



Youth Inclusion and Culture

By

Muzwakhe Alfred Sigundhla

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President SADC Youth Movement,
Coordinator NEPAD Youth Summit 2005

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SADC Youth Movement

"Expanding the world of possibility for young people"

"When our children are assured of survival and health, provided with a good education, protected from war and violence, and when youth participate in the democracy and development of their countries, then Africa will be set to claim the 21st century" – K Y Amoako

Introduction

The participation of African Youth in Africa's development is important aspect to be embraced that will guarantee the prospect of development. The new dawn of Africa's evolution towards development is duly centered on investing more to the future. Young people serve as economic cornerstone of Africa's development because they constitute the majority of Africa's population today. The current marginalisation of youth participation in the decision-making processes marks the undemocratic exclusion of the majority of Africa's population and poses a serious threat to social stability and good governance.

According to the African Common Position, Para 6, *"We recognize that the future of Africa lies with the well being of its children and youth. The prospect for the socio-economic transformation of the continent rests with investing in the young people of the continent. Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development."*

The United Nations has long recognized that the world's youth are valuable resources for the advancement of societies; indeed, they are often the leaders of social, political and technological developments, as well as dynamic agents of social change. However, if they are to take an active role in combating societal problems, then they must be given the right tools with which to work.

The current National Youth Policies in Africa have not responded effectively in mainstreaming youth participation in economic activities that should reduce youth unemployment. The dismal statistics of Youth unemployment, social marginalisation, HIV/AIDS, Civil Wars and the lack of popular participation in their own governance, affect mostly countries in Africa. It is also a fact that some countries in Africa still lack adequate youth policies. Africa has not yet developed a model for youth participation at the level of the African Union and all its related institutions. This situation has lead to uncoordinated youth policies. However it is noted with excitement that the African Youth Movements are now calling for participatory governance to be reflected in instruments such as an African Youth Charter

Background

Who are the Youth of today? Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 total almost 1.1 billion and constitute 18 per cent of the global population. Youth and children together, including all those aged 24 years and below, account for nearly 40 per cent of the world's population. Young people face many challenges today. Although in some parts of the world they are better educated than ever before, 133 million youth remain illiterate. Young people must also deal with increasing insecurity in the labour market although they now comprise 41 per cent of the world's unemployed.

Some 238 million youth live on less than \$1 per day. An average of 7,000 young people becomes infected with HIV daily. Girls and young women continue to face discrimination and violence in many parts of the world and lack access to reproductive health services. Young people are also involved in armed conflict, with estimates indicating a total of more than 300,000 child soldiers around the world. These statistics affect Africa most, in particular Southern Africa.

Charters and other mechanisms adopted by United Nations which would be legal mechanisms for assessing and ensuring youth participation and development. Young people have been reduced to just being subjects of socio-economic processes and have not been recognised as social stakeholders with specific interests. The prevalent status quo in Africa requires that political commitments be translated into concrete programmes that will develop and address the plight of young people. Since young people constitute a huge number of people deeply affected by underdevelopment, poverty and economic marginalisation, the realization Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and implementation of Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (WSSD) become relevant to challenges that face young people today. Therefore developed countries in particular the G8 would fail MDG's , if the fail to deliver in Africa.

When one addresses governance, one must also speak of priority. Among the urgent actions required by governing bodies, two are of special priority: The UN Secretary-General in his statement to the UN General Assembly's September 2002 meeting on NEPAD, *"combating HIV/AIDS and promoting girls' education are particularly central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and realizing the promise NEPAD holds for all of Africa ... besides being key MDGs in their own right, promotion of girls' education and control of HIV/AIDS would be the most powerful enablers for the achievement of all the other MDGs in Africa"*.

Defining Youth

Africa in particular Southern Africa is yet to define concretely age bracket of a youth or young person, These has limited policy intervention to address correctly sectoral youth issues though Youth, as a concept, varies from culture to culture and from one society to another. It is important this issue age collective defined with out the influence of western conceptual mechanisms. Alice Schlegel and Herbert Barry, in an anthropological publication based on some 200 different field studies, describe transition rites in pre-industrial societies.

The two authors found that in more than half of the societies studied, the progression from childhood to youth, especially for boys, involved some systematic rite of passage. These rites have symbolic significance in that, simply by participating in them, an individual achieves a new status and position. It is also a matter of genuine community action; the new status gains validity only through community recognition.

The age range 15-24 is often used by the United Nations and others for statistical purposes, but in many cases this distinction is too narrow. In some developed countries, for example, the male transition to adulthood, in terms of achieving the economic and social stability that comes with steady employment, may extend into the late twenties. For some men in developing countries who have not completed secondary school, the transition to stable work could take up to around age 35. Therefore in our context as SADC Youth Movement a youth ranges between 15-35 years. The idea of transition from Youth Childhood is adequately explained in Jordan Human Report 2000.

Promoting Democracy and Good Governance

The notion of good governance and democracy is centre-stage for development. Good Governance has broad principles such as follows:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Inclusively
- Fiscal responsibility
- Good Leadership
- Respect for Human Rights and Rule of Law
- Democracy and Fair competition for public office
- On going stakeholder participation

In light of the criteria listed above, Good governance is still illusive and lack popular participation in policy formulation. The participation, particularly of young people, thus remains an issue in Africa because few countries have complied with the above basic requirements for Good Governance. The evidence is based on various reports from Transparency International. The broad principle of Multipartism has not triumph to satisfactory extent. Human rights abuse and lack of respect for rule of law is high in Africa. It is further a worry that some African countries have not ascended to African Peer Review Mechanism as peer assessment tool for African Governments. Youth Movements should take government to task to ensure implementation of what governments have agreed upon.

Future Prospects Depend on Growth

In developing regions - which have the largest shares of youth within the working-age population - the fate of the youth entering the labour force in years to come will depend on the rate of growth of the economy as well as an improvement in the employment content of growth, the report says. In industrialized economies, where youth populations are expected to fall, the effects of demographic change are likely to reduce youth unemployment.

The YEN has promoted the development of National Action Plans on youth employment amongst a group of "lead countries". So far 10 countries have stepped forward to champion the development of national policies to showcase innovative solutions to meeting the youth employment challenge. The ILO is providing technical support and policy advice to countries within this partnership. One such tool is the recently released guide, "Improving prospects for young women and men in the world of work, which specifies basic considerations, trade-offs and experiences that can be drawn upon to develop and implement policies, including National Action Plans on youth employment.

Youth Participation

The participation of young people in decision making process in the continent is at the heart of social and political discourse. The notion of Good governance is located within the broad principles that all stakeholders' participation is required in *decision-making and governance*. In most African Countries, Youth constitute a majority of electoral voters; however, the legislative parliaments have less than one (1) percent youth participation as MP's. Young people continue to be subdued and relegated to Youth wing of political parties and have been used as agents to amass political power,

In some instances they are used in armed conflicts. For example, between 1989 and 2000, one hundred eleven (111) armed conflicts were reported. Laleh Ebrahimiran notes that civil warfare mostly took place in Africa. It is further estimated that there are 300 000 civil soldiers today, most of whom are found in Africa. There's no youth participation in the Peace and Security Council of the Africa Union. No role has been defined for youth participation, despite the belief that military intervention should not be the only form of intervention--civil intervention should include civil society participating in the mobilization of the society for peace and democracy.

Globally, the African youth remain mostly excluded from UN Youth gatherings. The UN Youth Agenda and interpretation of youth issues has been done mainly through western mechanism. These global phenomena undermine the notion of Good Governance. African Heads of State and Governments when attending the UN General Assembly often neglect to include Young people in their delegation to New York.

National Youth Policies that exist in Africa do not comply with the guidelines provided for in World Programme of Action to year 2000 and beyond and most policies do not compliment internationally agreed-upon instruments. Youth policies are developed by consultants with no input or aspirations from youth formations. Young people have been marginalized in terms economic participation because few countries in Africa has National Action Plan for Youth employment. Government's procurement policies are not friendly to the establishment of micro youth enterprises.

Policy Gap

The analysis of challenges facing African Youth are summarized as

- Lack of Coordination of Youth Policy in Africa
- Lack of African Youth Charter
- Slow ratification of International Instruments to deal with Youth issues
- Lack of Political will to involve Youth on policy formulation

Challenges facing Youth Movement in Africa

The challenges facing the African Youth Movements are summarized as follows:

- Poor lobbying and Advocacy Skills
- Lack of political space for participation
- Fragmentation and lack coordination
- Shortage of Financial and Human resources
- Poor Leadership and organizational discipline
- Lack of Platform for exchange of best practices
- Lack of credible continental organization
- Lack acknowledgement of Youth Work
- Competition Adult lead NGO's doing Youth Work

Culture and identity

Africa still has a long way to go in preserving its cultural identity. The Africa culture evolution should begin with programme of re-writing Africa history, Some History study books still have information such as Mr. Livingstone discovering Victoria Falls in Zambia which should be corrected.

Legal Instruments for assessing Commitments made for Youth

Youth Movement can engage other stakeholders such African Union and its sister institutions, Governments, NEPAD Secretariat, Private sector and other social actors that may be relevant to the advancement of Youth Agenda. The following could be the instruments among others that may be considered for discourse:

- UN World Programme of Action to year 2000 and Beyond , Adopted 1995
- ECCOSOC of AU Adopted June 2004, Addis Ababa
- Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)
- National Action Plans for Youth Employment (YEN) ILO
- APRM Adopted 2003, June Maputo
- Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
- Dakar Employment Strategy (World Youth Forum of UN 6 to 10 August 2001)
- Braga Youth Action Plan
- Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, Adopted World Ministers responsible for Youth, 12 August 1998
- Resolution Pan African Youth Movement , October 2003, Namibia

African Youth Charter

The establishment of the African Youth Charter as a regional mechanism for youth development and participation is crucial more than ever before. It envisages that the Youth Charter to be adopted by African Union (AU) will assist in terms of the mainstreaming of youth involvement and the coordination of UN instruments of Youth as World Programme of Action. The Youth Charter would also ensure that countries complying with the Charter will develop effective strategies for Youth Employment. It will further address challenges such as child labour which is against International Convention on the Rights of Child. The charter should also address the misuse of children in civil wars.

The Youth Charter should provide quota systems for the participation of Young people in institutions such as national parliaments, AU institutions such as Pan African Parliament, etc. It should reflect bias for young people in terms of procurement policies. However the African Youth Charter campaign should be lead by Youth Movement and develop a draft that will serve as tool for engagement of the African Union. It is exciting to note that the NEPAD Youth Summit 2005 has the Youth Charter in its agenda.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Commission for Africa should convene African wide consultation for Youth and children's rights movement to consolidate its findings, the consideration of Youth Commissioner in this consultation is important based in our firm believe that youth are experts of their own problems. The following for strategies, debates and future actions that need to be Considered:

Acknowledgements of Sources of Information

- Report of Labour Organizations
- UN Conventions
- Youth Publication Journal
- Jordan Human Resource report 2000
- Youth Employment Networks reports
- SADC Youth Movement perspective on Global Youth Trend
- AU Commission publications.
- Pan African Youth Leadership Summit Dakar, UNPD
- UNECA Publications
- NEPAD Young Face of Africa, UNICEF
- 1992 OAU International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC)
- Common position paper