Welcome to the 1st Edition of Your Voice Matters Updates. This update captures students’ activities in Your Voice Matters project between January and June 2019. From January to May 2019, students in Your Voice Matters Project engaged in a wide range of activities. These included strengthening existing Social Justice clubs within the universities, participation in forums both at the local, national and regional levels. Additionally, a section of the universities engaged on issues of gender, corruption, disability in addition to organising intra university dialogues through the clubs. The students further participated in activities that directly link academia with issues happening in communities.

The universities in the YVM project are: University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kampala International University, Makerere University, University of Bagamoyo, Tangaza University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology.

Editorial Team
Leonida Odongo & Lewis Kundai
Social Justice Clubs
The members of Catholic University Social Justice club engaged in discussions on youth and good governance, mental health, the boy child and dowry payment and the push for Constitutional change in Kenya.

Youth and Governance
On good governance, the club discussed that youth engagement in governance helps promote positive outcomes among youth, enhances capacity on active citizenship such as understanding the decision making process, facilitates skills transfer on organising, planning, communication and strengthening Civil Society when youth become informed citizens.

Youth and Governance discussion
The key ingredients of good governance were discussed as transparency, accountability, good leadership, respect for human rights, rule of law, democracy and fair competition for public office.

Constitutional Change
There has been a push for constitutional change in Kenya by a section of parliamentarians. The CUEA Social Justice Club members deliberated on this, discussing the pros and cons of constitutional change concluded that the presidential system should be replaced with a parliamentary system. In addition, they stated that the government should be all inclusive so to ensure peace after every election, collapse of 47 counties (devolved system of governance) to form 14 larger units and review of sections of the Constitution which appear problematic.

Deliberations on Constitutional Change

Mental Health
The CUEA Your Voice Matters project members discussed mental health and the impacts which include death, depression, stigmatisation and low self-esteem.

**Discussion on mental health**

The students identified strategies for handling persons with mental health issues which included being trustworthy and not making assumptions about recovery of the person, being confidential, making inquiries to find out how people are, sharing out one’s problems no matter how small the problem seems to be and taking part in exercises and activities that help in stress level reduction.

**Dowry payment and the boy child**

CUEA students further discussed the topic of dowry payment and gave their perspectives as follows: dowry should not be considered as a business transaction, the payment of dowry should be considerate on what the groom is capable of paying, dowry should not be used to quantify the value of a person and that dowry should be a sign of appreciation of one’s partner.

**Makerere University students planting trees**

At Makerere University, students engaged in environmental education and tree planting in a rural community in Northern Uganda, in total the students planted 250 trees naming two trees Makerere University and Your Voice Matters respectively. The trees were given to the students by Uganda’s National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA). The students further engaged in the creation of awareness on the importance of sanitation in informal settlements in Kampala and sensitised young people on leadership. The students further distributed clothing and shoes to disadvantaged community members.

**Discussion on sexual and reproductive health**

**Distribution of shoes and clothes to disadvantaged groups**
The student community engagement enabled the students to learn more about issues affecting the community, it was also a good exposure for the students as well as the community to see what positive things students can do to address community challenges.

**Student Engagement – Kenyatta University**

YVM members at Kenyatta University volunteered to create awareness on dangers of substance abuse as part of the Anti-Drugs Week held at Kenyatta University. The students responded positively through both open discussions and panel discussions. 6000 participants were reached the entire week. The students also participated in girl empowerment activities through the Fuzu Dada Forum to create awareness on Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) number 5. 89 males and 42 females were incorporated into the Fuzu Dada program.

YVM members also took part in Brand Audit of Plastic Pollutants alongside 100 participants through sampling of companies that use plastics in packaging their products. The companies identified as main pollutants in Nairobi city included Bidco and Coca cola.

During the YVM club at Kenyatta University weekly meetings, the students discussed food security, climate change, youth governance, mental health and youth economic empowerment.

**YVM members discussing climate change and food security**

Other activities students from Kenyatta University engaged in included Stop Femicide Demonstration at Freedom Corner, Nairobi. This was in response to the high rate of women being killed by either their spouses of boyfriends and the cases being unresolved. YVM Club members at Kenyatta University took part in the demonstration in solidarity with bereaved families, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and activists demanding justice. The members further engaged in awareness creation on sexual and reproductive health, safe sex, and family planning on World Condoms Day. The awareness was in response to the rising rates of abortion, the sensitisation resulted into distribution of 950 boxes of condom around the campus.

**100% Renewable Energy for All Campaign**

---

1 Fuzu is a Swahili word meaning to excel
On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019, members of YVM from Kenyatta University and Technical University of Kenya (TUK) took part in the 360Kenya organisation’s campaign on renewable energy. The campaign was title “100% Renewable Energy for All”. The campaign was against the proposed Coal plant in Lamu and the potential negative impacts on the community including the fact that Lamu is one of UNESCOs designated heritage sites.

YVM members from Kenyatta University and Technical University of Kenya at the Anti-Coal campaign

The students distributed fliers to the public as a way of awareness creation on the negative effects of the coal plant. The students also tweeted and did a demonstration on the same.

YVM members during the Energy for All Campaign

Community Initiatives
Usawa<sup>2</sup> Festival was held at Dandora in Nairobi’s Eastlands area on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019, this event coincided with timing of the World Economic Forum(WEF) held in Davos, Switzerland. The aim was to show the contradictions in realities of the extreme rich and extreme poverty. Dandora is a low income neighborhood located 11kms from Nairobi’s city centre and is home to 141,885 people. Sadly, Dandora is also home to a large dumpsite covering 30 acres of land with the dumpsite being a source of income for many residents. According to Oxfam, 82 percent of wealth generated went to the richest 1 percent of the global population while 3.7 billion who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase in their wealth. It is against this backdrop that an Usawa Festival was organized in Dandora which featured art, music and speeches.

The campaign aimed at showing the glaring inequality between the rich and the poor.

---

<sup>2</sup> Usawa is a Swahili word meaning equality
YVM was represented by students from Kenyatta University at the Festival.

Kenya’s former Chief Justice, Dr. Willy Mutunga at the Usawa Festival

A YVM member with progressive artist - Juliani

Kenyatta University students at the Usawa Festival

Students’ Visit to Fahamu

Deliberating on issues ailing students
Students from Moi University, Technical University of Kenya (TUK) and Egerton, universities visited Fahamu to learn more about Your Voice Matters project including how students in the three universities can be part of the YVM Project. Issues discussed included; what ails students in different universities, how students can organise to speak out against injustices and how students can utilise their various skills to transform communities. The meeting came at time when there were high suicidal tendencies among youth in Kenya as homicides and femicides by university students and the general population.

Discussion on YVM initiative at Egerton University

It was agreed that mental health will form part and parcel of YVM social justice club discussions in every university and that volunteers working on mental health issues would be identified and requested to be part of the clubs’ meetings to help students address various issues affecting them. Speak, Mind and Love, a community based organisation formed by university students agreed to step in on this.

Kenya Solidarity with Venezuela

A forum was held at the Kenya National Theatre on 20th February 2019, entitled “The Venezuelan Coup and Anti-Imperialist Struggle” organised by the Kenya organising committee of the International League of Peoples’ Struggles and anti-imperialist coalition of people’s movements.
The forum had 60 people comprising of youth. Invited organisation included Venezuelan Embassy to Kenya, progressive organisations and a representative from the Russian Federation to Kenya. Your Voice Matters (YVM) project was represented by a student from Kenyatta University. The recent developments in Venezuela were shared including the racial dimension of the Venezuelan struggle in which indigenous people and Black population are being robbed of their land and subjected to slavery and oppression. The forum also discussed the plight and struggle of Palestinian people. Others included an art piece on life in Kenya’s urban slums and the greed of Kenyan politicians.

Panelists at the Venezuela Anti-Imperialist Struggle Forum

Participants at the “Venezuelan Coup and Anti-Imperialist Struggle Forum

International Women’s Day

Celebrated every 8th of March globally, the day recognises the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. Students in the YVM project from Kenyatta University participated in the International Women’s Day by engaging in various activities. In Nairobi, the students celebrated at the Dandora an informal settlement where organisations came together to provide services to the local community which included family planning, HIV/AIDS testing and counselling, and free cancer and fistula screening.

International Food Safety Conference

Held at Kenyatta University from 20th -24th of May 2019, the theme of the conference was “Food and Nutrition safer from farm to fork: A Missing Link in Consumer Health and Food Security. The goal of the conference was to address food safety concerns involving all key players including scholars, scientists, nutritionists, public health, NGOs, policy makers, food legislators, civil society to share evidence based research and disseminate findings on issues of food safety concerns.
The conference had over 200 participants drawn from Kenya, Australia, Belgium, Uganda, Tanzania, USA, South Africa and Austria was represented by 5 students from Kenyatta University.

The conference objectives were: Address the link between food safety and food security and its effect on development, provide a forum to share the existing and emerging issues on food safety and enhance consumer protection, identify gaps in risk and exposure assessment and surveillance system on food safety, create consumer awareness on key issues of food concern, address the role of regulatory bodies, governments, environmentalists, producers, processors, traders, consumer organisations and civil society in ensuring food safety and identify key areas of food safety concern throughout the food chain: food production and environmental contamination, processing, packaging, distribution, storage, food and catering services, food vending and consumption.

Regional Platforms

Youth Indicator Workshop

The workshop was organised by Reality of Aid (ROA) Africa from 28th 29th January 2019 and brought together young people from 10 African countries namely; Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Cameroon. YVM was represented by a student from the University of Nairobi (UoN). Experiences on youth indicators from Cameroon were highlighted which indicated the issues facing youth to be mass unemployment, lack of skills, mismatch between skills and existing market demands, heavy taxation, outdated equipment in vocational training centres and inability to access social
security due to lack of information. The key indicators discussed were access to decision making, unemployment and youth sensitive budgeting.

**Participants at the Youth Indicators Workshop**

The forum emphasised that the informal sector where the majority of young people in Africa are to be found has been neglected with very little being done to enable young people in the informal sector migrate to formal sector. The forum further raised the issue of migration as a challenge to young people especially those who perish trying to go to Libya and Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

The forum discussed issues affecting young people with perspectives from Kenya’s Ministry of Youth and what the Kenyan government has put in place such as National Youth Service (NYS) and budgetary allocation for young people including existing government funds targeting youth. These were discussed to include Youth Fund and Uwezo³ Fund.

**Selfie Moments at the Youth Indicator Workshop**

The participants were also take through Kenya’s Big 4 Agenda and specific areas where young people are engaging which were described as cottage industry, food security and nutrition including participation in agribusiness, innovation in agriculture targeting young people. It was mentioned that the Directorate of Youth is developing the National Youth Development Index which will assess priority areas for youth in Kenya.

“Education should develop young people to become global citizens” – Thando, Zimbabwe

---

³Uwezo is a Swahili word meaning ability
The Africa Liberation Day (ALD) is a continental day. Africa Liberation Day is an annual event celebrated every 25th May. On this day we commemorate the continuity of African Freedom Day which was founded in 1958 when there were only 8 independent African states. Despite the celebration of Africa Liberation Day, Africa is not yet liberated. As the new frontier, Africa’s resources continue to be pillaged, her children lost in ravages of war and famine and never ending conflicts. Africa Liberation Day is and continues to be a commemoration of a process of the organising of the African people towards the total liberation of Our Land and resources, our people’s labour globally and the unification of our continent!

**Africa Liberation Day 2019 poster**

ALD 2019 was co-organised by Fahamu, Azimio, Ukombozi Library, Wezesha Youth Initiative, Social Justice Centres Working Group, Vita Books, Communist Party of Kenya, Red Flag Kenya, All Africa People Revolutionary Party and held at the Kenya National Theatre. Bringing together university students, social movements, women, youth and children, the theme of this year’s celebration as “Forward to a United Socialist Africa: Continuation of Resistance”.

During ALD 2019, the panellists discussed Pan-Africanism, what it means, the struggle against patriarchy and the various forms of discrimination faced by women, the Land reclamation question from Africa to the USA and the conditions of land ownership among black people in the USA, linkage of slavery and the land question and exploitation of African labour.

Participants at the Africa Liberation Day celebrations
The panellists further focused on the Military Industrial complex and how wars are created with Africa being the largest casualty. The session further reflected on budgetary allocations across various African states that is spent on war and matters of security. Key in the discussion was the amounts allocated to war on terrorism.

YVM members from Kenyatta University and University of Nairobi participated in ALD 2019, as both participants and panellists. They discussed Debt Slavery and the Economic situation with the focus being on taxation and how tax is used to offset foreign debts. Domestic debt was also discussed and highlighted how young people get lured into debt through mobile applications and how they borrow from online money lending apps such as Tala, Branch and Safaricom’s Mshwari among others to service another debt. The forum reflected on the importance of being debt free and how debt servicing is a burden at the expense of provision of basic services.

On Patriarchy, the YVM discussants raised the issue of patriarchy as harmful to both men and women but more so to men. He pointed out that traditional African setting respected women but now the situation is getting worse. Rising cases of femicide were mentioned as a contributory factor to male dominance. The panellist urged the participant on the need to think of a way forward on patriarchy as men who were promoting dominance are born of women and have been brought up by women.

A YVM member from Kenyatta University discussing debt burden and youth

Role of Women in the Resistance

Africa Liberation Day (ALD) 2019 also celebrated the role of Women in resistance. Muthoni Nyanjiru⁴ born in 1920 was the first woman to lead in calling for freeing of Harry Thuku⁵. This was a celebration because in the 1920s there were very few women in cities and she called upon men to give her trousers so that she can put on and become a “man” if the men were hesitant to go and free. She was killed by the British colonial government during a protest in 1922 at Central Police along Kingsway road, now renamed Harry Thuku Road. Nyanjiru was being celebrated because of her defiance and her being symbolic to women-led resistance.

---

⁴ https://owaahh.com/ageless-defiance-muthoni-nyanjiru/
⁵ Harry Thuku was a Kenyan pioneer for the nationalist movement and fighting for labour rights
The workshop brought together representation from Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe and took place from 4th -5th April 2019 and co-organised by the Institute of Development Studies (University of Nairobi), Centre for Social Change (University of Johannesburg) and Africa Leadership Centre (ALC). A student member of the YVM project from the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) participated in the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to provide a platform for activists and researchers to exchange knowledge and share perspectives about social movement struggles in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The expected outcome was to lay the foundation for an ongoing research network that can create an essential role in co-producing emancipatory knowledge for and with social movement as well as produce scholarship with the potential to reduce Africa’s marginalisation from the field of social movement studies.

The discussions focused on the history and trajectories of social movements in East and Southern Africa which included a discussion on social movements in different national contexts, continuities and discontinuities between past and present, how the working class movements have responded to economic, social and political crisis and strategies and tactics social movements have used over time.

The workshop further focused on the role of NGOs and questioned whether NGOs can be social movements, the relationship between social movements and NGOs and whether NGOs are necessary for social change. On building resistance, the forum discussed how social movements build and sustain resistance, interrogated whether social movements can be self-
reliant and how solidarities have been built between different sections of society; the middle class, students and working class.

Additionally, the convening deliberated on the role of research and researchers in movements including what scholars can do to support and contribute to social movements struggles, questioned whether academics can produce movement-relevant theory and what the relationship should be between scholars and activists and how social movements shape political ideologies.

Experiences from Tanzania

Experience sharing from Zimbabwe

Afrika Vuka Day

On 25th May 2019, YVM members from Catholic University participated in the AfrikaVuka Day which was a continental wave of actions purposed to halt and phase out fossil fuel projects and at the same time reduce carbon emissions and urge the continent and the globe to shift towards sustainable energy. Afrika Vuka provided a platform for citizens to take action against fossil fuel projects around the African continent.

A YVM member from CUEA at the AfrikaVuka Campaign
The She Decides Launch took place on 15th April 2019 and had 160 participants. This was a campaign advancing the rights of women and girls. The campaign focused on creation of an enabling environment where women and girls can make decisions about their bodies, futures and the kind of lives they want to lead. The forum further discussed creating spaces where women are not treated as sex objects and are free to express their sexuality including being able to access sexual and reproductive health services.

The forum was organised by Polycom Development Project and held on 9th May 2019. The dissemination workshop sought to bring to the attention of various stakeholders’ issues affecting women with disability in informal settlements.

The research was commissioned under a multiple country project entitled “Leave No Woman Behind” facilitated by Ghanaian Federation of Persons Living with Disabilities. Polycom Development Project and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Forum Kenya carried out a research on multiple discrimination against women living with disabilities in four slum settlements in Kenya, these were Kibra, Kiambiu, Mukuru and Mathare and produced a country status report. The workshop aimed at disseminating the country status report, identify policy asks and chart a way forward to enable bridging the gap and thinking through how to ensure that No one is left Behind.

Panel discussion on status of disability in Kenya and key Policy Asks

Two students, potential members of YVM representing University of Eastern Africa - Baraton and Maasai Mara university attended. It was an opportunity for the students to understand the disability situation in Kenya as well as the various challenges Persons with Disability (PWDs) more so women in informal settlements go through.

“It was a very exciting engagement, I learnt a lot” - Alex Muindi, student,
Participants at the Disability Status Report Dissemination Workshop

The platform was an eye opener to the students on the various policy provisions in support of PWDs such as on alighting from a public transport. The platform provided space for experience sharing on issues affecting PWDs and key asks for the government, policy makers and the community in general. The students mentioned that they had learnt a lot of new things and formed networks with several organisations.

National Anti-Corruption Conference

The conference was held at the Bomas of Kenya and organised by various stakeholders to reflect and come up with strategic and sustainable movement against corruption in Kenya. Students from Catholic University members of YVM attended. The forum focused on revenue collection and the inherent loopholes, managerial gaps in county projects, compliance to budgets at the country level and issues of procurement at the county level. The forum discussed experiences with multiagency corruption, role of judiciary in addressing corruption, challenges in dealing with corruption cases including issues of extortion and blackmail as well as how corruption occurs in various sectors.

A section of Participants at the Anti-Corruption Conference

Catholic University students at the National Anti-Corruption Conference

Biashara Model Fund Forum Forum
YVM members from Kenyatta University and Catholic University attended the Biashara Model forum at the Sarova Stanley. The aim was to create awareness on the existence of the fund and debate on whether the Biashara Model was viable to the public. The fund targets the general public.

 Students from CUEA at the Biashara Model Forum

Panelists at the Biashara Model Forum

 Students from Kenyatta University with representatives from Africa Youth Trust and World Youth Alliance at the Biashara Model forum

She Decides Campaign Launch
She Decides campaign took place on the 4th of March, bringing together 300 participants. The campaign was to advocate for women’s rights in decision making. YVM was represented by one student from Kenyatta University.

She Decides Launch

Your Voice Matters Essay Writing Competition
Essay writing competition was organised for universities in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in April 2019. Participating universities included University of Nairobi, Egerton University, Kampala International University, Kenyatta University, Moi University, Makerere University and University of Dar Es Salaam and Royal Mutesa University.
In Kenya, students who won the essay writing competition were from Kenyatta and Moi Universities. In Uganda, the winning students were from Makerere, Royal Mutesa and Kampala International University respectively. The winning essays discussed gender and development, mental health and climate change.

**Essay Writing Competition Posters**

**Justice for Carol Mtetezi**
Students from Kenyatta University part of YVM participated in the Justice for Carol vigil in Dandora. This was in solidarity with the family and friends of the slain activist and at the same time campaign against enforced disappearances.

Human Rights Defender –
Caro Mwatha

A Kenyatta University student with members of Dandora Social Justice Centre

Leadership and Mentorship Training-Kampala

A three-day leadership and mentorship training was organised in from 15th -17th April 2019 in Kampala and was hosted by Makerere University. The training brought together an average of 55 participants. Other universities represented during the training included Muteesa Royal University, Kampala International University(KIU), University of Dar- es Salaam, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi. The sessions undertaken during the training were: Leadership and mentorship, movement building, advocacy for social justice, proposal writing and resource mobilisation, the art of writing and how to compile reports and Pan-Africanism and its relevance to young people today.

Essay Awards and Student Conversation-Kenya
Organised by Fahamu Africa and hosted by Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), the forum aimed at rewarding students who had participated in essay writing competition, provide a space for students to understand leadership, mentorship and advocacy and at the same time enable students to interact with various stakeholders engaged in diverse social justice work. The forum further shared Fahamu’s Your Voice Matters project with new students who were not part of the project. The forum had 103 participants.

Cross section of participants

Bringing together students from University of Nairobi, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Egerton University, Multi University, Technical University of Kenya, Kenyatta University, Africa Nazarene University, Strathmore University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology(JKUAT).

Additional organisations represented were Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IG AD), Kenyan Peasants League, Dandora Social Justice Centre, Peace Tree Network, Kayole Community Justice Centre, Edmund Rice Advocacy Network, National Students Caucus, Nivalishe Pad Initiative, Social Justice Centres Working Group, Kiambiu Information and Justice Network and Dandora Transformational League (DTL).

Students being taken through an overview of Fahamu

In discussing leadership, the participants were taken through theories of leadership, values, self-introspection on own leadership and the importance of values.

The participants were further taken through a discussion of advocacy, what is advocacy, developing an advocacy plan and the importance of advocacy. Additionally the participants were taken through an in-depth discussion of the YVM project including activities under implementation.

Session on leadership and mentorship
Exposure Visits –Uganda
An exposure visit was organised for students to Uganda Youth Network (UYONET), the largest youth serving organisation in Uganda. The students also visited Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) a Continental advocacy organisation working with farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk and indigenous communities to advance food sovereignty . The students also held discussions with staff from GRAIN, a global advocacy organisation working on community controlled food systems and biodiversity related advocacy campaigns. The students were given educational materials produced by both AFSA and GRAIN. YVM initiative in working with young people was applauded by AFSA staff and the students were urged to join the movement for food sovereignty.

At UYONET, the participants learnt that the organisation was started by a student of Makerere university and that the network covers the whole of Uganda. At UYONET, the students were taken through how the organisation works, programmatic activities and how young people engage with the network.

Students engaging staff at UYONET

A student who visited UYONET commented as follows:
“I have learnt that I don’t have to wait to create change “-Mary, Kampala University

At AFSA, the students gained information on the background of AFSA, how the organisation works, key areas of focus which included;
seeds, climate change, consumer awareness, and land. The students appreciated the stakeholder visit and had the following to say.

“I loved that we had exposure to real life situations and organisations that are actually tackling them” - Kennedy Mbyati, student, University of Nairobi

“Visiting AFSA was one of the greatest thing in the training, it opened to us as youth the role we can play when it comes to environmental conservation” – Hope Halakure, student, Makerere University

The fact that students from Uganda were encouraged to apply for internships also brought out the networking aspect that I feel should be expounded on between YVM members and other organisations - Kennedy Mbyati, student, University of Nairobi

Through the exposure you get to know and experience the real needs and problems facing community members through direct interaction - Alfred Abuka, student, Kenyatta University

Memorable Moments – YVM 2019

Take a step forward for Social Justice Exercise

Africa Liberation Day 2019

Leadership and Mentorship Training – Kampala

Students engaging Japheth Kasimbu of IGAD
Launching YVM in Uganda

Transition from coal campaign

Celebrating women in Resistance – Muthoni Nyanjiru Triangle, Nairobi

Students from Kenya,

Uganda and Tanzania at AFSA

Selfie Moments; University of Dar, Kampala International and Makerere University

Leadership & Mentorship - Kampala

Kenyatta University YVM members at the Africa Liberation Day 2019