

THE USAU YOUTH



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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. This bad situation becomes worse when you think about the great pressure being placed on the environment. The question that one may ask is: **should Burundian youth be forced to inherit these problems?** NEMISA, the New Millennium Students Association, attempts to respond to this challenging question through means of environmental protection; encouraging youth to participate in reconstructing Burundi while giving particular attention to the environment.

It is well known that the global climate is slowly changing. In Burundi, there is a high reliance on rain-fed agriculture which increases the sensitivity of agriculture in the region to the effects of climate change. Consequently, this has led to widespread food insecurity, driven by a deficit of water resources, crop diseases, and the impacts of water pollution in lakes.

Those most affected are the youth who are often unable to make a successful transition from school to work and often have to face the bitter pangs of food shortage. Identifying an urgent need for capacity building and the development

of skills among the youth, the New Millennium Students Association (NEMISA) has decided to resolve the problem by working closely with the African Union in its work to empower the youth through sustainable development.

With activities centered on water, hygiene, and sanitation issues, NEMISA's first priority has been to organize sensitization programs in secondary schools on water management. During these programs, students do environmental sketches and carry out debates on climate change and its impacts in Burundi. The objective of this is to ensure that the younger generation starts practicing environmentally friendly ways of living.

NEMISA also organizes community work with local

people from rural areas. For instance, clean up campaigns that consists of collecting rubbish along Lake Tanganyika. In provinces where people destroy public taps that have been provided for them by water organizations, NEMISA members carry out public awareness campaigns on the up keep of public taps

with the motto **"You can't destroy our tap."**

What makes NEMISA unique is that it provides technical and professional training programs for Burundian youth. As a matter of fact, the association benefited from a six month training provided by an expert in communi-

cations from a German company working in Burundi, allowing for the direct training of trainers. From now on, Burundian youth will be able to create a platform where young people can share their knowledge and experience in dealing with climate change.

My message to the African youth is simple and clear: **development and environmental protection begins at home, start acting now.** I therefore invite African youth wherever they may be on the continent, to contribute and participate in this development process for we can achieve extraordinary results if our aspiration and motivation are strong enough.

Richard DUBASE
Member

New Millennium Students Association



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

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 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 centered on *"Getting to Zero by 2015 – Zero AIDS Related Deaths, Zero New Infections and Zero Discrimination."* This goal will remain unattainable and millions of people will die unnecessarily unless Governments and policy makers do the right thing, and begin living up to the financial pledges they have made. The year 2011 saw the unprecedented progress in science, political leadership, and quantifiable results in response to the AIDS crisis; however, that progress now seems to be overshadowed by the major financial crises that have arisen.

The UNAIDS Global AIDS Report has demonstrated that treatment scale-up is beginning to deliver results, both in averting an estimated 2.5 million AIDS-related deaths since 1995 and in halting new infections since 1997.

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."* Her comments came 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 ten billion dollar shortfall. While transitional financing is expected to provide for the continuation of current services, this decision has postponed the possibility of new funding until 2014.

"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," Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance Executive Director Peter Prove said. *"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."* But rather than

building on the new evidence that AIDS treatment saves lives and prevents new infections, while also scaling up treatment programs to end this epidemic, many donor governments are now seemingly turning their backs on millions of the world's poorest and most marginalized people.

The International Treatment Preparedness Coalition says funding for HIV had already begun to flat line at the end of the last decade. Last year the Global Fund failed to raise the minimum \$13 billion needed to main-

tain 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 some misuse of funds by recipients in a small number of countries. This reduced funding capacity indicates a worrying slow-down in international com-

mitment to the global AIDS response. In fact, several donors have since reneged on their pledges or delayed in converting their pledges to cash.

The AIDS epidemic is therefore far from being over, but with a sustained commitment to comprehensive treatment, prevention and care services, **it is still possible in our lifetime to create an AIDS Free Generation.** We young people are therefore calling on our world leaders to *live up to their promises and find the funds so that "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



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

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 that it shall invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building 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 story is an inspiring one worth sharing. I know you will tell me this is the story of a child and not a youth but there's an African proverb that says *'A child that washes his hands well, will eat and dine with elders.'* I believe that at this moment, the young lady we talk about should be 16 years old - a youth already. Allow me to introduce to you the first female youth hero to be featured in our newsletter,



Thoko Kambalame - Our young hero

Thoko Kambalame.

In her early years, Thoko had 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 infected people in Africa. Day after day, she'd play alone at home listening to the sounds of laughter from her peers in the neighborhood whom she could not join because they gossiped about her situation and were scared she would infect them.

After receiving support from her family members and the Family Planning Association in Malawi (FPAM), Thoko gradually overcame most of the fears about her status, and is now a member of the **FPAM Nzotheka Club** – an association for young people living with HIV. Nzotheka in the Malawian language means *it's possible* and Thoko's membership in the club brought out the fighter in her, proving that **it's 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 has become 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 are facing a lot of challenges ranging from stigma to poverty, and that some of them are failing to complete their studies because they lack material support, while others are now heading households after losing parents to AIDS.

Thoko has grown up in a world changed by AIDS where many still lack the comprehensive and often correct knowledge about the pandemic; but this 14 year old chose to take on the responsibility of working to halt the spread of this virus, and that has changed her life and the life of many others in an irreversible way. 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	
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APRIL PUZZLE

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

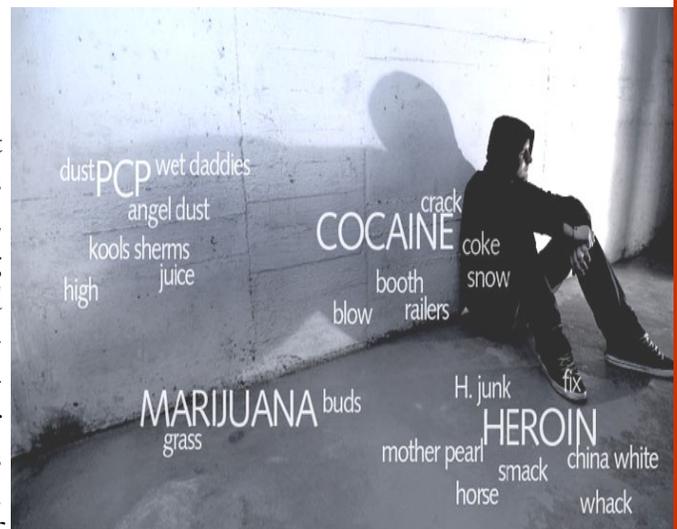
DID YOU KNOW? ... LET'S DISCUSS ON FACEBOOK (Youth and Drugs)

Impacts of Drug Abuse

The inability to work beyond what is demanded, to make decisions, permanent nonchalance, and the inability to plan, difficulty to breathe (cough, chronic bronchitis), tiredness, dehydration (thirst), the 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, the weakening of consciousness, educational failure, drug intoxication, memory disorders, difficulties in concentration, acts of violence, change in the perception of time and distances - are only some of the characteristics which are observed in those who abuse drugs.

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 most young people and this is a real threat to the stability of a continent already plagued by many other vices. Today, the problem of drug abuse among youth has taken a greater importance and the attention to it increases in various socio-cultural and economic layers. Although, there is no precise figure available to measure the real extent of the problem in many African countries, it is suggested that the problem has spread among various age groups, most commonly among youth aged 16 to 25 years. Let's talk on Facebook.



Youth and Drugs
Photo provided by WWW.PRESBYTARIAN.CA

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

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!

1																				
2							3													
				5												4				
							6													

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 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 and Development Unit, Department of Peace and Security - AUC

the University of Yaoundé where I specialised in history of international relations up to the Masters (Maîtrise) level. I later enrolled into the Doctorate and due to circumstances, which 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 though I had, *"You mentioned something very interesting, can you put it down in writing?"* Interestingly, we were discussing the visit of Ahmed Salim Ahmed, the then Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) to Cameroon. I wrote an interesting article, outlining some of the things that 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 and I soon enhanced my writing skills in media communication as a features writer, working on 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?"* and I said *"No, I wanted do something out of the ordinary."* It was an article I conceived from an elections observation report. It was this article 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 to work at WANEP where I had the chance to travel extensively in West Africa, Europe, and North America. I visited almost all the countries in West Africa especially the ECOWAS Member states.

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. I was raised in Cameroon where we heard of so many people but there was a man named **Dr. Nsokika Bernard Fonlon**. He was one of the first Cameroonians to have the Ph.D. He had written a lot and the way he wrote made his message come in a very unique way. He inspired me a lot. But what inspired me most in his life and made him my role model was his **simplicity and humility**. He was a Minister in Yaoundé and we all know the luxury ministers lived in. When I saw Fonlon's personal house, I couldn't believe it was the house of a minister. His private car was a *voix wagen* (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 realised that it was **service**. Back then, it was unfortunate that I was growing up in an age where the youth were, as you'll find out in most other countries, disgruntled with the system because 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 own background, and I didn't come from a rich family. My parents could not read and 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 realised in the peacebuilding world that those values are really very necessary if you are to be a peace worker. And I recognised these same values in some of **my colleagues** at WANEP. I found colleagues that groomed me in the spirit of **service, transparency and selflessness**. I have never met or thought of anything like that until I saw their selflessness manifested even in the man, Rev. Kenne, who linked me to WANEP. I found in them something good and different. When they told me that they were students of the Eastern Minnesota University of Virginia in the United States, I kept thinking there must be something special in that school or in the people who went there. I

A WORD TO THE WISE - MR. TAKWA ZEBULON

tried very hard to draw these values from them and those values 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.”* And 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 as part of my work here in the AU. I had the opportunity of getting into the peacebuilding world in a peculiar way. **But how many other African youth out there have the 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, 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 can 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 that, this is not happening.

Whenever there is recruitment, there is this famous requirement, **‘two to five years’ experience, working in an international organisation.** 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 from the time of the economic crisis and the structural adjustment programs that put an embargo on white collar jobs, and downsize the civil service. 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 grew up as victims in a world where they are rejected.** I have often wondered **why Africa cannot indulge on 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 because for me, even if we’re not going to fully employ these youth, we would have at least given them the opportunity to help themselves, and fulfil the two-three years’ experience of work in an international organisation, that is all traded around.

I’m firmly in support of the African Union Youth Volunteers Corps that has been launched by the AU Commission but want to say that the support so far is 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 the 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 by this fact, the Ministry of Youth Affairs in most of our countries is always the building that every other ministry has rejected; the budget for youth is always the lowest. This reflects the esteem we have for the youth and our commitment to youth issues. May be this is done unconsciously but that is what is on the ground. Is there any investment that we have seen Africa put in place to absorb thousands of youths at a go? None. **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 in this domain?

Mr. Zebulon Takwa: We all know that youth have been involved in conflict; some people say youth have been abusively used in perpetuating and waging conflict, especially in electoral violence and civil wars as thugs and foot soldiers. Of course, idle minds and perpetual unemployment have made these youths vulnerable to the manipulation of irresponsible politicians and war mongers. **If we can use these youth for destruction we can just as much also use them positively for**

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

reconstruction. We can turn the tides and use these very youth 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 that we all should also come up with creative programs to remunerate and reward the youth who were law-abiding and renounced war, those who were so patriotic, and carried the peace flag. We need to place them and the forefront of post-conflict peace building so that when we are dealing with the child soldiers who have made errors, they will also be learning from those who were good. I appeal on development partners to focus on this other side of the coin.

The USAU Youth: You earlier mentioned you come from a poor family and there are many young Africans who are growing up in a similar background like yours; have you a word for them?

Mr. Zebulon 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 the fact that Africa is 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. So 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 in which they talked of a change of fortunes. The article revealed that Europe, particularly Portugal, are all coming down to Africa as a new economic horizon, and Angola and Mozambique are the centres of attraction. The Chinese had known this, and they are all around. Where we see poverty, the Chinese seem to see riches.

We hear from the economists themselves that Africa is the next destination as the fastest growing economies are all 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 instil some hope in the youth to put an end to that the youth exodus to others parts of the world, with appalling stories of migrants crossing the Sahara and the Mediterranean 'by all means' to go to Europe. Our leaders should strategize and canalise efforts and resources within the continent to be able to create a space that will allow for youth imagination and creativity, and support packages that that will really accompany the youth initiatives and cause them to look once again and say, what is it we can do for our beloved continent Africa?

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, the Sudans; the North African spring has come and gone and Africa is planning on how to effectively rebuild. So, it is the youth who should take this leadership role in the reconstruction. In my opinion, it is not through violence that we will resolve Africa's problems. The youth can take up their pens and our voices, and be on our feet using the available instruments that have provided for us at national, regional and continental levels and ask for good governance, democratization and rule of law, and be part of the leaders of today (not just leaders of tomorrow that is long overdue in most cases).

The USAU Youth: Thank you Mr. Takwa it was my pleasure listening to you all this while, and I believe many young Africans will agree with me, and be inspired by you; and why not look up to you as a role model from now on.

Mr. Zebulon Takwa: Thank you and God bless you.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

The USAU Youth is seeking articles for our next issues, on Youth leadership initiatives in any domain especially in 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 **Monday June 11, 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'm 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 that 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, 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 such a difficult language unlike the Bantu languages that am used to in Southern Africa. 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

past, 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 and not everyone is 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 have 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 has 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 would 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 have shown me nothing but emotional and social support which I thought I could only find in my family; and this support and care is what makes 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 ... and till next time!

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

U.S. MISSION TO THE AFRICAN UNION

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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:

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