



AFRICA UNITE

BUILDING HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITIES



A VOICE FOR AFRICA'S YOUTH Newsletter - August 2013

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DIRECTOR'S OVERVIEW



It's good to be back

I am pleased to re-introduce this newsletter to you after a long time. When we launched the first and only other edition three years ago, we intended to give you regular updates through this publication, but because of a lack of funds, we have not been able to do so. We are effectively asking for your sponsorship so that we can produce this newsletter regularly to keep you up to date with our activities.

We need to act against discrimination

Africa Unite's core mission is to work with citizens, refugees, and migrants to prevent conflicts, enhance social cohesion and promote socio-economic development. Because of this focus, it greatly concerns us to hear about the recent flare-up of xenophobic incidents, including attacks on foreign business owners in many locations around the country. We are concerned when law enforcement authorities refuse to acknowledge the xenophobic nature of these incidents, preferring to assign the motive of criminality to them. This obviously affects the creation and implementation of policies necessary for government to take appropriate action, leaving the burden on civic society organisations to drive the social cohesion process.

As an organisation we have put in place several initiatives aimed at improving social cohesion. We are seeing positive results of some of our efforts, a case in point being the Women's Skills Development Programme that we feature in this newsletter. We also have other projects in the pipeline like the screen print initiative that is featured in this newsletter, which we feel is going to be a great success and will improve the self-sustainability of Africa Unite.

Volunteer effort is driving social cohesion

Our activities and approach to promoting social cohesion, where youths have become agents of change in their respective communities, owe a lot to the spirit of volunteerism that we've been tapping into. In this era of global economic meltdown, Africa Unite, like other NGOs in South Africa, has been facing challenges of resource mobilisation and staff turnover. We are grateful for the input of our volunteers, local youth and overseas interns who work hard to ensure the success of our programmes and projects.

We need your constant support

Your donations are 100% responsible for our success to date in our effort to accomplish social cohesion and integration. To everyone who has been donating to our projects, a very big thanks for your support. At the same time I appeal to all of you to donate everything you can to us so that our work can proceed at an even greater scale.

Zoe Nkongolo
Africa Unite Director

WOMEN'S SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROJECT GETTING RID OF XENOPHOBIA, ONE GROUP AT A TIME

The origin of the initiative

Between November 2011 and April 2012, Africa Unite implemented a rights awareness and community dialogue programme for refugee, migrant and South African women as part of our efforts to improve community integration. What we found out from the programme was that in South Africa:

- Refugee and migrant women continue to be exposed to unfair discrimination, often as a result of xenophobic beliefs, attitudes and actions.
- Existing gendered power relations, worsened by xenophobia, give refugee and migrant women even fewer opportunities than their male-counterparts to find gainful employment in South Africa.
- Many women are hampered by their lack of access to business forums or small business loans due to the social expectation that they remain the primary caregivers in the family.
- While some have ventured into setting up women's self-help groups, most lack the skills and knowledge about building sustainable businesses.

Based on these findings, we started a series of skills development workshops to alleviate women's economic isolation and enable them to become self-reliant. These workshops were also a way of showing participants that through working together, harmony can be created and most myths driving xenophobic tendencies are not true.

What the skills development project was all about

Beginning in November 2012 and over a period of six months, 36 women participated in workshops that covered key concepts and principles of business management. We taught them skills in budgeting and financial management, business development, sustainable business practices, teamwork, decision making, and conflict resolution. The women worked in six small groups and wrote a basic proposal, which developed into a marketing plan for business ventures they wanted to begin.

On 10 April 2013, we held a handover event at the Trinity Methodist Church in Nyanga to celebrate the end of the training programme. The women presented their business plans and start-up capital was allocated to each of the six groups.



Graduates of the skills development project

Recently we took a look at two of the business projects which the women started – Sunflower Clothing and Gwigza's Take-away.

Sunflower Clothing

Before Joyce Dube joined the women's skills development programme, her life consisted of waking up, feeding her children and waiting on her husband to bring home his meagre salary so they could eke out a modest existence. As a Zimbabwean refugee living in the Better Life housing project in Phillipi, she hardly was in contact with her neighbours – there was a mutual wall of mistrust between the local women and her.

'I did not know what they thought of me. In my opinion the local people were not to be trusted, whenever I went out of the house, it was with fear that bad things might be done to me. Before I came to South Africa I had been told many stories of how South Africans hate foreigners and I did not want to mix with them.

'It was only after I joined the skills development programme that I started familiarising myself with my neighbours and learned to talk to them. Through sharing our various experiences, I discovered that we share a lot of the same problems as women, regardless of where we come from. The one thing that I am really grateful for is that through working together with my neighbours in this clothing project, we have learned to trust each other.

'We are like sisters now, we have been through battles together in this business and I now have people to depend on in times of distress. I feel empowered now. Even though business is still slow since we don't have much capital to expand and reach our potential, at least I can bring something to the table for my family,' said Joyce.

Sunflower Clothing was started with an initial capital injection of R6 000 that we sourced from an organisation called Seniors Italy – Partners for Development. The group presented a proposal to sell second hand clothing within their community and outlying areas and to date they have sold six

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bales of clothing within their community. Their hope is to raise more capital so that they can buy their stock in bulk at cheaper prices and extend their sphere of operation to include areas outlying Cape Town.

Gwigza's Take-away

It is still a bit of a struggle for Gwigza's but Zodwa Tyika, who is one of the leaders of the group says they will keep striving.

'While the project has changed our lives, we still face some challenges. People are not yet used to the idea of a take-away in the location and turnover is still a bit low. However, we will get there one day. We are not giving up yet,' said Zodwa.

'Initially, in our group the challenge we faced was one of communication between the partners, some only understand IsiXhosa, others only French or Swahili and it was difficult to relate to each other. By bringing in our young children who are going to school, we found that we could relate well through their interpretation, as they can all understand English.

'We might have some personality clashes once in a while, but that is a minor problem. The biggest block of all was removed when we learned to work and exist together, now we treat each other as one family, without the suspicion and hatred we had for each other.

'We wish we had more capital so that we could diversify our offering and expand into selling more traditional stuff that people are used to buying in spaza shops,' said Zodwa.

Gwigza's Take-away was started with an initial capital outlay of R6 000 also from Seniors Italy – Partners for Development. They are into the business of selling braai meats, fish and chips, hamburgers, sandwiches, muffins, scones and beverages as well as stews, beef, rice, and pap to the community of Better Life and its surroundings areas.



Members of Sunflower Clothing

Join us in integrating communities – one person at a time

It is possible to change xenophobic attitudes when people from different backgrounds work together with a common objective – self sustenance. After literally being taught to 'fish together', these 36 ladies showed us that if we manage to get the same programme out to a wider section of society, there will be greater cohesion within our society. Taking one person through the skills development programme to a point where they can seek funding like Zodwa and Joyce did costs R2 500.

You too can help our society get rid of xenophobia, one person at a time, by donating just R2 500 so that we can conduct another skills development programme.

Visit our website at www.africaunite.org.za or call Brilliant Nyambi on 021 461 6551 to understand more about this programme.

ANOTHER HAPPY BENEFICIARY OF OUR MANDELA DAY INITIATIVE

“ The excellent Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory has already made clear what the icon wants by way of legacy ... he does not want a legacy cast in copper, concrete or marble, no monuments or highways, but a living legacy of volunteerism and service. ”

- Ferrial Hafferjee, June 2013

True to the legacy expressed above, on 18 July, Africa Unite together with the Samora Youth Group restored and painted the house of Nozakhe Nolandu, an unemployed and elderly woman in the community of Samora Machel. Before this intervention, this old lady's house was mouldy, leaked water whenever it rained and did not have a properly closing door.

After we painted the house and installed a new door, we handed over groceries generously donated by Spar. Nozakhe expressed a lot of gratitude and encouraged the team to continue making a difference in society and contribute to positive changes in communities.

The Africa Unite team was greatly impressed by the youth group's initiative to improve their own neighbourhood. The event had coverage from the Daily Sun newspaper and also helped us to forge new links with the Youth Development Centre (YDC).



Nozakhe Nolandu (holding cake) with the Africa Unite team

Your donations are 100% responsible for our success in our efforts to accomplish social cohesion and integration.

Please donate now to make a difference.

NPO no: 033-723
Donations to:
Africa unite (Business Cheque Account)
First National Bank, Adderley Street in Cape Town
Account Number: 62066426711

UNLOCKING THE YOUTH VOTE

Voter registration and political rights dialogue

As part of Africa Unite's human rights campaign, we recently conducted a public dialogue on voter awareness and human rights together with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). This was after the Cape Times reported that in the Western Cape, only 4% of youth between 18 and 19 years have registered to vote in the 2014 national elections. These low voter registration percentages reflect a need for the youth to make a move from indifference to taking control of their future.



Voter registration dialogue participants

The irony of this low registration percentage is that it is young people who are normally at the forefront of all service delivery protests in townships, demonstrating against government's 'incompetence'.

Why the youth do not register as voters

Some of the reasons the youth give for not registering are a lack of information on voter registration and their perceptions about the poor service delivery they experience in their communities. The youth argue that the apparent incompetence of those who hold public office and general abuse of public funds results in them losing interest in the political process. As such, some of them feel that voting is a waste of time.

Another crucial issue that came out of the dialogue is that many youth lack identity documentation needed to register to vote. Even if a youth wishes to vote, this often gets in the way of exercising their political right. To truly improve youth voter participation, there must be a concerted effort to ensure that the youth have IDs at age 16.

Sharing ideas on why it's necessary to be a registered voter

We explained why it is important for youth to exercise their right to vote with emphasis on the political rights that citizens have, including the rights to vote, form a political party, and stand for public office.

The right to vote gives an individual the power to add his or her voice to government. A vote can express the desire for change, and it is the basic unit of a democracy. Africa Unite peer educators stressed that not only is it the youth's right to vote, but it is an important medium through which to have their voices heard.

What the youth need to know about the voter registration process

There are a few things the youth need to know about the registration process. Joleen March of the IEC pointed out that:

- The earliest voter registration age is 16 and the voting age is 18.
- When a voter changes voting districts, he/she must re-register to update the new address.
- A birth certificate is not a valid document for registration.
- A bar-coded or temporary ID is required to successfully register.

A mobile identity document issuing unit is on the way

Africa Unite is currently working with the local government's department of community development to cover ID photo costs during an identity card issuing initiative, which the home affairs mobile unit will conduct. One of our youth peer educators in Nyanga Township has already collected over 300 names of young people who will be beneficiaries of this initiative.

Help the youth take control of their destiny

Because of the importance of voter registration awareness, we wish to fulfill this need by providing additional youth voting dialogues in and around Cape Town. With this in mind, we will conduct a similar dialogue in Worcester in early September.

Visit our website at www.africaunite.org.za or contact Brilliant Nyambi on 021 461 6551 to see how you can help us to help the youth to take control of their future.

SINGAMAKHALIPHA UPDATES

The Singamakhalipha programme offices recently moved from the Old Trinity Methodist Church hall in Nyanga to Africa Unite's Gugulethu Sports Complex offices. This was due to a high number of break-ins that occurred in Nyanga, which resulted in huge losses of equipment.

While there is no intention of stopping the after school activities project that takes place in Nyanga, it is unfortunate that the move created some emotional disorder among the vulnerable and orphaned children who felt that we were about to abandon them. Most of these children rely on the Nyanga Centre for their meals and social guidance.

Lack of funding affecting vital projects

During last year, social support groups that are run under the Singamakhalipha programme suffered a major setback as we could not secure funding for them. Not much work was done and we spent a lot of time trying to establish partnerships and secure funding so that some of the most vital projects could go on. Recently we secured limited funding and workshops on parental responsibilities and rights, sexual and reproductive health, sexual abuse support groups and individual counselling sessions will soon resume.

We are in desperate need of psycho-social support professionals as currently most of our activities are being overseen by peer educators who lack the professional knowledge in many instances. We also have great need of professional educators to assist in our programmes as some of the children

involved in Singamakhalipha's activities need to be assisted with their homework. Most of their parents either do not care or cannot help them because of the changes that have been made to the education curriculum.

Intent to re-focus

Originally formed as a psycho-social intervention programme, we had to change our initial focus after seeing the presence of a high number of orphans and vulnerable children in Nyanga who needed urgent material and emotional support. All along we have been concentrating on providing these basic material and emotional needs. We now intend to move from this type of involvement and focus more on vulnerable youths' psychological development in relation to the experiences they undergo within the society they live in once we are capacitated in terms of professional support.

Your support is urgently needed

Our involvement with the Gugulethu and Nyanga communities has shown us that there is a lot that needs to be done. The children have many needs but also much to offer society – optimism, energy in abundance, creativity and talent. They are the key to a better future – by helping them to develop, we can also help uplift these communities.

You too can make this development occur by offering your time as a specialist volunteer in the areas of education and psychological support.



Celebrating Human Rights day with Singamakhalipha

Visit our website on www.africaunite.org.za or call Nomsa Somdaka on 074 167 1430 to understand more on how you can get involved.

ENABLING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE POST 2015 MDGs AGENDA

Africa Unite, was selected by *African Monitor* (who are the pan African Secretariat on Civil society Organisations), to lead the South African segment of the *Voice Africa's Future* campaign. The campaign aims to collect 150 000 African youth voices that will contribute to the development of strategies for the *United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*, after the year 2015. In South Africa, we will form partnerships with other relevant stakeholders to collect 15,000 youth voices from across the country in response to the question:

What is your hope or dream of a better future for you and Africa?



Put your organisation's logo on this campaign T-shirt by donating

What are Millennium Development Goals?

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and the entire world's leading development institutions. Introduced by the United Nations in 2000, the eight goals were to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equity and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability, and
- Develop a global partnership for development.

How the campaign is going to be conducted

Starting in early August and lasting into October, the campaign will feature events aimed at generating awareness in collaboration with the media and our partners. In order to obtain a representative sample in the campaign, Africa Unite will partner with youth-based organisations across rural and urban areas of South Africa. The key methods of collecting the youth voices will be the use of *questionnaires* and a mixture of social media platforms, all designed to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

We have already started training workshops for youth enumerators who will be administering questionnaires and conducting interviews in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KZN provinces.



Youth enumerators after training workshop in Cape Town

What the intended results of the campaign are

We will measure the success of the Voice Africa's Future campaign by the amount of feedback that we receive. We will submit a report consisting of the information gathered through the campaign to the *High Level Panel of the Secretary General of the United Nations* so that new strategies after 2015 can be developed with the youth's input.

We want more partners to help conduct the campaign

You can also make your mark in the development of the post 2015 MDG strategies even if you are not a youth. We need your help to get our call for youth voices heard everywhere. We are looking for sponsors for promotional material that include T-shirts that our enumerators will be using. Put your name on this very important campaign by sponsoring a radio show, advert and even airtime for raffles that we will conduct.

Visit our website at www.africaunite.org.za to see and contribute to the activities happening in this campaign or call our co-ordinator Brilliant Nyambi on 021 461 6551.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND SOCIAL COHESION PROJECT ON THE CARDS

Xenophobic tendencies are rearing up again

“...we realise that it is not necessarily hate against our fellow Africans, but just a scramble for limited resources...it is just fear of us being unskilled and not having the necessary resources to raise our kids and sustain our livelihoods. ”

- Unemployed 32 year old male in Alexandra speaking on attacks against foreigners in 2008

Recently, there have been renewed attacks on business owners and people of foreign origin in various locations around South Africa and Africa Unite has seen many young people in the forefront of some of these attacks. Research has shown that poverty and unemployment are some of the factors that contribute to restricting the social integration of foreigners in xenophobia-prone communities.

We have identified a need to create employment and alleviate poverty through skills transference, development and training in South African locations where most of the unemployed youths are.

Africa Unite intends to create an environment suitable for community integration

We are starting a screen printing project in Gugulethu and Nyanga as a way of providing employment to youths in these areas. The screen printing initiative will also become a source of funding for our other social integration activities. This project will also be a medium through which to improve social cohesion in communities as we intend to have a mixture of unemployed foreign and local youths working together in this. All the profit that is generated from the project will go towards:

- Peer education initiatives.
- Promotion of integrative social activities.
- Unemployment and poverty relief through skills transference and development.

Help us teach skills and create sustainable livelihoods. We have already sourced premises from which to operate this venture. We need to raise at least R150 000 towards the purchase of screen printing equipment and your contribution is just what we need to make positive change in society possible. By donating money or your time to help us set up and run this project you will have made a big contribution towards creating a better African society with less crime and hatred.



One of the T-shirt designs we intend to produce

Visit our website at www.africaunite.org.za or contact Brilliant Nyambi on 021 461 6551 to find out how you can contribute to this important enterprise.

TEACHING SWAHILI TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION

A vast majority of immigrants in South Africa are Swahili speaking and the language is one of the fastest growing on the continent. However, most immigrants make an effort to learn the language and customs of the area they settle in in South Africa. While this is a good way of integrating, we saw a need to raise awareness among interested South Africans about different cultures in the continent they belong to. As part of an Africa Unite campaign to promote social cohesion, we took the initiative to provide Swahili lessons on a weekly basis in Gugulethu Township.

The Swahili program became the focus of our theme for celebrating Africa Day this year, when we celebrated one of East Africa's cultures with the participants and members of the Gugulethu community who managed to join. We invited Mansura Africa, a Tanzanian national, to address our gathering and share the customs particular to Tanzanian living.

The event focused on traditional Tanzanian food, dress, customs and a general awareness of the growing Swahili community within South Africa. Mansura described Tanzanian culture as vibrant and how it has connected people of different backgrounds in Tanzania. She also identified some of the cultural similarities between South African and Tanzanian nationals, sending out the message that we are all one people.



Mansura Africa dishing food for the Africa Day celebration participants

A taste of Tanzanian cuisine

Our guest speaker and a team of ladies fulfilled the traditional African proverb that says to reach a man's heart, one goes through the mouth. A mouth-watering exhibition of the east African country's culinary delights rounded off the celebration. Mansura and several other women prepared traditional Tanzanian dishes which we shared with all those present.

She explained that many dishes make use of local fruits and vegetables such as green bananas, sweet potatoes, and cassava leaves, and that much of their food has influences from Indian and Arab cuisine. The gathering also learned of how coconut milk is an essential ingredient in many dishes and is a substitute for cooking oil.

More knowledge about other African cultures will enhance cohesion

We are in the process of engaging the South African Police Service so that we extend to them the Swahili programme as it will help them in their dealings with the migrant community. We also believe that continuous recognition and celebration of different cultures will promote a spirit of African unity and social cohesion within South Africa's diverse communities.

FAREWELL SHINGAI



Shingai Maphosa (standing) who was coordinating the Human Rights for Social Cohesion programme with Africa Unite, left for Sierra Leone where she will be an Inspirator with MS ActionAid Denmark.

The communities, peer educators and Africa Unite will miss her.

With many thanks to our Funders:



Your donations are 100% responsible for our success in our efforts to accomplish social cohesion and integration.

Please donate now to make a difference.

NPO no: 033-723
Donations to:
Africa unite (Business Cheque Account)
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You can contribute to the enhancement of this unity by joining or facilitating our classes. Visit our website and blog at www.africaunite.org.za or call Brilliant Nyambi on 021 461 6551 and see how you can also contribute to the success of this ideal.