

# Improving the lives of young people: The TYC experience

**The Youth Café advises that society must never forget it is youth who will change and shape tomorrow's reality**

By **EVANS ONGWAE**  
eongwae@ke.nationmedia.com

Every young person is unique and authentic – and needs to be heard. That is the key message from The Youth Café (TYC), which calls for even greater involvement of young people in all development matters.

On the occasion of the 2020 International Youth Day, this pan-African organisation asserts that society has the capacity to support young people to overcome the barriers they face as they seek to fully enjoy their rights and to fulfil their potentials.

This year, the youth day is being marked against the grim backdrop of the raging **Covid-19** pandemic that is complicating matters for young people already marginalised by society.

The Youth Café notes: **“Covid-19 is exposing and exacerbating the existing inequalities that put girls at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV). Adolescent girls, particularly girls who are married, those with disabilities and the ones living in humanitarian contexts, face heightened risks, and often fall between services designed for adults and children.”**

TYC believes efforts to mitigate and address the impact of the **Covid-19**

pandemic must include provisions that are responsive to young people's needs and uphold their rights, or youth specific provisions when needed.

More decent jobs are part of the solutions to mitigate the impact of the **Covid-19** crisis to reduce poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition simultaneously.

Society, TYC advises, should never forget that it is youth who will change and shape tomorrow's reality. The organisation therefore insists that it is everyone's duty **“to empower the voices of tomorrow's leaders, emancipating these bright minds, and to involve young individuals in the decision making. In other words, it is important to “listen to what they have to say, making space available to them so that their voices are heard.”**

TYC believes that the real way to commemorate the International Youth Day is by being an example, and this is what it has been doing.

## Since 2012

TYC's experience since 2012 has been outstanding. The organisation found that when young individuals are given the tools and the opportunity to express themselves or to persuade others on what they want to achieve, the results are astounding. This leads to innovative ideas, creativity and passion, with the youth not held back by worries of failure, where dreams are what guide them.

Society, argues TYC, needs to eman-



cipate these future leaders. Society should enable these curious, outstanding minds to think for themselves, to explore, to question the *status quo*, and to wonder even, so they can develop critical thinking.

In the last few years, TYC has been working in several projects to create the conditions of a more equitable and fair society by improving the lives of young people.

To date, the organisation has reached 54 countries globally, 22 of them in Africa. It has impacted about 1.7 million youths across the continent. It has gained over 14,000 individual and corporate members.

Since it began operations, TYC has worked with more than 1,000 volunteers and 4,500 interns as well as a

complementary staff of 33.

Its work has been featured in leading media outlets like *Huffington Post*, and *Nation Media Group*. It has also featured in the World Economic Forum.

Furthermore, since 2013, TYC has launched seven editions of its Youth Enterprise Fund, providing seed funding and capacity-building to 34 youth-led organisations based in Africa. Their projects promoting youth empowerment have reached 94,055 direct beneficiaries in 39 countries. In total, more than 1.7 million direct and indirect beneficiaries have been impacted over the past six years.

The Youth Café is a youth-led Pan-African non-profit organisation, founded in 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya, and officially registered in 2014. It looks at today's

**1.7 million**

**The total number of youths that The Youth Café has impacted across Africa in the six years of its existence**

youth bulge as an opportunity for development and economic growth.

The organisation aims to model, inform, and advance youth-led approaches to sustainable development, environmental stewardship, social equity, democratic governance, and economic viability by using innovative research, media, policy, advocacy, as well as cross-cultural and intergenerational partnerships.

## In pursuit of a society where youths enjoy rights to the fullest

By **EVANS ONGWAE**  
eongwae@ke.nationmedia.com

The Youth Café seeks to create a more equal and inclusive society where youths, regardless of gender, enjoy their rights to the fullest. Although active in several cross-cutting areas, it works mainly in eight priority areas.

These pillars provide an essential organising structure for the development and implementation of its various programmes and initiatives. All play a critical role in reducing youth deprivation and socio-economic and political empowerment of young people in Africa.

The eight pillars are: Peace and Security, including preventing violent extremism; Governance and Political Inclusion (Remittances and Accountability); Culture, Arts and Sports; Education and Skills; Business, Job Creation and Entrepreneurship, Universal Health Coverage, Environmental Preservation, and Climate Change.

TYC sees young people as critical players in Africa's quest for peace and security in regions faced with turmoil. The role of young people is key to stabilisation, as recognised by the United Nations Security Council Resolution



(UNSCR) 2250, which calls for the effective participation of young people in peacebuilding efforts in fragile areas.

Another TYC pillar focuses on youth and governance. The under-representation of youth in governance is a clear challenge. TYC says the large proportion of youth in Africa presents an opportunity for further action in transparency and accountability.

According to TYC, culture, arts and



sports (CAS) can address major global challenges – such as conflict prevention and resolution, social integration, prevention of violent extremism, and protection of cultural heritage. CAS can contribute to socio-economic stability, sustainable development and economic growth through cultural entrepreneurship.

TYC would like to see the sector's potential further harnessed, through visible initiatives that can also help connect young people to opportunities (financing, networks, and necessary skills to build their careers).

TYC also aspires to provide high quality education and training systems that are efficient and facilitate young people's access and integration. This is be-



cause access to quality education and the opportunity to develop skills and competencies is vital to prepare youth for the future.

On business, job creation and entrepreneurship, TYC notes that Sub-Saharan Africa will need to create 18 million new jobs a year by 2035, whereas only three million are created annually. Youth, argues TYC, must be empowered to participate in shaping a shared future and economy.

The health and well-being of adolescents now and in their adult lives greatly depend on key education opportunities and access to quality health services that help them stay healthy, empowered, embracing gender equality norms and demanding rights, says TYC.



Remittances are another focus of TYC regarding international cooperation in Africa, helping to reduce poverty and generate domestic resources. However, TYC argues that further awareness and transparency about remittance fees and standards is needed, as well as more user-friendly applications and capacity support to innovative solutions from the sender and receiver regions.

TYC recognises young people as agents of development, decision-making, leadership, and governance. It calls for the concrete actions to benefit young people and empower youth and their organisations as active participants and implementers of environmental preservation and climate change initiatives.

Since its inception, The Youth Café has become a leading Pan-African youth organisation dedicated to serving as a representative and advocate of the voices and interests of African youth to the relevant decision-making and affiliated bodies.

At the heart of The Youth Café's operational work lies the notion of partnerships.

**Contact us:**  
Email: [info@theyouthcafe.com](mailto:info@theyouthcafe.com)  
Phone: 0734795798  
[www.the youthcafe.com](http://www.the youthcafe.com)

**18 million**

**The number of new jobs that Sub-Saharan Africa needs to create for youths by 2035, according to The Youth Café**