



AGYI

Looks Forward

in light of the Coronavirus

Taking a lead from the pro-active and dynamic response of the **AFRICAN UNION** to the Coronavirus pandemic, the AGYI network of organisations and alumni has stepped-up to show its resilience in remaining current and as a community committed to a better world.

This past month has been extra-ordinarily busy and required re-thinking priorities, revising operational plans, and building capacity in new and often uncharted waters.

Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 “An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by people, especially its women and youth and caring for children”.

- **The Southern African Alumni Network [SAAN]** has mobilised to build internal capacity and support alumni through the COVID 19 period

- **The UNICEF, with the AU** have mobilised an online community, in which the AGYI has been participating, to look at response to COVID 19 within the youth and volunteering sector

- Recipients to the **AGYI Innovation Fund** have reconfigured their projects to adapt to the implementation criteria brought upon all of us in the light of the Coronavirus

- **The GIZ** has created an opportunity within the framework of the AGYI for implementing organisations to propose youth led COVID 19 response plans for implementation

As we look forward to the relaxing of the lockdown restrictions, while at the same time seeing a likely increase in positive patients, the AGYI would like to take this opportunity to thank this network of individuals and organisations for its immediate, innovative and committed response to work together and bring value to this global challenge.

INSIDE this edition – Looking forward – Working in a COVID environment – Meet our AUYVC volunteer – Alumni Voice – SAAN in the digital space - Skills in exchange, learning journeys and e-learning – Innovation Fund update

Volunteer Mobilization for COVID Response WORKSHOP

Volunteer Engagement Design Workshop



In anticipation of alumni and AGYI network organisations becoming increasingly active on the COVID frontline, the AGYI participated in the 3-day Virtual COVID Volunteer Workshop organised by UNICEF on the video conferencing platform ZOOM. The workshop looked for practical solutions on how volunteers could collaborate and design tactics in response to the pandemic under the following thematic areas:

- Translating continental strategies for volunteer mobilization into the local context and creating continental guidance on volunteering for governments and civil society partners
- How volunteers can have a vital role in overcoming fake news and misinformation about COVID-19 at local community levels
- How to equip volunteers with the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 and build their capacity while our own understanding of the virus and best practices are changing rapidly
- How to mobilise volunteers to promote handwashing, physical distancing, and other preventative measures that encourage necessary behavioural change
- How to mobilize volunteers to alleviate the secondary impacts of the pandemic such as unemployment and mental health issues

Participants from the AU, VSO, UNV, UNICEF, Generation Unlimited, and the International Red Cross Society amongst others, shared insights and collectively designed volunteer activities, tested concepts, generated prototypes and planned next steps to move volunteers' actions forward.

The AGYI will continue to share their learnings with organisations and individuals who are engaging on the COVID frontline through one to one interactions and through work with SAAN and the use of learning webinars.



Join the Southern African Alumni NETWORK

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E-LEARNING

Optimising e-learning for youth on exchange is one strong mechanism whereby participants can self-drive their learning and skills development while on an exchange. This goes a long way to responding to the AGYI African call for “hard” skills development to be more strongly situated in programmes.

While many people have begun the movement to online presence, whether it is for work or school, we have all begun to engage on virtual platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Webex. While the space of online learning has always been present, it is proving to be a more and more essential resource and the AGYI believes it can be structured and incorporated into the **skills in exchange & learning journeys framework.**

The AU Education Division invited African youth to engage about opportunities to learn online and explore how youth can educate themselves while at home (or on an exchange).

[Snapplify](#), has worked with schools in South Africa to provide core textbooks and past exam papers online for pupils.

[Mavis Computel](#), presented his company’s talking book which aims to help children who do not have access to the internet and digital platform. The book uses an encoded book and a pen that sounds out the content of pages in the student’s native tongue.

[Nouvelles Editions Numériques Africaines](#) raised the point that Africa has an education crisis that is being further negatively affected by the COVID pandemic.

[HP’s Be Online](#) was proposed as a resource as it is a platform with 3 pillars – (1) Technology & IT advice, (2) Comprehensive learner management systems & virtual classrooms and, (3) remote learning consultancy & advice. All these resources are available to download to use offline.

INNOVATION FUND update –

awards for revised projects have been made and alumni and organisations are starting to implement. COVID brought a lot of frustrations and delays into the process but AGYI is hoping these have been resolved. AGYI’s Moipone Kgatle is available to support implementers and can be contacted on Moipone.kgatle@wessa.co.za Good luck as you deliver on your innovations.



ALUMNI APP - SAAN has been awarded the Innovation Fund to begin work on the Alumni Application. The concept of the app was developed last October at the Alumni Continental Summit. The network will begin workshops on the structure and content of the app in the coming month.

SAAN WEBINAR SERIES

SOUTHERN AFRICAN ALUMNI NETWORK continues to position itself as a meaningful and impactful roleplayer in the exchange and volunteering sector. Through a strategic decision to bring value to more alumni, the network has developed and is delivering a webinar series.

A survey of alumni was undertaken, and the results have guided SAAN in their thematic planning and delivery of the online process. The first webinar focused on offering mental and emotional support to the members of the network. Participants shared stories on their experience in light of the COVID crisis and also shared advice on how to manage under the conditions.

This was followed up by a Skills and Knowledge Exchange that saw members and partner networks joining. The webinar had presentations from Lonwabo Damane, Kefiloe Mokoena and Bliss Sibiyi discussing how to start and sustain an NPO/business, youth skills development and active citizenship.

The board transcends geographical challenges, with leading members spread around South Africa, Germany and Africa, through the utilisation of multiple digital platforms to meet, plan and implement, not just the webinars, but their ambitious roadmap which was developed early in the life of the AGYI.



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Voice ^{alumni}

Ayanda Siboto

entrepreneur, connector & communicator

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Living in Cape Town, I have been working remotely from mid last year, so the transition to working from home full time because of Covid-19 was not too hard for me to get into. However, as a self-employed person, this halt in much of our economic activities has me very nervous and you could say I kicked into crisis management mode, not just about how I can survive it, but how I can make sure that we come out the other side in a better place.

BIO - - - Chief Networking Officer of the Zimele Beauty Network - 10 years formally working in Media & Marketing - actively engaged in volunteering as well as capacity & skills development - connect and support beauty entrepreneurs by providing resources and the necessary information to help formalise, structure and scale their businesses - facilitates entrepreneurial workshops, and consults as early stage business coach - content creation for entrepreneur development programmes, advising on inclusive digital literacy, township economy and strategic stakeholder relations in this landscape

EXCHANGE - - - 2006 with Youth for Understanding, and I attended a year of High School in Germany and lived with a Host Family. I later did an internship at our Youth for Understanding Austria offices in 2007

IMPACT - - - *"My exchange year helped me find myself and the career path that I ended up choosing to pursue. It was realising how little people knew, and also how misrepresented we were as a country, when I realised the power of Media and Communications. You can't expect people to know what you don't tell them. So essentially, that year I was teaching many people I came across many things about not just me as a person, but my culture and my heritage. And so thereafter, I knew I had the skills to go into Public Relations and definitely continue to influence and educate people through sharing information and knowledge. That is still exactly what I do, except in the entrepreneurship space more specifically now."*

"I told everybody to leave the country, lol. The experiences allowed me at different life phases (I was 15 when I went on Exchange, and 26 when I went on internship) the opportunity to truly define/refine who I am, by my values and not just my

environment and who surrounded me. I had such an affirmed sense of Identity, and that is something that I wanted to guide others in figuring out for themselves. I've volunteered as a Teamer for YFU South Africa since 2009, helping other exchange students coming into South Africa by organising workshops and Orientations, as well as for those who were going to Germany. Similarly, this is why I went into business coaching, helping early stage entrepreneurs find their feet and direction in their journey, because I know from experience what a game-changing phase that can be especially when you have support."

ADVICE - - - *There is so much power and value to be unlocked in Community. The one thing that has been a dominant and powerful effect in my journey, is that I've had the privilege of being immersed in community and many different cultures, experientially and professionally. No one is an expert on how to navigate Covid19, but it poses an opportunity for us as a community to figure out together how to support each other through this drastic & accelerated life transition.*

As much as we need and love family and friends, we also need a community of people that get your aspirations, that get your struggles and your doubts, that can serve as your sounding board, business advisors, event plugs, those that continue to hold your hand, as you're holding theirs. A Community is a give and take, it's a space where you are filled and where you fill a gap in someone else's journey. Even though we are all advised to stay at social distance from each other physically, but make sure you remain connected to your community.



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The African Union Youth Volunteer Corps [AUYVC]

WESSA would like to welcome the AUYVC's Mona Moustafa to our AGYI team. Mona is part of the 2020 "virtual" volunteers where she joins us from Egypt as a Project Support Officer.

Some of Mona's key areas on focus to the AGYI include co-developing the "Skills in Exchange and Learning Journeys" framework and supporting WESSA in their work with SAAN.



Tell us about yourself, where did you study, what did you study and why?

Being awarded a prestigious scholarship recognizing the next generation of young female Egyptian leaders, I earned a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Akron in the U.S. I also have a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Mansoura University in Egypt.

Before joining WESSA, where did you work and what did you do?

I have diverse work experience in both the non-profit and corporate sectors. The most recent one is with the International Institute of Akron; a local American NGO that provides services to immigrants and refugees in Northeast Ohio. The focus of my role was in a development project context, planning and implementing social and economic development projects.

What makes you a true environmental champion? How do you actively #CareForTheEarth?

I do my best to be environmentally conscious and follow eco-friendly practices such as reducing the waste of food, water, and electricity and reusing items.

Most importantly, I take action to educate myself about different environmental issues. I had the opportunity to participate in a youth- exchange program between Egypt and Germany to connect with other young people to raise awareness. It was a great experience in which I had the chance to acquire knowledge and experiences about environmental issues such as climate change and sustainability

What do you do in your spare time and on weekends?

I love volunteering, reading, traveling, learning new skills, and spending time with my family

What are your aspirations for your new role in the AGYI?

Africa is the world's 'youngest' continent. and its young people are the key to its social and economic transformation. Until now, the majority don't have access to high-quality skills-based training or sustainable employment opportunities. I am aspiring to empower young people by building their capacity, enabling them to get access to equal opportunities, and helping them on promoting their innovative ideas. I hope with my role with AGYI to contribute to their skills development, advocate for their participation and engagement, amplify their voices, and connect them to resources and opportunities. I hope to be acting towards a more sustainable future through the promotion and implementation of sustainable frameworks (SDGs) in which youth empowerment is a major component.

SKILLS in EXCHANGE & LEARNING JOURNEYS

A working group has been convened to develop the "Skills in Exchange and Learning Journeys" concept which will enhance benefit back to youth on exchange/volunteer programs. The framework will facilitate (1) personal growth and development opportunities and, (2) formal learning journeys in line with personal and professional aspirations.

The working group is exploring the on-line/e-learning opportunities as well as looking at digital platforms that can host the framework.

The working group is liaising with the ALUMNI TOOLKIT continental development team to align their work with the toolkit where appropriate and therefore enhance both initiatives.

ALUMNI TOOLKIT – A toolbox comprising

of different tools tailored to various engagement streams. The network is working with the African Union Commission and other exchange alumni from across the African continent to build a practical tool for supporting alumni of engagement programmes in the areas of leadership, exchange and volunteering. The editorial team is currently in the process of compiling the chapters of the first draft.

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Developed as part of the African German Youth Initiative

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