‘Continental Volunteerism Linkages Platform’ workshop

WESSA’s Mike Denison attended the African Union Continental Linkages Platform workshop in Gaborone, Botswana in September 2018. Government youth departments from several AU member states and civil society organisations met for three days to workshop two key concepts, namely the development of an appropriate platform to streamline and drive volunteerism into the next generation as a continental priority for youth development, and secondly to consider a continental policy to guide and strengthen volunteerism across the continent.

An enlightening keynote was delivered by the Head of the Youth Division, AUC, Ms Prudence Ngwenya after the opening remarks by Mr Kago Ramokate, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth Sport & Culture of Botswana.

The workshop encouraged the various country experts to share their developments and best practice. Technology, database management, information sharing and monitoring and evaluation tools were discussed and a basic framework for a digital platform for the AU Youth Division to consider developing further was tabled. On policy, breakaway groups deliberated on technical support that is required and the development of draft terms of reference for the development of a policy framework.

Southern African Alumni Network Workshop

Report by Nolitha January – Chair SAAN

The Southern African Alumni Network (SAAN) Core Team Members held their first strategic planning workshop in Cintsa from the 21st-23rd of September, a meeting that resulted in a strategic plan of action. The workshop was a build up from the launch of the network held earlier this year in Johannesburg.

The team spent time planning and setting concrete steps to move the network forward. They agreed that the first step was to tap into already existing partnerships in the exchange landscape and work with those to impact and improve the lives of those who participate in youth exchange. Most importantly to focus on methodologies of exchange that will align with impacting participants communities, and particularly upon their return.

The team spent time redefining their vision, mission, goals and setting a network structure that takes into account the growth of the network into other regions of Southern Africa; concretizing the networks Change projects and Capacity building of the core team for more effective network growth.

Activities included reflecting on this year’s milestones through to goal-setting for future projects and setting up short, mid and long-term goals. They looked into current resources and planned around using what they have to begin to impact their communities and implement their short term goals moving forward.

What stands out, is the need to sensitize communities about youth exchange and the concept of global learning, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

This team can safely say that it was a fruitful meeting.

Click below for Pan-African delegation of volunteer experts in Gaborone with dignitaries from the AU & Botswana

INdSIDE

Journey of an African Union Volunteer – Peer Leader International – SDGs – Links to resources and reports

Content contributions – email youth@wessa.co.za before the 22nd of the month for any content you wish to be considered for the News-bite
The JOURNEY of an African Union VOLUNTEER

Walusungu Ngulube
From Malawi
Placement: AU Youth Volunteer Corps
WESSA AGYI Project Office, South Africa
September 2017 – September 2018

Life is a journey and along the way we meet circumstances that continually shape who we become. One person rightly said that we are the sum total of the people we have met, books we have read and the places we have been to; if this is true then the aim of the African Union Volunteer Corps program was not just to upskill me professionally but to transform me into a young leader with a mind-set to impact my world.

You see there is something that happens within when you leave your Comfort Zone; Home, Family, Country and enter new territories. Before exchange I was proud of the fact that I had established an NGO and we were impacting the Nation; but exchange challenged me. I met young people my age who were not just impacting their nations but the world; I attended and coordinated high level forums and workshops that exposed me to international policies and processes on a whole new level. I have come out on the other end believing that there is a role I have to play in this world; what I have seen and experienced will not allow me to sleep at night and live an ordinary life no matter the challenges because it is tangible and the evidence within me can never be eroded.

No matter how much you try to explain your experience in words; people will only see the results. That is why for me exchange is not a luxury but a necessity; I encourage more young people to apply and apply for such opportunities. One of my favourite quotes says ‘an army of sheep led by a lion will defeat an army of lions led by a sheep’, that perfectly sums up the impact of exchange for me; it gave me the mind-set of a leader.

I was over the moon when I got my contract to serve on the African-German Youth Initiative, under WESSA in South Africa. I have been to some parts of South Africa before and I thought I knew what to expect. My young heart was ready to spend weekends at the mall, cinemas, feasting and dining.

But when I arrived at my destination in Chintsa Village; I had the shock of my life! There was no mall, I looked around wondering how I was going to survive. Chintsa is a little village by the ocean; I like to call it a piece of heaven on Earth because here is where I learnt to hear the sound of my own voice and spend time with myself. I enjoyed reading books and taking long walks by the beach.

The highlight of my journey was my Job; where I was constantly challenged and given opportunities. Before great women like Oprah, Sonia Gandi, Wangari Maathai, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the impact they are today, they started from somewhere and with someone offering them opportunities. That is why am personally grateful for my boss who continually provided platforms and opportunities for me to be exposed, challenged, trained and moulded for my future roles.

It has been a beautiful journey and as I come to the end of my service I realise how difficult it will be for me to part with my work and my little village. However, I am grateful for this amazing opportunity and I stand in awe of the person I have become.

And most importantly, THANK YOU Walu

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Peer-Leader-International (PLI) has for 10 years been a youth-initiative empowering youth around the world - Brazil, Germany, South Africa, Ukraine, Bosnia, Tunisia, Israel, Egypt, Malawi and Uganda - to develop concepts and exchange on realities and possibilities. They deliberate on diversity, power, the rainbow of cultures and the challenges of poverty, unfair conditions and corruption etc. With PLI youth start a battle against a bad future through being trained to identify problems and see solutions.

PLI trains youth, holds seminars and supports youth to create active groups where they discover solutions for national problems and work on them at a local level. This includes contacting politicians, bigger NGOs, taking excursions into realities like ghettos, destroyed rain forests, refugee hot spots. Considerations are against the SDGs where they check their values and mobilise politically. The participants do NOT follow a program but create a program out of what they do. The platform PLI offers is a forum to enable local work and enable national trainees to run international projects through taking the “LEAD!” which is an AGYI sponsored action and volunteers exchange worldwide.

The courageous 2018 “youth in politics” looks to qualify young changemakers in school institutions. Schools do not offer “activism”, where you can learn and make mistakes or create successes, and at the last plenary of LEAD! it was decided to create a “Y-School” - a YOUNG school for and with young people, strictly democratic, offering various fields of participation, of interdisciplinary work and creativity. In autumn this year, LEAD! met to strategize on how to take this type of school into their countries and build up a Y-School-network. This action is supported by Greenpeace Germany and others.

Encouraged by good feedback PLI also aims to create the CLIMATEcycle-tour around the world, stopping each day in a new school or youth group, reading a drama, showing climate stories, playing music and nudging others to go to the next school themselves to take action and generate impulses for climate protection at a viral level. Using social media, ideas will be collected and ideally presented to the International UN-Climate-Conference: the voice of young people against climate change.

PLI is empowering ambassadors for peer-education in schools as a mechanism to bring about new learning approaches and improve the motivation of youth to learn.

Other areas of PLI work and impact includes sustainable menstruation care and gender equality. PLI wants to enable women and girls to have continuous access to education and a life without worries about their period. Actions would include the provision of menstrual cups for women in the townships of Blantyre (Malawi), Kampala (Uganda) and Golden Youth Club Winterveld (South Africa). This work would first be shared through the local networks and then scaled to an international awareness campaign about gender equality and sustainable menstruation care. The approach is driven through partner cooperation.

PLI feels it is important to not reinforce a north south "knowledge and merchandise one-way." The approach and activities therefore promote a youth driven agenda to address, through partnerships, cooperation and exchange, a journey of exploration, conceptualisation and action to address local, regional and international issues.

Text and photo provided by Nomia J. Mahlangu, Golden Youth Club
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As the largest public participation process in the history of humanity, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) provide a road-map to future sustainability. They integrate development and sustainability to provide an excellent platform, and mobilising process, to rethink and reconstruct the way we live and work on the Earth. Through such processes, we can work towards minimizing the erosion of our life support systems and risks to ecological & social infrastructure.

Click left for a detailed transcript of the Thematic Forum. Pp 20 – 21 provide a “Concept to Practice” table that we encourage you to view and consider as it summarises the take-aways from the forum and provides concrete actions for all of us to take on board to bring the SDGs and Global Learning more effectively into our work. Thank you Jamil Khan for capturing.

For those who have not seen the Good Practice, Responsible Exchange & Volunteering Guideline for Practitioners, you can click here to access for download.

The guideline provides practitioners with a useful reference tool to improve the operational quality of hosting and sending volunteers and practicing in the exchange sector.

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