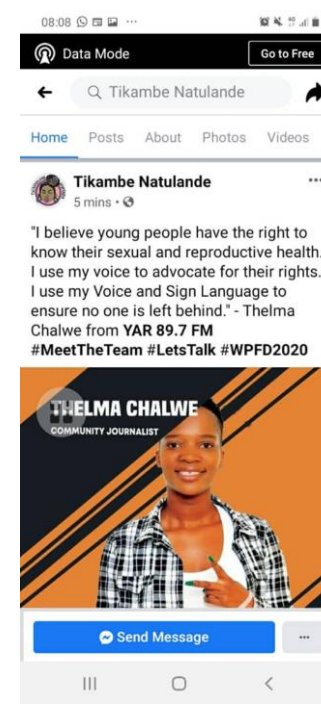
- “In SADC there are no concrete mechanisms to support youth work. The last call for SADC was to develop one. SAYoF & CRINSA among other are working on a collaboration to push for a SADC Youth Protocol that defines youth engagement & participation. There has been some interest by the secretariat to work on youth issues- the zeal that we need to advocate & complement. **Concrete engagements on youth issues!** On COVID-19 we are yet to hear their strategy.”
- “I think that the Secretariat can engage national government **to include young people** in their struggle against COVID-19. They can also encourage their international partners to seek youth led and youth driven organisation at national level to be at the forefront of this fight.”
- “The Secretariat have a role to play in **supporting Youth Networks** during this moment of the COVID-19. The Secretariat has released the SADC Regional Response to COVID-19 where 10 Regional measures have been cited that are being done at National Level.”
- “SADC Secretariat's 10-point COVID-19 response in Member States had no mention of the Youth. SADC Youth Forum (SAYoF) Country office in Botswana is trying to engage them- before other engagements on other advocacy i.e. media, petition advocacy. However I **agree youth in SADC are doing a lot on COVID-19 what lacks is support in their four variations.**
- “Data needs to be collected to guide the policy implementations post-COVID-19. We can't create strategy on Corona alone, but we **need capacitate ourselves for future disasters.** ”
- Ensure the dissemination of accurate and valid information re COVID-19. SADC has space **to commission youth networks to investigate on vulnerabilities of young people** and how we can best prevent these disasters in the future.”
- **Key words: include, support, engage, capacitate and leverage on youth in Southern Africa**



You can check out the SADC Regional Measures [here](#)

Outcomes

- The network leads formed collaborations around issues relating to COVID-19
- The network leads have a broader perspective on the issues facing the region. Many found that the issues were nearly identical and could identify similar strategies for addressing some challenges
- The networks chose #PostCOVIDSADC as a hashtag to track the progress of the networks and pool efforts and constituencies to multiply the effect of the individual work.



Connect with AYNM

You can connect us via the following communities of youth networks:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- Southern Africa [WhatsApp Group](#)
- Email: nonkululeko@minds-africa.org

Join the movement and tell us about yourself:

- Register [here](#)



List of networks/organisations in attendance

- Institute for Economic Justice/
- Budget Justice Coalition (Busi said she is not in the meeting in representing IEJ but can speak for the Budget Justice Coalition)
- National Association for Youth Organisations
- Southern African Youth Forum
- National Students Council for Private Universities
- Mawiba EcoFarms
- Graca Machel Trust
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation
- Southern Africa Trust
- Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation
- International Youth Parliament
- Anzisha
- African Leadership Academy
- Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator
- Young politicians Union
- Kupes Young Women's Network
- Solomonic Peacocks Theatre
- Civil Society for Poverty Reduction



List continued

- Fundi and Jem
- Youth For Parliament
- Phalombe Youth Arms
- Physically Active Youth Namibia
- AWPRAS Mauritius
- African Youth Empowerment Team
- International Youth Federation-Malawi
- Selfless for Africa
- Safety First For Girls
- Botho University- Botswana
- University of South Africa
- Namibia Institute for Democracy
- YALI East Africa
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
- Pepeta Africa
- Centre for Social Concern and Development
- Zimbabwe Young Ambassadors
- Opportunity Transformation Services
- Activista Mozambique Movement
- Mozambique Youth Parliament



List ended

- Youth Forum Zimbabwe
- University of Namibia Student Representative Council
- Spear of Youth NGO
- Networks For Youth Development (NfYD)
- Boy Child You Matter
- Zambian Deaf Women and Youth

