

THE USAU YOUTH



Issue 005, Volume I

MAY 2012

INSIDE

NEMISA: Burundian Youth Working on Environmental Preservation I

Our World Scourged by HIV/AIDS 2

THOKO KAMBALAME - A True Hero 4

Did You Know?... Let's Discuss on Facebook (Youth and Drugs) 6

A Word to the Wise - Mr. ZEBULON TAKWA 8

The Voice of Volunteers - MPHATSO JACQUELINE PRICE II

NEMISA: BURUNDIAN YOUTH WORKING ON ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Since 2005, the Burundian development process has grown critically important. Currently, there is an increased rate of unemployment - which especially affects the youth - coupled with extreme poverty and high prices for goods. The situation worsens when thinking about the pressure placed on the environment. The question that one may ask is: **should Burundian youth inherit these problems?** NEMISA, the New Millennium Students Association, attempts to respond to this challenging question through environmental protection, encouraging youth to participate in reconstructing Burundi with particular attention to the environment.

The global climate is slowly changing. In Burundi, there is a high reliance on rain-fed agriculture, increasing the sensitivity of agriculture in the region to effects of climate change. This generated widespread food insecurity, driven by a dearth of water resources, crop diseases, and water pollution. Those most affected are the youth, often unable to make successful transitions from school to work. The New Millennium Students Association (NEMISA) decided to work closely with the African Union to empower the youth through capacity building and skill development.



One of NEMISA's clean up campaigns with students in a Burundian secondary school.

NEMISA's first priority has been organizing sensitization curricula in secondary schools with programs on water, hygiene, and sanitation issues. During these programs, students do environmental sketches and debate on climate change and its impacts on Burundi. The objective is to expose younger generations to environmentally friendly ways of living.

NEMISA also organizes community work with

local people from rural areas. For instance, clean up campaigns collecting rubbish along Lake Tanganyika. In provinces where people destroy public taps provided for them by water organizations, NEMISA members carry out public awareness campaigns for the upkeep of public taps with the motto **"You can't destroy our tap."**

What makes NEMISA unique is that it provides technical and professional training for Burundian youth. These programs help create a platform where young people can share their knowledge and experiences with environmental issues.

My message to African youth is simple and clear: **development and environmental protection begins at home, start acting now.** Therefore, I invite African youth to contribute and participate in this development process. We can achieve extraordinary results, if our aspirations and motivations are strong enough.

Richard DUBASE
Member
New Millennium Students Association

EDITORIAL NOTE

A little news flash, youth are doing great things around the continent.

Have you heard about the New Millennium Students Association or perhaps about Thoko Kambalame, our youth hero for the month? This edition introduces you to people who started small and are doing really big things.

Be ready to hear about youth and drug use in Africa on page 6, Start "Getting to Zero" against HIV on page 2, and discover the benefits of being a volunteer from our "Voice of Volunteers" column page 11.

If after all this you still don't know what to do for yourself and your community, pour yourself a cup of tea and sit in on my conversation with the African Union Head of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Unit, Mr. Zebulun Takwa – everything he does is executed with purpose and dedication, and his life experience might leave you a little more ready to take action!

Enjoy as you read on ...

Fanso Bari
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU

OUR WORLD SCOURGED BY HIV/AIDS

Last year's World AIDS Day Campaign theme was "Getting to Zero by 2015 – Zero AIDS Related Deaths, Zero New Infections and Zero Discrimination." Millions of people will die unnecessarily unless Governments and policy makers begin living up to the financial pledges they made. The year 2011 saw unprecedented progress with quantifiable results in science, political leadership, and in response to the AIDS crisis; however, that progress seems overshadowed by major financial crises.

The UNAIDS Global AIDS Report demonstrated that treatments are beginning to deliver tangible results, both in averting - an estimated 2.5 million AIDS-related deaths since 1995 - and halting new infections.

The World AIDS Campaign Chair,

Allyson Leacock said: "Just when we should be increasing our efforts to achieve universal access to treatment, we are tearing apart the progress made and losing momentum in the HIV response." This comment was made after the Global Fund to fight against AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria announced its intention to end the next round of funding, as the organization is facing a \$ 10 billion (USD) shortfall. While transitional financing is expected to provide for the continuation of current services, the decision postponed the possibility of new funding until 2014.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance Executive Director Peter Prove said, "Round II funds would have enabled scale-up of lifesaving treatment and prevention services for HIV, TB, and Malaria to millions of people in developing countries, people currently dying from the lack of access to treatment and prevention have been betrayed – just when science is showing that the end of AIDS is within our grasp." Rather than

building on the new evidence that AIDS treatment saves lives and prevents new infections, many donors are seemingly turning their backs on millions of the world's poorest and most marginalized people.

The International Treatment Preparedness Coalition says funding for HIV began flattening at the end of the last decade. In 2011 the Global Fund failed to raise the minimum \$13 billion needed to maintain its current programs. Of the overall \$20 billion target, the organization raised roughly one-half, with \$11.5 billion secured

in pledges. In a challenging year, the Global Fund also faced mixed publicity as it unearthed misuse of funds by recipients in a small number of countries. This reduced funding capacity indicates a worrying slow-down in international commitment to the global AIDS problem. In fact, several donors reneged on pledges or delayed converting their pledges to cash.



**A community based AIDS Information Center that provides HIV testing for adults and children in Uganda.
Photo by WWW.AVERT.ORG**

The AIDS epidemic is far from over, but with a sustained commitment to comprehensive treatment, prevention, and care services, it is still possible to create an AIDS Free Generation. We therefore, young people are calling on our world leaders to *live up to their promises and find funds so "Getting to Zero" will no longer be a slogan but a reality. We call on governments to join hands with NGOs because more still needs to be done.* Let's not focus our attention solely on the global and international organizations, *young people also have a role to play in enabling populations to make and take healthy decisions and choices in life for today and posterity.*

Akampa R. Johnson Tanbull
National Peer Trainer
WSWM School Net Uganda, Rutgers WPF
Rukungiri, Uganda

NEWS FLASH

U.S. Agricultural Companies set millions for Africa.

A group of U.S. Seed, chemical and equipment companies will invest at least \$150 million over the next few years in African agricultural projects and products. The investment pledged by Du Pont, Monsanto, Cargill and others will help farmers in the developing world build local markets and improve productivity.

USAU and AU Host Joint Trade Forum

On May 8, 2012 the African Union (AU) and the U.S. Mission to the African Union (USAU) hosted the “Accelerate Private Capital Flow for Trade Within Africa” joint trade private sector forum at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. This forum was hosted on the margins of the World Economic Forum. Participants discussed the methods in which the AU, African governments, and international partners can increase private sector investment in Africa.

The AU strives to mainstream the Diaspora within the continent’s development agenda

The African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the Republic of South Africa, held the first “Global African Diaspora Summit.” After defining the African Diaspora as ‘peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union’, the AUC declared it will invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in strengthening of the African Union.

MONTHLY PROVERB

“He who does not climb the tree, eats the fruits that are unripe.” – Central African proverb.



Photo by
WWW.MASTERFILE.COM

This proverb illustrates that, *if you do not put in efforts in whatever you do, you will never achieve good results.*

So then, dream all you want, make a plan on how to achieve those dreams, and work very hard to achieve them; you’ll be amazed at the outcome.

Bye for now and see you next month.

Bari Fanso
African Union Youth Volunteer (AU-YV)
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU

THOKO KAMBALAME - A TRUE HERO

I came across the story of a 14 year old girl from Malawi whose inspiring story is one worth sharing. You may think this is the story of a child, but there's an African proverb that says *"A child that washes his hands well, will eat and dine with elders."* Allow me to introduce to you the first female youth hero featured in our newsletter, **Thoko Kambalame**.



Thoko Kambalame - Our young hero

In her early years, Thoko experienced more suffering than most people expect in a lifetime. She was born HIV positive, discovered her status when she was only 8 and became an orphan at the age of 10. *"I remember that day perfectly,"* says Thoko as she recalls the day she discovered her status, *"it was honestly the most trying day of my life. My heart broke, I felt my dreams shattering and I cried myself to sleep."* Consequently, Thoko suffered stigmatization which is still a major problem for HIV positive people in Africa. Day after day, she played alone at home listening to the sounds of laughter from her peers. They were scared she would infect them and avoided her.

After receiving support from her family and the Family Planning Association in Malawi (FPAM), Thoko gradually overcame fears about her status, and is now a member of the **FPAM Nzotheke Club** – an association for young people living with HIV. Nzotheke in the Malawian language means *it's possible*. Thoko's membership in the club brought out the fight in her, proving **it is possible to have dreams and a life; even if it is a life with HIV**. Through her active membership in the club, she gathered courage to go public about her HIV status and became a **passionate advocate for young people living with the virus**. Thoko says, *"I want to accomplish many things and I will. I pray every day and I know God is by my side, and my dreams will come to pass. I want to be a lawyer and give legal support to young people infected and affected by HIV. I share my experiences with fellow youth living with the virus, we support each other and this is making a big difference in my life; I have overcome self stigma."*

She even mentioned that Malawian young people living with HIV face challenges ranging from stigma to poverty. Some are failing to complete their education, because they lack material support. Others are heading households after losing parents to AIDS.

Thoko GREW up in a world changed by AIDS. Many still lack accurate and comprehensive knowledge about the pandemic; but this 14 year old embraced the challenge of working to stop the spread of this virus. After reading her story, there are a few questions we should ask ourselves; **what are we doing to make a positive change in our communities? How do we handle our mishaps? Do we let these mishaps break us down or bring out the worse in us, or do we use that as a weapon to empower others and make our world a better place?**

DISCLAIMER: The information above was obtained from open media sources. Although slightly revised, USAU is not responsible for the content of independent media reports.

*Fanso Bari B.
African Union Youth Volunteer (AUYV)
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU*

SUDOKU PUZZLE

THE NEW PUZZLE - MAY

1		9	7			6		
			3	1			7	
		6		9				3
2	1						6	
	5		6	3	1		2	
	7						8	5
3				7		5		
	6			4	3			
		1			9	7		2

ANSWERS FOR APRIL PUZZLE

2	1	4	3	7	8	9	5	6
3	7	5	9	6	4	1	2	8
8	9	6	2	1	5	4	7	3
6	4	7	1	8	9	2	3	5
5	3	1	6	4	2	7	8	9
9	8	2	7	5	3	6	1	4
4	2	9	5	3	7	8	6	1
7	6	3	8	9	1	5	4	2
1	5	8	4	2	6	3	9	7

DID YOU KNOW? ... LET'S DISCUSS ON FACEBOOK (Youth and Drugs)

Impacts of Drug Abuse

The inability to concentrate, make decisions, permanent nonchalance, inability to plan, difficulty breathing (cough, chronic bronchitis), fatigue, dehydration (thirst), weakening of the immune system, abnormal sperm, impotence, decrease in fertility, harm to fetuses as cannabis can penetrate through the placental barrier and harm the unborn child, schizophrenia (mental illness), hallucinations, scattered thoughts, loss of social benchmarks, weakening of consciousness, educational failure, drug intoxication, memory disorders, acts of violence, and the change in the perception of time and distance - are only some of the characteristics observed in drug abusers.

African Youth and Drug Abuse

The African continent has experienced a significant increase in drug trafficking. Several varieties of drugs including cocaine are found in youth settings: schools, universities, and, of course, on the street. In fact, drug use has become fashionable for many young people and this is a real threat to the stability of a continent already plagued by many other vices.

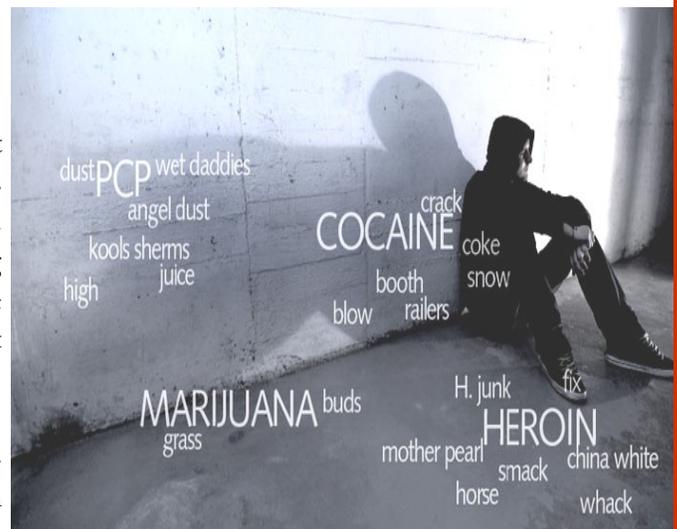
Although, there is no precise figure available to measure the real extent of the problem in many African countries, it is suggested that drug abuse affects various age groups, most commonly among youth aged 16 to 25 years.

As usual, your contributions, comments, and information from your research, will be highly appreciated.

What can you do to discourage young addicts? Are they aware of the dangers? What can be done to combat this scourge of drug use among youth? Let's discuss on Facebook.

See you at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Did-You-Know-Le-Saviez-Vous/181760325263595>

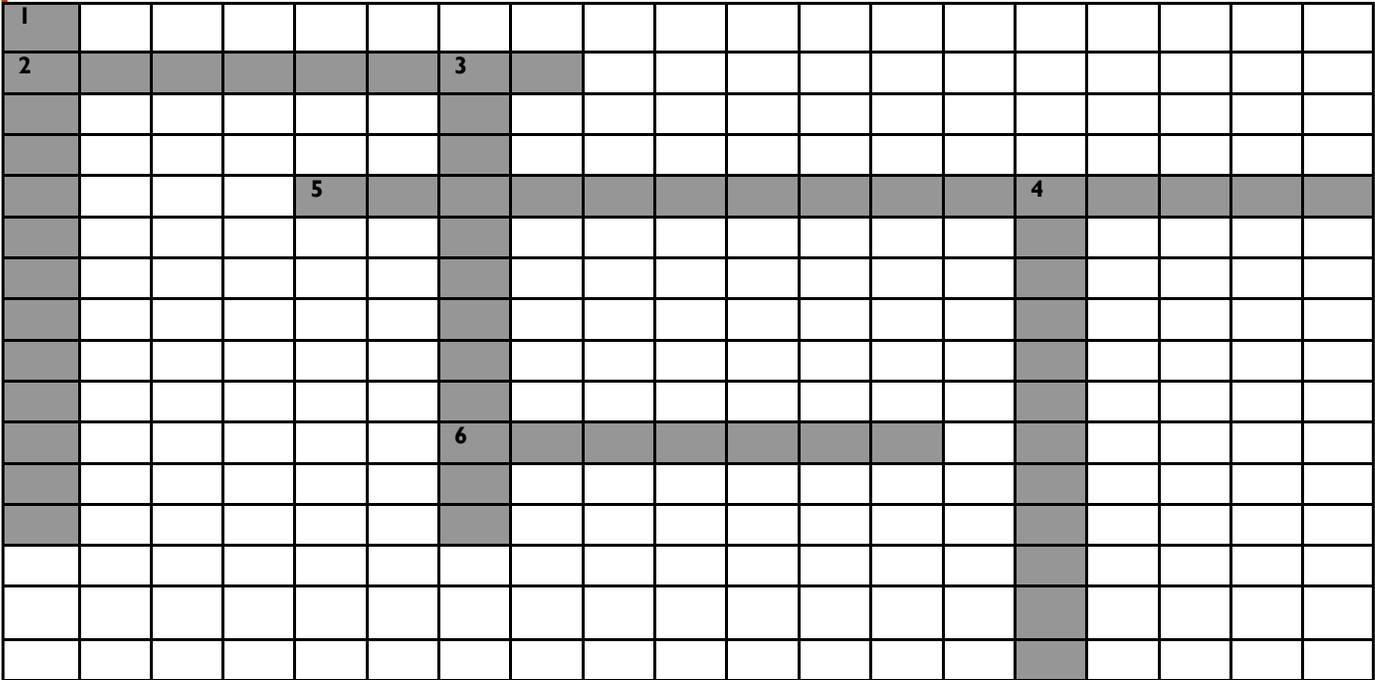
This information has been provided through various open sources



Youth and Drugs
Photo provided by WWW.PRESBYTARIAN.CA

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Read through our articles on our *'Did You know? ... Let's Discuss on Facebook'* column in order to answer all the crossword puzzles. Thank you!



ACROSS

- 2. Another name for marijuana

- 5. The sale, purchase, manufacture, delivery, possession, or transportation of illegal drugs in a predetermined quantity.

- 6. A green, leafy plant grown in warm climates which is used for smoking and chewing, and as snuff.

DOWN

- 1. A chronic, severe, and disabling brain disorder that usually strikes in late adolescence or early adulthood, but can strike at any time in life.

- 3. A collection of organs, cells and tissues that work together to protect the body from diseases

- 4. An adjective describing substances that cause or tend to cause cancer.

ANSWERS:
 DOWN - 1.Schizophrenia 2.Cannabis 3.Immune System 4.Carcinogenic
 ACROSS - 5.Drug Trafficking 6.Tobacco

A WORD TO THE WISE - MR. TAKWA ZEBULON

Mr. Takwa Zebulon Suifon is the Head of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Unit under the Department of Peace and Security at the African Union Commission (AUC). Now he shares with us his opinion on youth, conflict resolution, and the African Union Commission.



MR. TAKWA ZEBULON
Head of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Unit, Department of Peace and Security - AUC

University of Yaoundé where I specialized in history of international relations up to the Maîtrise (Master) level. I later enrolled into the Doctorate program, but, due to circumstances you'll soon understand, I decided to suspend it.

While at the University, I became a graduate assistant and developed a keen interest in reading newspapers as I wanted to know about the events around me. One day, a gentleman asked me to record an interesting thought I had, *"You mentioned something very interesting, can you put it down in writing?"* Interestingly, we were discussing the visit of Salim Ahmed Salim, then Secretary-General of the Organization of African Union (OAU). I wrote an article outlining some of the things the OAU could do. When the publisher of the newspaper read the article he immediately requested to see the author. That was my introduction into the media landscape, as he immediately 'recruited' me. I enhanced my writing skills in media communication as a features writer, working on a part-time basis, while continuing with my university assignments.

One day, I wrote an article on the Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP), a peace focused NGO, and the owner of the NGO saw the article and asked, *"Do you have a background in Peace and Security?"* I replied *"No, I wanted do something out of the ordinary."* It was an article I conceived

that led to the opportunity to participate in a peace training exercise in Ghana. I was one of the first trainees for the launch of the West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP) which is now one of the biggest civil society organizations in Africa.

I suspended my Ph.D. and continued working at WANEP where I had the chance to travel extensively in West Africa, Europe, and North America.

The USAU Youth: Did you have any heroes back then, and what made them different from the other adults in the community in which you were raised?

Mr. Zebulon Takwa: That is a very interesting question. Obviously there were heroes in my life. There was a man named **Dr. Nsokika Bernard Fonlon**. He was one of the first Cameroonians to earn a Ph.D. His writing style made his message very unique. He inspired me, a lot. But, what inspired me most and made him my role model, was his **simplicity and humility**. He was a Minister in Yaoundé and we all knew the luxury ministers lived in. When I saw Fonlon's house, I couldn't believe it was the house of a minister. His private car was a Volkswagen (fondly called the beetle). He refused any other car or amenity from the government. So I asked myself what was behind this attitude that Fonlon had, and there I realized it was **service**. Unfortunately, I grew up in an age where the youth were, as you'll find out in most other countries, disgruntled with the system. There were no role models. Everyone wanted to be rich, ride around in big cars, and have the latest sophisticated gadgets.

I looked at my background; I didn't come from a rich family. My parents could not read or write, so I told myself *"there is no way I can be a part of this other world."* So I got inspired by Fonlon and said *"I will live the Fonlon kind of life, if there is a possibility of living it. I may not be 100% like him but there are certain things I'll draw from him" ... humility, dedication and dedicated service.*

I realized, in the peacebuilding world those values are really very necessary if you are to be successful. I never met or thought anything like that until I saw the selflessness manifested in Rev. Kenne who linked me to WANEP. I recognized these same values in some of **my colleagues** at WANEP. I found colleagues that groomed me in the spirit of **service, transparency and selflessness**. In them was something good and different. When they told me they were students from a renowned university in the United States, I kept thinking there must be something special in that school or in the people who went there.

A WORD TO THE WISE - MR. TAKWA ZEBULON

I tried very hard to draw these values from them which have since remained in me. One day, colleagues were grumbling about salaries and conditions of work, and in a meeting with my bosses, one of them said: *“this work is not about money, it’s a calling. If you want to work for peace, you’ll have to take it as a calling. If you want to go for money then you may consider working in the Bank because that’s where the money is.”* Those words remained in me and guided me through my work.

I continued doing my best, hoping someday things will get better. Today, I am speaking to you from the walls of the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission, and I always remember Dr. Fonlon and all those good people for that.

The USAU Youth: Your life is truly an inspiring and interesting one. Now let’s talk a little about the African Union. What is your opinion of the African Union initiative that involves young people in the continent’s development through the African Union Youth Volunteers Corps (AU-YVC)?

Mr. Zebulon Takwa: That question is central because it is what I’m doing here in the AU. I had the opportunity of getting into the peace-building world in a peculiar way. **But how many other African youth out there have an opportunity like me? What use is their willingness and ability to give what they have, or have been trained to do if they don’t have the opportunity to do that?** So, in an ideal situation, there is no reason why well qualified, hardworking, and determined African youth should not have the jobs of their dreams. I’m one of those who had always said we can go for the best. Why not put a program in place wherein we go to the universities, select the best students, and give them one year probation period of training to put them into the system. It’s rather unfortunate this is not happening.

Whenever there is recruitment, there is this famous requirement, **‘two to five years’ experience, working in an international organization.** I have always argued that Africa needs to reconsider this borrowed format. Where on earth will a youth in Africa have international working experience when he or she is just coming out of school, considering all the difficulties that we have gone through. This challenging unemployment phenomenon has been on-going while our school curriculum has not changed to reflect the job market needs. All this is impacting on the youths, **who grow as victims in a world where they feel rejected.** I have often wondered **why Africa cannot institute compulsory on-the-job training, both at the national and regional levels.**

One of the paragraphs on the AU Decision that endorsed the AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) in 2006, **called for the creation of a (robust) AU Youth Volunteer Corps**, but this has not received commensurate attention. I was so excited about the Youth Volunteer Program. **Even if we’re not going to fully employ these youth, we would have at least given them the opportunity to help themselves, and fulfill two-three years of work experience in an international organisation.**

I’m firmly in support of the African Union Youth Volunteers Corps launched by the AU Commission. However, I want to say that the support so far has been very timid and grossly inadequate. If continentally we are deploying only about a 100 youths, then this does not reflect Africa at all. We should be talking of thousands of them. **I’ll like to use this opportunity to say this is the time for all of us in leadership position to take action; we all talk about youth issues**

but when it comes to concrete actions we pay lip service. I have always been depressed about the state of the Ministry of Youth Affairs in many African countries. It is the building every other ministry rejected. The budget for youth is always the lowest. This reflects the esteem we have for the youth and our commitment to their issues. Maybe this is done unconsciously, but that is what is on the ground. Is there any substantial African investment we have seen Africa put in? No. **The moment we start investing in the young people is now. That is where I think Africa’s priority should be.**

The USAU Youth: Thank you very much for that. Now as an expert in Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peace-building, in what ways do you think the African Union can involve the youth?

Mr. Zebulon Takwa: We all know that youth have been involved in conflict. Some people say youth have been used to perpetuate conflict - especially electoral violence - and civil wars. Of course, idle minds and perpetual unemployment made them vulnerable to the manipulation of irresponsible politicians and war mongers. **If we can use these youth for destruction we can just easily use them positively for reconstruction. We can**

“The moment we start investing in young people is now. That is where I think Africa’s priority should be.”

stem the tides and use them for development.

In post-conflict situations, the most we do is focus on disarmament and the reintegration of child soldiers who took the guns and killed. But the rest of the 'good youth' who were the veritable role models and law abiding citizen are all neglected in the background. Nobody thinks of them. I think it is high time we come up with creative programs rewarding youth who were law-abiding, patriotic, and carried the peace flag. We need to place them and the forefront of post-conflict peace-building as role models. I appeal to our development partners to focus on this other side of the coin.

The USAU Youth: Earlier you mentioned coming from a poor family. There are many young Africans who are growing up with a similar background to yours, have you a word for them?

Mr. Zebulun Takwa: Yes I do. I want to tell them that, *"If you lose hope; you lose everything."* Africa is not doomed. I'm granting you this interview at a moment when, for the first time, since independence and even since the UN Development Decade that was in the 1960s and 1970s, all economic indicators are pointing to an Africa on the rise. I remember the infamous headline in *The Economist* that portrayed Africa as the 'Hopeless Continent.' Today, just a few years after, that same journal has come back on its words and now tagged Africa as the continent of hope and the new economic horizon. The same people who condemned the continent are coming back, and I will quote the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi in addressing the audience in a recent forum at the AUC: *"Africa will not be judged by its past nor its present, but by its future."*

What I am saying is that, *"the youth should refocus."* Let the youth erase the apathy and general malaise they have about Africa. *The New York Times* recently published a story highlighting a change of fortunes. The article revealed Europe, particularly Portugal, are in decline as Africa becomes a new economic horizon. The Chinese have known this, and are all around. Where we see poverty, the Chinese seem to see riches.

We hear from the economists themselves that Africa is the next frontier. Six of the world's fastest growing economies are in Africa. So there is hope, provided we don't make the old mistakes. We must not miss the train, the youth and African leaders at all tiers must all refocus and strategize accordingly.

The leadership in Africa, in particular, must also instill some hope in the youth to put an end to that the youth exodus to others parts of the world. I don't want to hear any more appalling stories of migrants crossing the Sahara and the Mediterranean 'by all means' to go to Europe. Our leaders should strategize to create a space that will allow for young imagination and creativity.

The pockets of crisis and conflict around should not derail us. If you look carefully you'll see the stemming tides of peace in Somalia and the Sudans. The North African spring has come and gone, and Africa is planning to rebuild. So, it is the youth who should take this leadership role in the reconstruction. In my opinion, it is not through violence that Africa's problems will be resolved. The youth can take up their pens and our voices, and be on our feet using the available instruments that have been provided for us at the national, regional and continental levels and ask for good governance, democratization and rule of law, and be part of the leaders of today.

The USAU Youth: Thank you Mr. Takwa, it was my pleasure listening to you all this while, and I believe many young Africans will be inspired by you.

Mr. Zebulun Takwa: Thank you and may God bless you.

*"If
you
lose
hope,
you
lose
Everything."*

*Bari Fanso
African Union Youth Volunteer (AU-YV)
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU*

ANNOUNCEMENT

The USAU Youth is seeking articles for our upcoming issues, on youth leadership initiatives in any domain - business and entrepreneurship, health, education, migration, gender issues or cultural malpractices - from young people and organizations that are connected or work in these sectors. The deadline for sending in articles is **Friday June 22, 2012**. Articles must not go beyond **500 words**. Kindly send your articles to USAUYouth@state.gov. We hope to hear from you soon.

THE VOICE OF VOLUNTEERS - MPHATSO JACQUELINE PRICE

Hello, I am Mphatso Jacqueline Price, a youth volunteer at the Department of Social Affairs of the African Union Commission. I work on the Campaign against Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) project as a Data Manager. If you all remember, I wrote about my job in the February edition of the newsletter.



Mphatso Jacqueline Price

ADDIS ABABA, what can I say? The town famous for its beautiful ladies, night life, and rather huge diplomatic community. As I'm told apart from Washington, D.C., it's the only capital that has representatives in embassies, consulates, and missions from around the world.

I recall the day I received a letter informing me I had been deployed to Addis for my 'volunteership' with the African Union. The thought of being in a big city and working in a big organization like the AU made me ecstatic. As my time to leave drew nearer, I started panicking, I didn't know anyone in Addis and had no family there – what would it be like? Finally, the day came and I left the comfort of my home country Malawi to journey to Addis. It was very different from what I had imagined, and the language was, and still is, a problem for me. Amharic is unlike the Bantu languages that I am accustomed. The culture is something else. I have never seen a people so cultured and in touch with their roots. Maybe it's also because Ethiopia has for the most part, remained shielded from outside

influences.

People ask questions like, *"Why be a volunteer? You don't get paid."* **Volunteerism, in my opinion, is a calling.** Everyone is not cut out to leave home and volunteer in a different country; it's not as easy as it seems. The cultural differences, different food, different environment ... it's just a very new and weird experience. As a matter of fact, I used to be one of those people who would ask "why volunteer?" However, I learned that **it's all about gaining experience and most importantly giving without expecting anything in return. You share your ideas and give your knowledge for the sole purpose of making a difference where you are and this is driven by your desire to make things better or rather to build a better AFRICA.**

There is also the good side of volunteering. For instance, **Addis opened many doors for me. I'm able to sit in a room with Directors and Commissioners at the African Union and recommend an idea, and they seriously consider it.** That is something that would never have happened if I was not a volunteer. Again, **when you volunteer you're never alone and you never feel lonely or homesick.** When I was coming here I thought I would spend my days crying but I found another family waiting for me – complete with a mother and with lots of brothers and sisters in the AU-YVC team. Everyone in the team showed me nothing but emotional and social support. I thought I could only find that in my family, making my experience a great one. **I have grown professionally, spiritually, and mentally as a person during my volunteership.**

Lastly, let me inspire you to join this wonderful calling with the words of Blessed Pope John Paul II. *"Volunteer workers have a specific role to play: they make a valuable contribution to the service of life when they combine professional ability and generous, selfless love. The Gospel of life inspires them to lift their feelings of good will towards others to the heights of Christ's charity; to renew every day, amid hard work and weariness, their awareness of the dignity of every person; to search out people's needs and, when necessary, to set out on new paths where needs are greater but care and support weaker."*

With these words, I'll say Amaseginalo, Merci Beaucoup, Zikomo Kwambir, Thank you very much ... until next time!

***"Volunteerism
in my
opinion is
a calling ...
it's all
about
gaining
experience
and most
importantly
giving
without
expecting
anything
in return."***

*Mphatso Jacqueline Price
Data Manager - African Union Commission
African Union Youth Volunteer*

U.S. MISSION TO THE AFRICAN UNION

The USAU Youth is a platform for African youth around the world and the views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the United States Government.

We're on the web:
www.usau.usmission.gov

**FREE
ONLINE
SUBSCRIPTION**



The USAU Youth thanks all the readers who sent in articles for this month's edition. Please keep sending in the articles, announcements, and information on any subject matter you would like to see in subsequent editions of the newsletter to USAUyouth@state.gov. Kindly share with us activities and pictures of what you or your country is doing in relation to youth empowerment in Africa. Thank you.

NOTIFICATION:

KINDLY TAKE THE TIME TO FILL OUT ALL THE REQUIREMENTS UPON SUBSCRIPTION. WE WILL BE UNABLE TO SEND YOU A COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER IF YOUR DATA IS INCOMPLETE.

CONTACT

TEL: +251 - 11 - 130 - 6794

Email: USAUyouth@state.gov

Facebook (page name): U.S. Mission to the African Union

Website: www.usau.usmission.gov

DETAILS OF EDITORS

Editor-in-Chief:

Bari Fanso

Translations:

Annick Laure Tchuendem

Chimene Astrid Agossou

Bari Fanso

Contributors:

Peace Corps Volunteers

African Union Youth Volunteers

African youth around the world

Members of youth organizations

based in Africa

Design/Layout

Bari Fanso

USAU Youth Liaison to the AUC

Chief Editorial Advisor:

Jasmine White

*Political and Public Diplomacy Officer
(USAU)*

Editorial Advisors:

Mark Lovejoy / Laura Holbrook

*Community Liaison Office
(US Embassy)*

Orlando Bama

*Senior Communication Officer
(AU Commission)*

Web Master

Lina Mohammed

Public Diplomacy Assistant (USAU)