



# EASTERN AFRICA YOUTH CONFERENCE



FIRST EDITION

## 1st EASTERN AFRICA YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT

8th - 13th February 2011

Nakuru, Kenya.



### Message from the Outgoing Chair.

African Visionaries,

I salute you. With the challenges that face us in the region including corruption, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, war, drugs and crime just to mention a few, it is easy to conclude that Africa is a basket case. But as young leaders with a vision for our region and indeed continent, we shall not relent in the fight for the Africa we want to see. The Eastern Africa Youth Conference (EAYC) is an opportunity for us to come together, reflect on the challenges we are grappling with and seek to speak in one voice. As the organizers, of the first EAYC, we created a platform for honest dialogue and constructive debate where we identified the needs that need to be talked to, and set a foundation that future engagements need to build on for the Eastern Africa we want to see. It's time to act, NOW!

**Joanne Nabbanja,**

*1st Chairperson, Eastern Africa Youth Conference.*

## Background

Planning for the First Eastern Africa Youth Conference dates back to Ethiopia in late 2009 when the idea was floated during the 5th Harambee Africa Training. At first, all eyes were on Sudan that was courting the idea of a referendum for the south to secede from the north. The challenge then was “how do we strengthen the young IofC team in Sudan to have an impact as the country prepared for a peaceful transition?” However, as the discussions advanced, ideas shifted from Sudan as a single entity to countries in the region, bearing in mind common challenges faced. That was the spark that ignited the fire now known as the Eastern Africa Youth Conference.

## Vision

An Africa that is economically prosperous, politically vibrant, ecologically sustainable and socially inclusive; a continent of people who celebrate their cultural heritage and diversity, bringing hope to the world. (Developed by Harambee 5 participants 2009 in Ethiopia and adopted by EAYC)

## The Event

Wednesday February 9th 2011, Kenya opened its gates to about 70 young visionaries from the Eastern Africa Region (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, North and South Sudan) gathered under the theme “**Beyond Me...it’s time to act!**” to chart the way forward for the challenges they are facing in their countries. Through daily morning reflections, delegates got to share on the four moral absolutes of IofC –



*Mr. Julius Khakula - Chairman IofC Kenya Speaking at the Opening Ceremony*

Absolute Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love - that challenged them to take proactive actions towards personal and public ethical leadership. Personal reflections and introspection bring out the uniqueness aspects of this conference. Delegates got a chance to connect with themselves. Plenary sessions; “Economic Empowerment”, “Social Responsibility” and “Responsible Leadership”,



*Delegates follow proceedings at the Opening Ceremony*

had speakers with a wealth of knowledge coupled with inspiring experiences and seasoned with the authority with which they presented their challenge to the new generation of change-makers.

## Beyond me... its time to act!

“There is no youth empowerment without the youth!” These were the words of Ken Walusala, President Regional Multifunctional Youth forum and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region who graced the opening ceremony.



*Country Representatives at a media briefing after the Opening Ceremony*

He further challenged the youth to be actively involved in the process of policy formulation and implementation in their respective countries. Also present at the opening forum was Julius Khakula,

Chairman of IofC Kenya who shared in great depth on Africa's potential "Africa can be just, Africa can be refuge for humanity, Africa is full of strength and compassion" he said. . He also highlighted the depth of natural resource and latency found in the region. Sarah Ongige, a representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports from the Rift region challenged the youth to use their numbers wisely and not to destroy the potential they have.

The opening ceremony laid ground for a highly interactive dialogue dubbed "East Africa speaks". In this session the delegates explored the root causes of the challenges facing the youth in Eastern Africa, envisioned a desirable vision for the future of the region and identified their roles as individuals on how to confront these challenges. The following seven issues were identified;

- Unemployment – Lack of job opportunities has made the youths engage in ills within the society. E.g. Substance abuse, crime
- Violence – Absence of true peace. Constant conflicts with neighbours and selves.
- Moral decadence - Ethical relativism and moral decadence have contributed greatly to the vices in the society today. eg pornography
- Ignorance \illiteracy – Contributed by a wanting education system.
- Youth marginalization – Especially in decision making and in taking leadership positions.
- Poverty – Underuse, abuse and misuse of available resources.
- Poor Education system – One that is not relevant to the needs of the youth in Eastern Africa.

### **Economic Empowerment**

Chrispine Oduor, a Strategic Plans Consultant and Rachel Ajiambo (Kilimo Trust Uganda), laid bare the statistics of unemployment of the youth, and revealed financial principles of economic

freedom like saving and investment. The delegates were challenged on their thinking about economic empowerment as well as the attitude towards work. "No one can empower you, you only can empower yourself. Let's have proper attitude towards work... Develop proper work ethics...Whatever you are doing, do it to the best." Said Rachel. Dr. Hongo, an expert in Effective School Management, shared his belief that 'Africa's nakedness can only be solved from the head'. He further challenged the young visionaries on how well they maximized what they already have; "What are we doing with our brains, our hearts and our resources?" he asked.

### **Responsible Leadership**

Irresponsible leadership has been blamed by many for the problems in many African countries. In this light, George Gachara, a youth worker and author, together with Peter Ndolo, Trust Coordinator Sanchat, illuminated the meaning and significance of service oriented leadership. The



*Small Group Discussion*

two speakers asked questions that triggered critical thinking; 'Is the ideal of your future society consistent with what you are doing now?', 'What are the motivations for your leadership?'

### **Social Responsibility**

Dr. Jim, Mcfie, a lecturer at Strathmore University, Bedan Mbugua, the General Manager for Royal Media Services and Dan Mugeru, a motivational speaker from Mombasa, Kenya explored the concept of social responsibility. Well, many of us agree that there is lack of sound governance in the Eastern Africa region which might be the cause of our problems, but there is more to these problems than just governance. "Let's be realistic, let's be honest with what the real problem is." said Dr. Mc Fie. "We are lazy; we want money, just money!"

he continued. Dan said that many Africans have lost the values they held so dear back in the days. He called on the youth to live their words, beliefs and values “When I speak, I speak my convictions, my values and my beliefs and when I act, I act my convictions, my values and my beliefs”. He also encouraged them to do what is good “We have to start doing good because doing good is good!” he said. ‘Social responsibility must emanate from competence and character - the key requirements in social responsibility. Young people must think quickly and act now’ were the wise words from Bedan Mbugua.

**Peaceful Procession**

On the 3rd day of the conference, the delegates held a peaceful procession, from the conference centre through Nakuru town to the Nyayo Gardens, Nakuru. They wore T-shirts proclaiming ‘It’s time to act’ and carried slogans like ‘Corruption is a moral issue’ and ‘To raise the standard, I must raise my standards’. The street demonstration was a climax to the conference deliberations as youths sang over and over: ‘We are the change generation and we’ll impact the nation...For change is within us’, marching their way into the peaceful town.



*Peaceful March entering Nakuru Town*

This was a wake-up call to young people in the town to live responsibly for the sake of their future and that of coming generations. While at the gardens, Deputy Provincial Commissioner Rift Valley Province, Ole Saya, addressed the delegates and members of public that had gathered there calling upon youths in the region to use peaceful

methods in seeking to address their needs rather than resorting to violent means. The procession culminated in a tree planting exercise at the St. Mary’s Pastoral center after the march.

What stood out in Nakuru was the bond of commitment between those leading the action and their insistence that inner change is the driver for social change.

**Workshops**

For 2 days the delegates had the opportunity to participate in one of the four workshops;

**Youth and Peace Building** *by Nelly Njoki*, Using exercises, role plays and discussions, this workshop walked with the delegates in making peace practical, by identifying youth peace concerns, understanding frameworks for youth in peace and acquiring knowledge and skills in conflict transformation.

**Communication Workshop** *by Mike Kuria, a senior lecturer at Daystar University*, took people through ‘What and How of Communication for Social Transformation’ Through short presentations, open discussions and other interactive methodologies, and challenged participants to set an agenda and strategize on how to communicate it bearing in mind the sensitivity to other different cultures, gender, age etc.

**Entrepreneurship for Youth Empowerment Workshop** *by Tonnie Mello*, the Founder and CEO of Entrepreneurship for Youth Empowerment, This workshop answered questions like :- What is youth entrepreneurship? What is the state of youth and young adult entrepreneurs in the East African region? How to finance and support youth businesses – Youth, Communities, government, donors and private sector involvement. And Does wealth creation for national development really exist? (business to build communities and the Eastern African region)

**Call to Action Workshop** by Mike Brown, *Initiatives of Change Australia*. He helped the delegates to link personal life and values to be BIG issues like ending Poverty and Hunger, responding to the Climate Change crisis, reducing War and Conflict. These were issues highlighted in the ‘Caux Call to Action’ which was drafted in Caux, Switzerland in 2010.

**Action Steps**

The delegates took sometime to brainstorm on action steps that need to be undertaken to address the issues identified earlier. Below are some of the solutions suggested

- Adoption of a relevant education system which meets the needs of the youth in the region.
- Peace and security through dialogue, reconciliation and trust building.
- Conduct more Eastern Africa youth Conferences to enhance the spirit of unity and continual dialogue.
- Encourage youth representation in dialogue with the Government.
- Creating programs that encourage individual action against any form of violence.
- Introducing peace and conflict transformation modules in the school curriculum from an early stage.
- Training of key community\grassroot youth leaders on alternative dispute resolution
- Holding of campaigns which create awareness about human rights in member states by holding



*Singing the “Change Song” at Nyayo Gardens after a peaceful march through Nakuru Town*

community meetings, conferences and dialogues on human rights and holding talk shows

- Integration of moral education in school curriculums

**Achievements**

- Successfully mobilized and created a strong network of young change makers from the region.
- Resolutions made to some of the challenges identified during the 4-day forum.
- Set a firm foundation for future conferences.

Some Personal Commitments made during the conference include;

- I want to be more honest with me first. I



*Delegates pause for a photo with the Rift Valley Deputy Provincial Commissioner Mr. Oe Saya after addressing members of the public at the Nyayo Gardens.*

will practice the principal of absolute honesty though its going to be a struggle but I believe with my strong will, I will make it. And I hope the rest of the people around me will learn by example.

- I commit not to give or receive bribes, to love each and every person without regard to tribe, gender, social status etc and to volunteer all the time possible for the good of the community around me.
- My commitment is to educate people to conserve the environment and not to pollute the environment.
- This journey I am starting with myself and give an example to my society at large. I also

commit to be the touch bearer of peace in my country and the whole world for promoting peace from the grass root.

- Staying true to my vision- promoting human values; Being consistent both in my public and private life; Engaging more youths towards sensitization.
- I commit to networking and taking the EAYC conference on for several years

### Some Memorable Quotes

- “Africa can live up to its promise.” **Julius Khakula, Chairman IofC Kenya.**
- “If Africa keeps spending more on militarism, then we shall never develop.” **Ken Walusala, President Regional Multifunctional Youth forum**
- “The answers we are seeking are within us... we only need to change our attitude...” **Rachel Ajiambo, Uganda.**
- “Those that know what is right but don’t do anything are worser than those who do wrong... Perceive what you can do to transform lives, participate in it with passion and persuade other people to walk with you.” **Dan Mugera, Motivational Speaker, Kenya.**

#### *Why EAYC is Unique from other conferences*

*It creates an opportunity for the participants to share best practices in their own countries, learn from one another and challenge individuals to take personal responsibility towards change in their society. It shines the spotlight on an individual’s discovery of his/ her moral and natural resources for the sake of influencing his/ her generation.*

- “I now recognize that I have a responsibility not just to expect others to do things for me.” **Selvatrix Michael, Tanzania**

- “We must trouble ourselves to understand every piece of information regarding regional and national laws, policies, treaties, acts, resolutions and more, if we are to make our voices heard. This is the only way through which we will be in a position to provide sound opinion and judgment regarding what we stand for.” - **Joshua Kuria, Kenya**

- “I looked inwardly at myself and found that I have been wasting a lot of money on what is unnecessary. When I go back home, I will save and seek to invest. I will also share with other youths.” **Eldoma Dawood, Sudan**

### Testimonials

- “After watching the documentary on the Australian apology, I was challenged to go back to my country and speak with actions rather than rhetoric. I will organize open discussions on the role of youths in peacebuilding which I believe is what we need to be able to bring about true reconciliation in my country.” **Aline Munyarubaga, Rwanda**
- “I am excited because all the speakers reminded us of the potential we have as youth to do a lot. We should not wait for the government to act for us because they might not. We should believe in change within us. I will share this good news with other students when I go back to my University.” **Oumarou Yayah, Cameroon.**

### Funding sources

This programme was financed by donations from IofC teams within and outside Africa including IofC Sweden, IofC Australia, IofC Kenya, Friends of Africa Fund and Irene Prestwich Trust (IPT). In future we hope to stir support from local governments and corporate organizations in the host country for purposes of ownership.

## *The Conference in Action*



### **Conclusion**

Indeed, the 1st Eastern Africa Youth Conference was a great success in many ways. We hope that this will be an annual venture that will seek to influence the capacity and skills in empowering a new generation of leaders; leaders who will influence the future direction of this region and the continent at large.

The next conference will be in Uganda from 7th to 12th February 2012. For more details, contact us at [eayc@iofc.org](mailto:eayc@iofc.org)

### **My Commitment**

I am not confined within the structures,  
Structures that suppresses values so important,  
They have been hidden from the face of our hearts,  
I am claiming this change,  
Adopting every value,  
Honesty, purity, unselfishness and love,  
Knowing I am not perfect,  
Accepting they may each change me.

Asked of us as we began,  
That the success of what we experienced,  
The change ignited from within,  
Be shared with those we meet,  
Adopting key elements that would see,  
Economic empowerment become a reality,  
Responsible leadership embraced by humanity,  
Social responsibility a daily life style.

I am not without my faults,  
A youth who chose before,  
To ignore the ills happening around me,  
See, I was convinced someone else would do it,  
That my role, well, didn't count for much,  
Admitting I was wrong,  
From this day I act on all I ignored

*By Winnie Isakia*



### Message from the Chair

I am honoured to Chair the 2nd EAYC. One key lesson learnt from the past conference is that as much as we share common challenges, each country is unique with its own opportunities and resources. There is also a great wave of development and progress in the region, much of it being led by Africans themselves. For us to continue making an impact towards the Eastern Africa we want to see, countrymen in this region must continue investing and finding solutions to the problems that must be addressed. One of the key ones being maximizing potential of the youth.

Our challenge as we plan the 2nd EAYC, is to recognize the potential of the youth and maximize their engagement in enhancing a cohesive society. Youths who have sought to make peace not only a vocabulary in their conversations but an act that will seek to influence positively the life of those around them. Truly, it's time to act, NOW!

Mbindyo Kimanathi, Chairman, Eastern Africa Youth Conference.

### Coordinators for the 2nd EAYC in Uganda

**Mbindyo Kimanathi** – *Chairman, Kenya*

**James Wamboga** – *General EAYC Coordinator*

**Lilian Birungi** – *Uganda*

**Fidelis Maro** – *Tanzania*

**Patrick Iradukunda** – *Burundi*

**Louis Ngarambe** – *Rwanda*

**Yonas Demise** – *Ethiopia*

**James Tongo** – *Southern Sudan*

**Abuelgasim Elsir** – *Northern Sudan*

For more information, contact the organizing team through [eayc@iofc.org](mailto:eayc@iofc.org)



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