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If You Speak Up You Die

By Ancillar Mangena, South Africa



It is not for the faint-hearted. It is a big step many people face when they see a policeman taking a bribe, an accountant embezzling funds or a government worker stealing taxpayers' money. Whistleblowing – the choice is yours and it could be fatal; so says this cautionary tale of small town sorrow.

A family man, who stood up for what he believed in, paid with his life. In the coalmining town of Dundee, situated in a valley of the Biggarsberg mountains, in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, it is one of the many sad, yet largely unsung, stories of whistleblowing in Africa.

Blowing the whistle is a tough game in 21st-century Africa, but, it's as important as ever in a world of more and more dirty secrets. In many parts of the world, whistleblowers have become household names, such as Chelsea Manning, after disclosing sensitive military and diplomatic documents, and Edward Snowden after he leaked classified information from the National Security Agency. In Africa, online war-

rior Baba Jukwa, who leaked sensitive information about Zimbabwe's ruling party Zanu-PF; and Kenya's John Githongo, who embarrassed the powerful with his book *It's Our Turn To Eat*, are far from lauded. Sadly, many whistleblowers in Africa are ruined or die unsung. They are shunned, harassed, jailed and left jobless.

In the small town of Umzinyathi District in KZN, South Africa, whistleblowing ended with a bullet. Grishen Bujram, from Dundee, was respected and hardworking. He had been an activist since he was 15 and a councillor. One day, he found that free houses for the poor were being sold for profit. South Africa has built millions of the so-called Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, putting a roof over millions of heads.

Bujram was outraged and alleged the

mayor of the African National Congress (ANC)-controlled Endumeni municipality, Thandeka Nukani, had sold 17 RDP houses and also taken one for herself; even though she had a well-paid job.

Bujram confronted the mayor and reported it to the council. On June 15, 2007, he was allegedly called for a meeting. His widow, Shirley Bujram, kissed him goodbye at the door at 6:30PM, unaware it was the last time she would see him alive.

"I was home with my children and I heard someone pounding at the door. When I went to the kitchen it was dark but I could see the police blue lights. I assumed my husband went and smashed someone or something else had happened. When I opened the door I saw the police and his nephew there. I said to the nephew, 'if your unc-

le is in trouble I will leave him in jail till the end of the weekend,” says Shirley. The men in blue asked Shirley to sit down as they delivered the news. They said Bujram had been shot many times at the wheel in a township near Dundee. “He was like a father to all of us in the community,” says resident Muzikayifani Khumalo – eight years later.

Another resident Thando Dube* says, “The thing that ended his life was his hatred for corruption. People like Bujram are the people who die for telling the truth. In this district, we are scared to talk because we are face to face with the gun. This place is corrupt but if you speak up you die.”

In the days after the death, Nukani, according to Shirley, visited the family to pass her condolences. “Her exact words were ‘your husband’s killers must rot in jail’ which is shocking

because she had previously sent me messages saying my husband is interfering with her work and has a jealous syndrome. If he continues on his path against her, he will be sorry,” she says.

According to the widow, a woman who was with Bujram, minutes before the assassination, testified in court that Bujram knew he was being followed by the mayor’s car, but thought nothing of it. Two brothers, on their way home from work; witnessed the mayor’s boyfriend, Bongani Shangase, shoot Bujram and her nephew, Siyabonga Nukani, used the car as a getaway vehicle. This breakthrough gave way to disappointment for the Bujram family. They say Dundee police had the case for three months but no arrest was made until the widow went to the organized crime unit.

Police arrested Nukani, but charges

were dropped for insufficient evidence. Detectives arrested Shangase and Siyabonga Nukani. Shangase received a life sentence; Siyabonga turned state witness and got 20 years. “Thandeka planned to have her nephew poisoned because he had turned state witness. Her boyfriend worked with other inmates to make this happen but the inmates couldn’t go through with it,” says Shirley.

There were charges for the attempted murder of Siyabonga Nukani, against Thandeka Nukani. They were withdrawn, in 2011, due to insufficient evidence.

Shirley Bujram and the police, with Siyabonga Nukani’s cooperation, also found there was a hitman, Mzamo Majola. “I found out that when [Bujram] was killed it was the third attempt which became successful. The hitman

had tried two times before. On the day Bujram was killed, Mzamo Majola couldn’t go ahead with it because there were people around. Shangase got agitated and killed my husband himself,” she says.

The police offered Majola a deal to turn state witness. Based on his evidence, police arrested Thandeka Nukani again.

In August last year, Judge Isaac Nkosi withdrew the Bujram murder charges against Thandeka Nukani after Majola went on the run. For the second time, the former mayor walked free.

Thandeka Nukani has been redeployed as the personal assistant to Umzinyathi District mayor, James Mthethwa. She lost her mayoral seat after it was found R100,000 (\$7,410) in legal fees, for the Bujram case, were allegedly paid

for by the ANC. Thandeka Nukani did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Nearly eight years on, Bujram's comrades carry whistleblowing forward at equal risk. Mzwakhe Sithebe and Yusuf Kader are fellow activists who fight corruption in KZN and are often ridiculed for doing so.

"During the apartheid era we were fighting for justice together with Grishen Bujram. Now, in a democratic country, we are still faced with the same tendencies. The problem is people driven by greed," says Sithebe.

"The problem is that politicians have been elevated and are like a law [unto] themselves. We will always fight for justice. The issue of being eliminated unfortunately is the fate for all of us who stand against corruption. We will raise

questions that need to be raised irrespective of who will be offended and decide to kill us. We have lost a number of whistleblowers in this area. We need some kind of system that protects people willing to come forward with sensitive information."

Kader, a businessman who now drives a bulletproof car, says whistleblowers risk their lives for the good of the country.

"Houses of the poorest of the poor are being taken by those in power. Some RDP houses get sold and there is a lot of inside corruption which we continue to fight against," says Kader.

Because of the corruption, Kader has written a letter demanding the dismissal of five government employees.

"As it stands, I can be killed at any time but I am not afraid to die for the poor

rest of the poor."

Endumeni Municipality's Mayor Thulani Mahaye, the successor to Mayor Nukani, encourages people to come forward with any information that exposes irregularities.

"I am proud of the police and the community right now. They are working together to make this area safer and ensure arrests are made when a crime is committed. If someone needs to blow the whistle and they are afraid of being eliminated, they can secretly come forward and protection will be given to them," he says. Despite this, controversy over houses, that saw the death of Bujram, rumbles on.

A five-minute drive outside Dundee lies the small town of Glencoe. Its residents are up in arms against the municipality. They allege 71 names, for RDP

houses, in Glencoe's Sithembile Phase 2 projects, have been removed from the list.

"It is unclear how so many people lost houses they had applied, and had been approved, for. It can only be corruption. People's names are disappearing from the list or being withdrawn without reason. For some people, untrue claims of application withdrawals are even made," says Glencoe resident Sifiso Madi.

"An RDP house that I applied for was approved but when the houses were built they said I withdrew my application which I never did. They also said that they looked for me to come and sign documents but didn't find me. This is not true because no one ever contacted me or my next of kin, sent a letter or came to where I stay to look for me," says one Dundee woman who wants to

remain anonymous for fear of retribution.

Another frustrated resident says “my cousin died in 2008 but an RDP house had been approved for him. He left dependants, so in 2013 when the houses were being built I decided to check on the progress to make sure his children have a place to stay. Funnily enough, they gave me a list that says my cousin withdrew the application. How is that possible when he is dead? Did he wake up from his grave to withdraw it? I asked the human settlement people to show me where my cousin signed to withdraw his application for the house he had already been approved for, but obviously, because it never happened, they were not able to provide any proof.”

Many who rocked the boat like Bujram also paid with their lives.

In June, just 55 kilometers from Dundee, Vusi Ntombela, an Nquthu Municipality council speaker for the ANC, and teacher and deputy principal at Luvisi Primary School, was gunned down while teaching a Grade 6 class. A gunman walked into his classroom and shot him four times. Two pupils were caught in the crossfire. Thirteen-year-old Elizabeth Nhleko died from a stray bullet.

The widow, Thembelihle Ntombela, told journalists she believes Vusi was killed because of tensions within the ANC. In December last year, Vusi had resisted an instruction from the ANC sub-region to resign as speaker. His murder is allegedly related to political tensions in the governing party’s Inkosi Bhambatha region and in the council itself.

Police arrested Mbhekiseni Khambu-

le and Sibongiseni Mdakane for the murder. Khambule is the bodyguard of Nquthu mayor, Emily Molefe. Mdakane was later sentenced to life imprisonment. He confessed that he had been promised R15,000 (around \$1,100) for the hit by his co-accused.

In May 2008, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) councillor Peter Nxele was shot dead in his driveway for speaking out against corruption just a week after raising questions about R50,000 (\$3,700) that had gone missing from a council business grant. He also requested a forensic audit into the spending of the Endumeni municipality. One of the five men accused of gunning down Nxele is Bongani Shangase, the same man who killed Bujram.

In June 2009, 124 kilometers from Dundee where Bujram was killed, Tony Malunga, an ANC councillor and regio-

nal executive committee member, was gunned down at his home in Greytown. He was allegedly killed because of his fight against corruption. Malunga was found lying in a pool of blood outside the ANC offices.

Back in Dundee, Shirley Bujram vows to fight for justice for her husband’s murder. “My husband was diabetic but a month before he died he said to me he was not going to be killed by diabetes because there is a bullet there for him; and by the bullet he died.”

##

What limits the success of experiments in democratization in achieving development goals?

By **Hilda Liswani, Namibia**



A vital relationship to be analysed when exploring the dynamics of democracy and democratization within the contemporary era of globalisation is the relationship between capitalism and democracy.

We seem to be living in an era where the general consensus in terms of governance and development is advocacy of democracy while at the same time advocacy of the maintenance and promotion of capitalism. However the capitalist political economy which exists today may generate some major habits which ultimately impede the success of democratic ventures and of the process of democratization. However this potentially volatile relationship has not always been present.

In the past, capitalism “has often been

good for democracy” (Dryzek, 1996: 3) however as capitalism evolved and morphed into the self-serving mechanism that it is today it started to show and possess features and qualities which are not conducive to many key fundamental democratic principles. Processes such as free trade, market liberal ideology, economic rationalism and aggressive individualism “combine to obstruct any deeper democratization and to erode existing democratic achievements” (Dryzek, 1996: 3).

Authors such as Dryzek argue that

for a sustainable form of democracy to exist in conjunction with capitalism there needs to be a powerful civil society and the democratic response needs to be “multidimensional and often unconventional” (Dryzek, 1996). This ultimately leads one to inquire the true extent of the democracy practiced by actively pro-capitalist states in the West who argue the importance of both. Is it possible to have them both or is it an either or situation. In his latest book, Thomas Piketty boldly questions the co-habitability of democracy and capitalism and even goes as far as implying that they are at opposite ends continuously in battle. He argues that “worsening inequality is an inevitable outcome of free market capitalism” and furthermore that “capitalism’s inherent dynamic propels powerful forces that threaten democratic societies” (Edsall, New York Times, 2014).

Initialisation of the Third Wave in Africa

To start off at the beginning, it is widely known that the promotion of democracy in Africa was actually launched under false pretences. During the Cold War (early 1960s to late 1980s) the world witnessed an era of intense superpower competition between capitalist/neo-liberal USA and communist Russia. The two powers would form alliances with various African countries in order to gain way in the ideological version of the arms race. "Promoting democratic institutions abroad became an explicit goal of US development aid in 1961, with the enactment of the Foreign Assistance Act" (Brown, 2005: 181) and in return for allegiance to the US these African countries would receive aid and "a formal semblance of democracy was deemed sufficient" to indicate their accordance to neo-liberalism.

It was evident that most African nations were in need of political and social reform, and democracy was the most appropriate solution, however the transitioning process was "contaminated by the Cold War as the East and West provided logistical, military, ideological, and financial support for Africa's dictators" (Ihonvbere, 1997: 372). Therefore it is not that the idea of democracy was detrimental for Africa nations, but rather the way in which it was catapulted set democratization up for failure.

The Missing Link in Africa

So what is that sets Africa apart from other regions which have not responded to democratization as negatively? In addition to the structural factors which work against fundamental democracy which was outlined earlier, and the premature and unsustainable

nature of the promotion of democratization in Africa; a substantial amount of Sub-Saharan African countries lack strong civil society networks and institutions. Evans argues that state-society synergy is "Mutually reinforcing relations between governments and groups of engaged citizens" which can be a major catalyst for development (Evans, 1996: 1119). However despite his advocacy for civil society he maintains that perhaps too much emphasis is placed on civil societies within the third world. He suggests that maybe "the limits to synergy are located in government rather than in civil society." After independence many states opted to maintain power and the "ultimate aim of the various devices of depoliticisation and depoliticisation was 'de-mobilisation', i.e. the curbing of independent associational life and the dwarfing of the civic realm" (Kunz, p183). This was clearly a strategy to keep the peop-

le from 'scaling up'. According to Evans, it is not that the third world has a lack of social capital but more so that there are "difficulties involved in "scaling up" micro-level social capital to generate solidary ties and social action on a scale that is politically and economically efficacious" (Evans, 1997).

According to Huber et al "the power of the state needs to be counterbalanced by the organisational strength of civil society to make democracy viable" (1997: 326). This view is shared by many other advocates of civil society and social movements, and their general consensus is that civil society acts to a certain extent as the middle man between the state and the people. According to de Sousa, democracy is relatively useful and in different contexts can have various effects. He argues that in order for civil society to be strong in a 'demo-liberal' or 'demo-socialism'

regime, a strong state of democracy is required. However for civil society to be strong under neo-liberalism “a weak democratic state is a necessary condition.” This is problematic as it implies that the factor which democracy needs in order to be effective (civil society) can only function in a capitalist context if democracy is side-lined. It is a complex paradox which makes it somewhat impossible for civil society and democracy to co-exist unless neo-liberalism is eliminated from the equation.

Conclusion

Ultimately it proves to be very problematic to consider democracy as a general solution of all problems which the developing world is facing. The way in which democratization was promoted in the third wave gave the impression that democracy is the foundational step towards economic and social development. This completely marginalises and, to a certain extent, even

ignores other underlying determining factors which need to be in place for any form of democracy to be successful and effective. Factors such as the presence of a strong civil society and social capital.

Structurally, capitalism and the neo-liberal system create a volatile environment for democracy which further exacerbated the experiments of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. This factor added with a clumsy and rushed process of initialisation in order for Western ideology to gain way against communism during the Cold War acted as major limits to the success of democratization.

Many African nations were simply not ready and some still are not ready, to successfully accommodate the fundamental principles of democracy. However, to a certain degree, this is to be expected, just as the first and second waves of democracy took tens of years

to truly manifest and start showing democratic functionality, so too will the third wave in Africa take time. In the meantime it is crucial to attend to underlying issues in the continent which ultimately impede the possibility of attaining functional democracy.

##

Advocating for the decriminalization of sex work in South Africa

By Frances Aron, South Africa



We meet at the SWEAT premises in Observatory, Cape Town. Portia* starts talking immediately. “I’m 34 years old and I do sex work for 18 years now.” Portia looks very maternal with a round healthy face. She admits she is tired of street work. “I am ready re-

tire to a big house with a big car.” She laughs. “I wish my children to be educated and not do sex work ever,” she adds in a more serious tone. “Sex work isn’t easy.” She pauses. “But you get used to it. It’s your job,” she says. For years Portia worried that her family and children would find out what her real job was. She moved away from home when her mother found out and in with a fellow sex worker. She tells me: “Life could be worse. I still look healthy and I’m providing for my kids.”

Amanda* is 36 years old and this is her 13th year of doing sex work. Amanda looks older than her years, yet she is lively and is outspoken about her expe-

rience in the streets. “Hey, sex workers make mistakes like everybody; some use drugs and alcohol and it’s not surprising they get arrested.” Amanda says she hasn’t been harassed by the police for a while as in not this year, but she knows female sex workers who have been more recently. “When I was at the AIDS Conference in Durban this year, this one lady reported how a policeman ordered her to take off her clothes and walk in public if she didn’t want to be arrested.”

Amanda has twins who are 21 years old. One of them and her 14 year-old live with her former husband in Durban. “He helps to support them,” she

says. “My other 21 year- old twin stays with me.” When asked what her dream is, she answers: “I love doing outreach with the children.” She stops, then sees my eyebrows raised questioningly. “These children, their mothers, were my fellow sisters who passed away from AIDS or other things. They can’t stay with family because of stigma. We at Mothers for the Future help them.” After a long pause she says: “I wish for big funds to look after these children, and also our female sex workers who get sick and stop work.”

In South Africa many families are dirt poor with no means of income. Sex work has become a means of survival for many women and men who live on the economic margins of a systemic society. Until sex work is decriminalized in this country, sex workers will continue to experience rampant injustices. Sex workers are confronted daily with

potentially dangerous situations, rape, police harassment, having condoms confiscated, being pepper-sprayed and customers with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) unwilling to use protection.

According to Portia and Amanda, sex work has always been their means at a livelihood. Neither of them finished high school, the lack of unskilled work available, and lack of income from other family members, both resorted to this work, without which they would starve. It has meant that everyday the women are risking themselves as they have no idea how clients will behave. "Clients are all races, but most are white. They come from every part of society," says Portia. She goes on: "Some are nice. Others are verbally abusive and so I tell them to take back their money. And if they start doing things that are not safe, I tell them "No" and say I will

take their car registration number to SWEAT. Some get scared when I say that." Amanda continues: "Ja. When you reject them, they can leave you stranded on the highway."

Sex workers, in this case female sex workers, find it a constant challenge to face society and their own communities given the stigma of the profession. People pelt insults at those they believe to be working the streets. Hoer. Maghosa. Families feel ostracized in their communities. Portia tells me that it took some time before her daughter was able to say: "You are my mother and I love you no matter what!" "SWEAT (Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Taskforce) and Sisonke have helped us grow our confidence," says Portia. "I feel proud I can feed my children and send them to school," she continues. Amanda says she pictures the ten, twenty, fifty, and hundred rand

notes she will receive, as a daily motivator. Portia agrees. It's no coincidence they both belong to a positive initiative set up by SWEAT and Sisonke called Mothers for the Future (M4F).

Mothers for the Future is the brainchild of Dudu Zwane who, a mother, sex worker, and a passionate advocate for the decriminalization of sex work, identified the need for a platform and support group for female sex workers. M4F members are encouraged to do outreach in their communities, this might be in the form of sex education in communities, to caring for orphaned children to encouraging other female sex workers to join SWEAT if they haven't yet, to helping their members in times of crisis, or example, when they are sick and not earning anything.

We meet at a Claremont side-street cafe away from the Saturday morning

bustle. Dudu is there to chat with me over a cooked breakfast and coffee. She doesn't rush with her answers, and is distinctly passionate about her cause. She informs me she continues to work as a sex worker during her off hours at SWEAT, where she runs M4F. „I have children to support,“ she tells me straight. „This is the only way to make extra money. I did sex work fulltime for many years before joining SWEAT.“

“Three years ago, I saw how many children came to the Christmas party at the SWEAT premises, and I decided we had to create a support group. There are thirty of us now in Mothers for the Future,” she says. They share a Creative Space to in which they can express themselves through story and song. Dudu reveals that many sex workers in South Africa are HIV-positive and M4F ensures the women in the group understand how vital ARVs, (antiretro-

virals) are, that they be taken properly and that regular clinic visits be made. “As sex workers, we have no legal protection,” she tells me. “We are subjected to greater criminal elements.” Dudu says there have been a high number of cases of sex workers murdered in South Africa since 2014. Police officers are known to throw sex workers into a cell for the night without access to ARVs. Disempowered, these women are forced to leave their children alone over night or have to pay disgruntled helpers for more hours childcare than agreed. “We at SWEAT and SiSonke have made a big difference in recent years. People know about us. And we together with SiSonke Justice, can get women out of jail within three hours,” she says proudly.

Dudu chews on her toast for a minute; “Sex workers are not even permitted to hold savings in an Old Mutual Trust

or Retirement Fund. She pauses which serves to highlight the issue. “You know that business women in this country are allowed to register and take out loans? We are business women, but the SA Bill of Rights as it stands states no rights for us.”

Dudu goes on: “Some clients specifically want pregnant women.” Without maternity leave and little recourse to social services let alone financial loans, these women have no choice but return to work soon after giving birth. Although legalized in South Africa, abortions are not common for sex workers. There could be several reasons for this Dudu explains: “Too often the queues at the clinics are very long and the women don’t even realise they are pregnant until it’s too late for an abortion.”

Dudu is hopeful. “Progress is slow

here. But, one by one out parliamentarians are agreeing sex work should be decriminalized!” She looks pleased as she tells me how hard she and other SWEAT members have worked at convincing them.

There will always be a demand for sex in society, be it legal or illegal. Today’s world is one of double standards where porn is legal and glamorized by celebrities; yet sex workers, choosing to sell themselves for a living, are denied rights and are treated like criminals. Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa said earlier this year, “Sex workers can no longer be denied their constitutional rights. They can no longer be people who are just beaten up, with no recourse to justice.” It is advocates like Dudu who fight for sex work to be decriminalized, to reduce the vulnerability of sex workers to potential danger and violence and to enable them to ac-

cess proper healthcare.

Mothers for the Future is certainly an example of how female sex workers dream of making their lives and the lives of their children safer. Dudu wants to create a safe haven for the motherless kids and retired sex workers. She envisages the home functioning like a community. “It will happen,” she says. “We’ve managed on public donations up until now; we will find funding!” It is clear that she and her M4F sisters don’t have a victim mentality, but are making the best they can for their lives in a harsh world.

##

Malawi Presidents and Press Rallies

By Jimmy Kainja, Malawi



Writing in 2000, Francis Nyamnjoh, professor of anthropology at University of Cape Town made the following observation on African media: “An examination of most legal frameworks in Africa, even after the liberalisation of media in the 1990s, reveals a craving to control that leaves little doubt of lawmakers perceiving journalists as potential troublemakers who must be policed.”

He added: “The tendency is for new laws [in Africa] to grant freedom in principle while providing, often by administrative nexus, the curtailment of press freedom in practice. Although strongest in Francophone Africa, this use of derogable and claw back measures by the state to limit the right of the expression and press freedom is common through out the continent.”

I reflected on this following the recent fallout between media institutions in Malawi and Malawi government, led by the country’s two paramount media bodies, NAMISA and Media Council of Malawi. The media, mostly private owned are against the presence of political party officials and supporters, often in large numbers, at presidential press conferences. The role of these

party members at presidential press conferences is not officially defined but these party members jeer and intimidate journalists who supposedly ask difficult, embarrassing or awkward questions. In essence, jeering journalists for doing their job.

The latest of such case was President Peter Mutharika’s press conference held at State House in Lilongwe to brief the country on his official trip to United Nations General Assembly.

The press conference was full of tension due to the President’s unexplained prolonged stay in America, a development that triggered rumors and speculation about his health. Yet, it is important to recall that such press con-

ferences, or “press rallies” as others have called them are not peculiar to Mutharika government. Former president Joyce Banda held a similar “press rally” on her return from abroad when she anticipated tough questions from the media on what was then news revelations on cashgate in 2013. Before Mrs Banda the late president, Bingu wa Mutharika, held his own “press rally” as he returned from holiday in Hong-Kong in 2011.

So the trend is that these “press rallies” take place when state presidents are trying to avoid unwelcome questions – avoiding accountability. When faced with such a situation the tendency has, unfortunately, been to shift blame and portray journalists as troublemakers, as Nyamnjoh has observed. Meanwhile, these “press rallies” are not just aimed at intimidating and bullying the media into submission; it is also way of

limiting freedom of expression while national legal frameworks permits it.

Noam Chomsky made a key observation on these tactics, arguing: “the smartest way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.” The government strategy is to allow journalists to come to the press conference in the spirit of freedoms of press and expression yet limiting them on what they can ask and say.

Unfortunately, the state machinery has completely misread the script. The once submissive local media that for 30 years of Kamuzu Banda’s dictatorship could only report what the governing authorities wanted has overcome the post-Kamuzu hangover. They now realise that they owe their allegiance to the nation, not the state and so deman-

ding accountability and transparency is their key duty.

As it is, the onus is on the government to also realise that bullying tactics of the old will no-longer hold sway. Coercion is always futile in open societies where ideas work – this is why the government needs good public relations people in place. It should be clear for those who care to see that the genesis of the current standoff between the government and private media institutions as poor communication on the part of the government.

It is painfully clear that the Malawi government is oblivious to changes in communication systems and hence cannot adapt accordingly. Live broadcasting, especially television has been a game changer in political communication for some time now. The state machinery may not be aware of this,

but live broadcasting is one of the key factors why from Bingu wa Mutharika, Joyce Banda to Peter Mutharika, presidential communication team always get agitated about press conferences.

A live press conference means that the public make up their own minds as the president respond to questions. The public does not have to wait for media institutions to repackage the information for them. In this case both the media and, crucially, the state lose control over information. This is difficult even for a heavily partisan state controlled institutions like Malawi Broadcasting Corporation to change people’s perceptions.

The odds here are against the state if intimidation is the way they want to go, as it seems the case at the moment. Instead of intimidating journalists and cursing freedom of the press

and expression, the government could do well to have people in place who understand the increasingly changing communication environment. Being in control of communication no longer means having a spokesperson that can speak the loudest, it means understanding increasingly complex communication systems. Most importantly the government can just be honest, open and transparent – this way it doesn’t have to worry about media. As they say, it is better to light a lamp than to curse the dark.

##

Zambia's LGBT Community Pushes For Official Recognition In HIV Fight

By Paul Shalala, Zambia



A consortium of Zambian civil society organizations championing the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people has embarked on a campaign to advance their rights in the soon-to-be launched 2016 - 2019 Zambia National AIDS Strategic Framework.

According to the consortium's submission to Zambia's National AIDS Council, the group wants the new framework to openly recognize their plight and to channel funds towards the fight against AIDS in the LGBT community. The confidential submission, leaked by an activist who helped draft it, details names and explanations of LGBT-relevant terminology the consortium hopes will be included in the forthcoming framework.

It also notes that use of the phrase "key population" to refer to the LGBT community in the 2014 - 2016 National AIDS Strategic Framework has not helped reduce the stigma and challenges

facing the community. According to the Zambia Population-based HIV Impact survey released in December 2016 by the Ministry of Health and the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka, 12.3 percent of people living in Zambia are HIV-positive.

There are no official statistics on the prevalence of HIV among Zambia's LGBT community due to sensitivity surrounding issues of sexual orientation, much of which stems from conservative beliefs in the country.

Under Zambia's Penal Code, any person who has "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature," a vague definition that includes homose-

xuality, can be jailed for 14 years.

Natasha, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is an activist with Friends of Rainka, an NGO that campaigns for LGBT rights in Zambia. She says the consortium submitted its recommendations because LGBT people need support and recognition from the Zambian government to ensure the protection of their equal rights.

"We are aware that last year, the Global Fund (a partnership organization that works to accelerate the end of AIDS) gave the Zambian government US\$2 million to help the LGBT community fight HIV, and we are waiting for the way forward," she said.

The National AIDS Council has not responded to requests for comment on why the money has yet to be spent on the community for which it was in-

tended. “We know that the money is in the hands of government, and we cannot demand a share. However, what we want is money to be channelled towards sensitization activities in the LGBT community and increasing access to health in the community,” said Natasha.

The National AIDS Council is currently holding a series of meetings with activists to devise a plan for how the Global Fund allocation will be disbursed and utilized.

Both activists and the council are tight-lipped on what they expect these meetings to achieve, but whatever comes of them will likely be key in mapping approaches to HIV prevention among the LGBT community going forward.

Various interest groups are submitting what they want included in the forth-

coming framework.

In the current framework, which expires this year, key populations include the LGBT community, sex workers, migrant laborers and children on the streets.

The document refers to LGBT in its high-risk class but does not spell out what interventions can be done to fight AIDS in the community.

Zambia’s most prominent gay activist Lundu Mazoka says a holistic approach is needed. He cites culture and religion as two factors that propel ignorance and apathy towards the LGBT community.

During the run-up to the 2011 general elections, Zambia’s three church mother bodies the Council of Churches in Zambia, the Evangelical Fellowship

of Zambia and the Zambia Episcopal Conference issued a joint statement condemning homosexuality and asking voters not to support anyone who was suspected of supporting the LGBT community.

Since then, many churches have been vocal in their opposition to equal rights for LGBT people, and in January 2016, Zambia’s President assented to a constitutional amendment that once again declared Zambia as a Christian nation. Lusaka-based evangelical preacher Moses Lungu says homosexuality is wrong because marriage is between a man and a woman in the Bible.

“From the Old Testament to the New Testament, marriage has always been between a man and a woman. Leviticus calls [homosexuality] an abomination. In this country we shouldn’t allow what the Bible doesn’t allow,” Lungu said.

Lungu is also President of the Evangelical Youth Alliance International, an NGO that champions the wellbeing of youth.

In 2013, a local Pentecostal musician whose stage name is Kings released a song called “Wake up Zambia” in which he calls on Christians to resist what he terms donor-driven homosexuality. On the cultural side, many Zambians see homosexuality as taboo. Hundreds of the country’s traditional chiefs outlaw same-sex sexual relations in their chiefdoms.

Chiefs are very influential in social and political lives, and their subjects widely respect their authority. Mazoka says human rights issues concerning the LGBT community need to be enshrined in Zambian laws to properly safeguard the LGBT community and to promote tolerance in society.

“Because Zambians thought unprotected anal intercourse was just for homosexuals, we have also failed to address this high-risk sexual behaviour in young girls who engaged in anal intercourse as a way to preserve virginity and avoid pregnancy,” he added.

In the past four years, three people have been brutally arrested and taken to court on suspicion of promoting or practicing homosexuality. The cases have all ended in acquittals due to lack of evidence.

Despite laws prohibiting homosexuality in Zambia, other laws allow universal access to health services for all citizens irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity.

##

- Rex. Moses Lungu -



Farmers Fight Climate Change In Malawi

By Deogracias Kalima, Malawi



Having been heavily affected, farmers in rural Malawi are taking a leading role in fighting climate change by employing climate smart agriculture techniques. This is an approach for transforming and reorienting agricultural development under the new realities of climate change.

Kenson Mulapula is an exceptional farmer. While most of neighbouring households are struggling with acute food shortages, he has enough maize for his household to last the next six months. The 52 year old's resilience to climate change is attracting other farmers too.

"It has been a tough two successive farming seasons with floods, and then drought which has seen complete failure of crops here. However, I have been able to harvest enough for my household thanks to Climate Smart Agriculture techniques I use." He says. Like many other countries, Malawi has not been spared of climate change effects. In 2015, unprecedented flooding washed away thousands of hectares of

crop fields mostly in the densely populated southern part of Malawi affecting over 200,000 people, while early this year, severe drought affecting the central and southern provinces of the country has left over 8 million people in need of emergency food now.

Experts have attributed this to the effects of the El Nino weather phenomenon which has been affecting the Southern part of Africa for the past two years due to climate change. However, agricultural experts and other stakeholders are engaging selected local farmers who are being trained in climate smart agriculture practices which in turn they put into practice in their areas so that others can see their impact and learn from these farmers.

These are called lead farmers and their impact in their communities is visible as they are acting as models to fellow farmers and encouraging others to adopt conservation agriculture which in local vernacular language is popularly known as Mleranthaka.

Climate smart agriculture refers to an approach for transforming and reorienting agricultural development under the new realities of climate change which according to Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) views as an agricultural practice that sustainably increases productivity, enhances resilience (adaptation), reduces Green House Emissions where possible, and enhances achievement of national food security and development goals. The principal goal of Climate Smart Agriculture according to FAO is food security and development while productivity, adaptation and mitigation

are identified as three interlinked pillars necessary for achieving this goal. Mulapula is one of such lead farmers in his area. He explains contrary to traditional farming which involves making ridges, in conservation agriculture, they do away with ridges.

“In this type of farming, we don’t make ridges and furrows as in conventional agriculture but leave the land untilled but we fill the land with residues from the last harvest in this case, the maize stalks. This means there is minimum soil disturbance and also permanent soil cover which allows up to 35 percent greater rainfall water infiltration.” He explains.

Mulapula says manure making is an integral part of conservation agriculture. That is why he produces organic manure from the crop residues and livestock drops. He has ten goats which gives

him enough drops to make organic manure while at the same time giving him an alternative source of income in case of crop failure.

“I periodically collect goats droppings which I use as manure at my maize field. That aside, I also have the readily available alternative source of income should there be an emergency at my household as I just sell one or two livestock and use the proceeds to meet my household needs like school fees for his children.” Says the father of five. Among other problems that is faced by most rural farmers in Malawi, is the lack of proper storage facilities for their harvested crops which sees most farmers losing a third of their harvest through pests which attack crops when they are in storage facilities according to the statistics from the Malawi Ministry of Agriculture.

Most farmers in Malawi use granaries made from bamboo planks. However, this apart from taking a greater role in making the land bare, the bamboo made granaries, are also highly vulnerable to pests thereby reducing most farmers produce. With an intention to stop this, the agriculture ministry has introduced metal granaries which are being offered to farmers at an affordable price.

According to Mulapula, the metal granaries are pest resistant since they absorb heat from the sun which kills most pests which attack crops while in storage. He also says they metal granaries have no chance of getting the stored crops wet as compared to bamboo made granaries which sometimes can leak in times of heavy rains.

“Ever since I bought the metal granary two years ago, I have not had

any post harvest losses due to pests. Furthermore, the metal granary has helped me to conserve the bamboo in my forest which means more soil cover and reducing the soil erosion which has been a serious problem here.” Remarks Mulapula.

Due to his resilience in times of harsh weather, Mulapula has managed to attract scores of farmers in his areas who this year have started practicing conservation agriculture in an attempt to beat harsh weather should it strike again.

One such farmer is Alex Mitswati who has seen the resilience of climate smart agriculture and wants to start it this farming year which has just started in Malawi. “I have been practicing conventional agriculture all these years, but due to the harsh weather, I have experienced 60 percent drop of harvest

which has seen my household with severe food deficit this year while for those who have been doing conservation agriculture, they have still been harvesting enough despite the effects of El Nino harsh weather pattern hence my decision to adopt it too." Says Mitswati.

One of the characteristics of climate smart agriculture according to the United Nations, is engaging women and marginalized. While in Malawi women have the less access and legal right to land, still some women have taken it upon themselves to lead in restoring the forest cover which have destroyed by human activities. One such woman is Mable Mailosi, a 62 year old retired civil servant who has committed herself to replanting trees along river banks and hills. Mailosi, has established her own tree nursery in her village which she is producing indigenous trees seedlings which she is planting herself

and also offer other interested farmers at a small fee.

"When I look around the area as compared to the days of my childhood, I see that the forest cover has been destroyed, and that is why we have harsh weather pattern of late. So I committed myself to replanting the trees along the river banks and hilly areas so as to mitigate the effects of climate change." Says Mailosi.

"I also offer tree seedlings to other interested farmers so that they can also plant trees of their own and in so doing, together we can restore the ecosystem."

Mailosi hopes in the next five years she will be able to restore most of her area's ecosystem as it provides farmers in her area with water, clean air, food and other essential materials for livelihoods. However, she has bemoaned conflicting government policies which are affecting the re-afforestation ef-

forts as one policy encourages smallholder irrigation farming along the rivers but does not take into consideration measures which can mitigate siltation and erosion to most rivers catchment areas.

##

Inspiring political discourse through Social Media

By Malvern Mkudu, Zimbabwe



Frustrated by the deteriorating economic and political situation in Zimbabwe, some youths are using satire as an outlet for simmering anger and discontent against the government of President Robert Mugabe.

The economic and political strife that has characterized the country in the last decade has inspired political protests and representations through art. With the restricted media space and the state broadcaster unwillingness to produce or broadcast content that is critical of the government and its leadership, the internet has provided opportunities for diverse voices to be heard.

Many emerging artists have taken advantage of these global technological developments to produce politically charged satirical videos. Such content producers include the Zambezi News

project run by the Magamba Network, recently voted this year's second most popular comedy show in the comedy awards held by online entertainment publication ZimboJam.

The group has made live performances at festivals in countries such as Sweden, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Zambezi News satirizes the propaganda and ineptitude of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation state controlled television.

According to their website, "Zambezi News is the satirical comedy series that has taken Zimbabwe and abroad by storm. A parody of a typical Zimbabwe

Broadcasting Corporation news programme, Zambezi News satirizes the relentless propaganda and astounding journalistic ineptitude on state TV."

Focusing on the problems faced by Zimbabweans, the show has found favour with many locals including many Zimbabweans abroad. The programme pokes fun at government and focuses attention on oppression perpetrated by the state.

The show is anchored by comical presenters Mandape Mandape, Jerome Weathers and Kudzai Mashayamombe. It consists of live news in the studio and constantly breaks for random news reports, music videos and cheeky advertisements.

The satire comedy is not only popular in Zimbabwe as season 1 and season 2 of the programme have been broadcast

around Southern Africa. It has been received very well in these countries especially by the audience on the internet using social media platforms.

A brainchild of Samm Farai Monro better known as Comrade Fatso and Leslie Tongai Makawa also known as Outspoken, the show was started in 2011 and managed to distribute 10.000 DVDs then. The two play leading roles as Mandape Mandape and Jerome Weathers in the show.

We asked Samm Monro to tell us more about the Zambezi News show. The Zambezi News executive producer says that in 2011 they were asked to perform at the Zimbabwe Film Festival. From then on they have not looked back. Their first episode of the comedy satire distributed 10.000 DVDs.

“Zimbabweans are facing economic,

social and political challenges and Zambezi News talks to these issues,” Monro said. This is why it has become popular with Zimbabweans from all walks of life.

The internet boom in the country has been a major influence on the Zambezi News and its growth. The show now relies on Zimbabwe’s two biggest social network platforms WhatsApp and Facebook to distribute its work. Monro added, “In a week our videos can have 10.000 views and it proves that our reach is growing. In Zimbabwe WhatsApp and Facebook are bigger than YouTube, so we have six times viewership on Facebook than on YouTube.”

Zimbabwe has a constrained media space where the ruling party uses it to further its propaganda to entrench its political hegemony. Anything seen as harmful to the ruling party’s interests

is censored and removed from the public space. However, the internet has changed the overt censorship. Young Zimbabweans are now able to produce content and distribute it to their intended audiences without censorship. Citizens want to talk about the issues that affect them and the internet gives them this opportunity.

Internet influence on satire

There is no doubt that the internet is helping to open up and democratise the Zimbabwean media space. It has given people multiple options to express themselves and promote the right to freedom of expression.

According to Monro, the future is looking brighter, “Zambezi News is just starting and will grow even bigger. Experts are saying they are waiting for digitization to create content but the

internet and social media has already allowed us to do this” he says.

Internet penetration in Zimbabwe has been pegged at 50 percent by the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) and more than 90 percent of this is accounted for by mobile broadband.

The internet became a bastion for alternative voices, a space that the Zimbabwe government could not easily censure. While the state could control what programmes toe the line and could air on the national broadcaster, the internet provided an alternative platform for Zimbabweans with divergent political views.

Faced with economic challenges and denial of basic civil rights, many artists tried to express themselves through many ways without success. Many

were arrested and detained by state security agents. Samm Farai Monro of Magamba Network was one of the artists who was known for his protest poetry that challenged and questioned the status quo.

Although he succeeded with poetry, there was no medium to distribute his work to a wider audience. Increased and improved internet access and speeds in Zimbabwe has given Monro's other project Zambezi News more traction.

Zimbabweans must take advantage of internet access to express themselves and challenge the government's dominance on mainstream media. The democratic influence of the internet is manifesting itself in how young Zimbabweans are producing entertainment programmes that hold the government to account through humour. ##



Zambezi News

Mocked ‘bus conductor’ is Zimbabwe’s surprising hottest job

By Ray Mwareya, Zimbabwe



As Zimbabwe’s economy dies, there is a fascinating breed of “CEOs” emerging. They are not corporate bankers. They’re comically labelled the “Chief Executives of Earnings.” They are the local distance and cross border “bus conductors.” In towns, mega cities or villages, the “bus conductor” is now the “job-of-the

moment” and envied even by nurses, teachers, and unemployed professional graduates.

The “bus conductor” tyrannical presence begins in city bus terminuses - usually noisy enclosures filled with brawls, shouts, open air maize roasts, forex dealers and turf wars to herd travelers into Brazilian manufactured Marco Polo coaches and British Leyland coaches. The “bus conductor,” is happiest when he eyes multitudes of passengers standing idly outside, clicking Android phones on bus pavements, screening prices for Zimbabwe’s most wanted journey “Harare - to - Johannesburg, South Africa.”

Lies and flattery are deployed. “This bus is driven by Schumacher’s nephew, ambuya (sister), jet speed,” gloats the “bus conductor” when pitching his bus to a gorgeous would-be passenger. “Your Gucci handbag are safe next to the engine,” continues the “bus conductor”, as he grabs travel bags long before you agree “yes” to board his bus.

Bus coaches are mushrooming in Harare, unemployment is creating hundreds of bus touts, and fights for travelers are soaring. Harmful force is increasingly used to muscle unwilling passengers into buses. In one grim incident that made international headlines in May 2016, a newly wedded 25 year old wo-

man and her unborn baby died from abdominal trauma after “conductors” brawling for South Africa bound passengers crushed and overwhelmed her. Once you have been “force seated” inside the bus, the lies pick up tempo.

“This is the safest window inside. Rain, sunshine are none of your worries,” says the bus conductor ignoring woe, under fitted glass windowpanes that leak brown dust into customer eyes. “We have been waiting for you passenger. The bus will depart forth, now.”

On glance, inside the 88 seater bus, you’ll be the eleventh or twelfth passenger to board. “Sorry conductor I must catch other buses already full,” you will plead, eyeing rival buses, packed and departing on time.

The transaction at this point turns ho-

stale. "I've already written your ticket, sister. I can't reverse my billing book. You are stuck here," the "conductor" will say. He usually tears off a fluffy paper out of his ticket book - and forces it into your hand. "You're officially our number 90th passenger today," he says. He will soothe you with wild claims. "We gave you a US\$5 discount. Harare, Zimbabwe to Johannesburg is \$25, that bus ahead charges \$35, oh it got involved in three accidents last two months, fatal if you ask."

The trick is to instill fear and dampen a passenger's enthusiasm for rival, better organized coaches. Then the "conductor" will stiffen his jaw, get angrier. "Pay the fee now, I already tore my ticket book. For you."

As soon as you hand over a \$50 note for his \$25 fare, you're locked in by the bus conductor. His mood swings to dis-

dain. "You'll get your change during the course of the journey," he says dashing out of the bus to hook more unsuspecting travelers.

That is when you realize you have just fallen to a woven "persuasion scam." A bus scheduled to embark from Harare to South Africa at 9 am will stay on until 1pm much to your helplessness. You peep outside the bus, the "conductor" swings to life, in fits and hops. He dismantles the windowpanes as he climbs up the bus's roof "carrier" to impose sanity and further dictatorship on touts and pick pockets who tussle for traveler's bags, and wallets.

"Everyone down the bus roof!" shouts the "bus conductor", money bag swinging around his neck. Lousy touts are forced into line to get "wages" - \$ 5 notes from the "bus conductor." The reward is for their efforts in whistling,

scattering, brawling travelers until they are forced to climb into rival buses.

"To confuse and trap passengers is the aim," laughs Tindo Shoko, a 27 year old "conductor" who says he has vocational training certificate in plumbing but has failed to find work in the capital Harare for the last three years.

Fresh from acting "paymaster" to rank touts, the "bus conductor" rushes across the pavement, herding more undecided travelers into his bus. A tout in secret consultation with the conductor reverses the bus to and from for some yards to create an utterly false impression of urgency that the bus is immediately leaving. "This is the last bus!" screams the bus conductor.

In hey days 1990s and early 2000s of Zimbabwe's sparkling economic prosperity the "bus conductor" used to be

a shunned and stereo-typed profession associated with the badly schooled, usually primary school drop outs and refugees fleeing war from nearer African countries. In a cliché, times have changed.

Now, most of Zimbabwe's bus conductors are polished graduates of the British Cambridge International Advanced Level system, former teachers fed up with paltry salaries, ex-hospital clerks and even technical college

graduates attracted to an industry that is experiencing a voluminous growth as millions of Zimbabweans jostle in buses every year to buy cheaper food, clothes, medicines in South Africa, Zambia, or Botswana.

The spotless fluent English spoken by the "bus conductors" and touts usually baffles tourists taking a ride on

Zimbabwe's public bus system. "Morning, sir, I'm the badged conductor in charge of this bus and this terminus. Which country is currently suffering your absence? I'm humbled to be chauffeuring you on this bus," says the comic conductor, Tindo Shoko, who draws a cackle of laughs from bevy of Chinese and American tourists hitching a bus ride from Harare to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe's most glamorous holiday town.

When at last, the bus moors the road, five hours late, a stiff apology, a monumental lie, comes. "Sorry, our bus driver was attending to some banking transactions, human issues...We'll overtake all coaches gone ahead of us." The real bus driver cranks up the engine, the bus peaks speed out of the terminus. Jittery passengers, "The fake driver, he vanished with my change! \$30 - it's a rip off!"

The driver now multitasking, balancing the steering wheel and swiping WhatsApp on his smartphone, hoarsens his voice, "Peace...peace! At least the real conductor is with us..."

The course of the journey is the bus conductor's cash cow moment. In the blink of an eye, a fake ticket book is produced, outlandishly similar to the real ticket book. A quarter of the bus passengers fares are harvested by the bus conductor in secret liaison with the bus driver.

The real bus owner, sleeping haughtily far away in a leafy Harare suburb or toiling in the diaspora in London, receives only 75% of his bus's daily income. Along the way, the bus is stopped by dotted traffic police officers and the bus company's auditor. Again the go-to man is the lively bus conductor. He rattles to action, inflating costs to the

bus owner.

Along the way, to the further disgruntlement of passenger - the coach stops abruptly on a sideway butchery or restaurant. Passengers are commanded, "get down...go eat! 35 minutes break."

The purpose is not a deserved break for weary travelers. It is a crafty scheme which earns the bus conductor and driver free meals, cash vouchers from impressed restaurant owners and means to further claim false bills from the bus owner.

At the end of the journey, the bus conductor nicely nicks from both the driver and bus owner and goes home with up to 5% of the bus's income daily. Bus conductors are envy of townships in Zimbabwe, building seven roomed middle class homes, buying their own taxis, sending their children to private schools with nostalgic British names

like Prince so an so Primary School - in a country where proper civil servants moan of pay dates shifts and erratic bank queues.

##

The Rise of Swaziland's Hip-Hop Scene

By Sabelo Mkhabela, Swaziland



Over the past five years Swaziland's hip-hop scene has been steadily shaping up and finding its own voice. A gust of Swazi artists are demanding to be taken seriously.

About a decade ago, the southern African kingdom had essentially no hip hop scene. At the time, there were just a

few artists – the pioneers of Swazi hip hop – who had their songs played on radio and their videos on TV. Their music though, was suspect – the beats and delivery were weak and their concepts were recycled from both American and South African hip hop. A majority of artists even went as far as rapping in Zulu – a South African language prevalent in South African music.

Lately, Swazi rappers have been embracing their own languages by incorporating it more in their music. Rappers such as QibhoIntalektual, Dungavee, Mr Kangaroo come to mind. “Dlala Swaziland” by a group called Stealth Independence was one of the first Swazi vernacular hip hop songs to be, if I may, a hit in 2008. The song was chosen

by radio DJ LindelwaMafa as the theme song for her radio show The Swazi Rhythm. The group hasn't released any music together since then. One of the members, Slim Q, who now runs inQgnito – a stable which is home to a handful of promising artists, reflects on the success of their 2008 hit song: “I feel like I was part of a group of people that changed the perception of a lot of Swazis when it came to music. We created a sound that was uniquely Swazi at a time when people were trying to rap in Zulu and felt like it was hard to use their mothertongue.”

Technical obstacles

Swaziland is not the most technologically advanced country. Bandwidth is

still a luxury. Soaring data costs have stalled the Swazi music industry's growth in the digital sphere. The average citizen cannot afford to access streaming sites on a daily basis. The majority of artists are unable to use sites like SoundCloud, Bandcamp and YouTube to promote their music. Mobile telephone network, MTN enjoys a natural monopoly in the country, which could be why the company has ignored the nation's cries over their exorbitant rates. Talking to national newspaper, The Swazi Observer, renowned rapper, producer and CEO of notable Swazi music stable, Claiming Ground, Mozaik said: “I truly appreciate how MTN has provided us artists the platform to sell local talent. It would be lovely if they would consider lowering the rates for the benefit of local talent, because many people want to hear our material and the feedback is usually how much it costs to download this material. It

would be a move that empowers us profoundly.”

Artists in Swaziland then rely on radio for their music to be heard. Though a few radio show hosts have been working to spread the artform, like MTN Top 20 co-hosts Bongani “Bobo” Dlamini and Bongani “DJ Tizalami” Dube, and The Swazi Rhythm’s Lindelwa “Lindz” Mafa, by and large the nation has been reluctant to give local hip hop a chance.

The country has one major radio station (SBIS – Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services) that’s split into two channels – one that broadcasts in Swati (SBIS1) and another that broadcasts in English (SBIS2). The latter, a youth-orientated station, is the more likely of the two to play rap. But because radio hosts make their own playlists, they’ll only play songs that they personally know and like. And even if

an artist’s song does get played, they won’t see any royalties. In Swaziland airplay is entirely about exposure. DJ Tizalami, in his article “This is the house that we built ... it needs a roof ” on The Swazi Observer, wrote, “In Swaziland, our sole (state) broadcaster is wholly funded by government and has no other commercial mechanism for self-sustenance other than sporadic income from advertising. Therefore, airplay royalties for our artistes remains a noble but impractical concept, for now.”

Music sales are dropping worldwide. Streaming, though an unstable venture itself, seems to be the future of consuming music. In Swaziland, streaming is hardly an option because of the country’s high internet rates, as stated earlier. Most African musicians make a large percentage of their revenue from shows, brand partnerships or endorsements, and of course, advertising. Be-

cause of a lack of a law regulating the use of intellectual property, Swazi artists will, in most cases, gain no revenue when their songs are used by brands for advertising campaigns. It’s simply a casual practice. Music just isn’t looked at as a service that can be exchanged for money.

Hip hop as a culture never truly flourished in Swaziland either. Djing, B-boying, graffiti, ciphers and park jams are essentially unheard of in the small kingdom. Rap is the most prevalent element of hip hop in the country, but the lack of grassroots platforms like ciphers and park jams which play as rappers’ training grounds, jeopardises the quality of emcees the kingdom has. “I think the absence of platforms like ciphers, battles and rap sessions is affecting the game in a major way,” says rapper Psycholution who honed his skills in some of the very few plat-

forms that were available to him as an up-and-comer. “It’s platforms like those that serve as lyrical exercise which is vital for an emcee on a street level, before stepping into the [recording] booth. Not having those platforms results in up-and-coming rappers lacking the basic fundamentals of being an emcee. I myself am a product of ciphers and battles. We need to have more of those as the the hip hop movement.”

Recently, some strides have been made in the Swazi hip hop scene. The general public now seems willing to pay attention to local rappers. Swazis have begun headlining well-attended shows and sharing stages with South Africa’s most revered acts. The annual Hipnotik Festival – a mid-year youth music festival that hosts the biggest names in South African and Swazi hip hop – offers perhaps the greatest opportunity for hip hop to shine in Swaziland. Some

hip hop artists have even had the opportunity to perform for the king during his birthday, an opportunity which was mostly offered to artists who do more “mature” and “serious” genres. A sign that hip hop is starting to be taken seriously in the country.

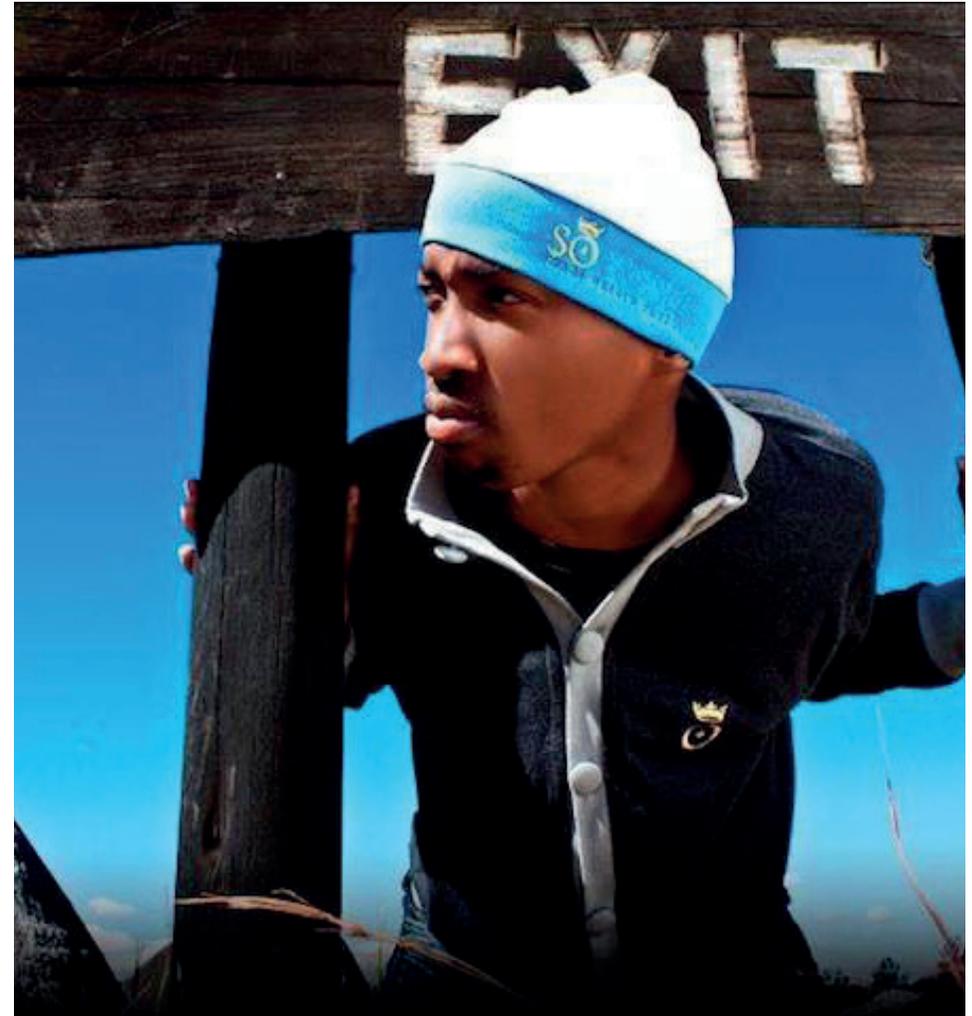
Ready for the big stage

A few Swazi rappers have even seen their faces on corporate billboards, and their songs used for big brand ad campaigns and lucrative partnerships. This is owed to the love some Swazi hip hop artists are now receiving; they have songs on high rotation on national radio, and a reasonable number of people just resonate with the music.

Though working within a sloppy music industry, in a country that itself has much to deal with – like its tumultuous political climate, famine, a drought,

high HIV-related deaths and unemployment, a handful of Swazi rappers are ready for the world stage.

##



Psycho Lution

‘Life is too short to learn German’, unless you are a refugee

By Kim Harrisberg



Germany made headlines for receiving the most number of refugees in Europe during the recent refugee crisis. But how has both the state and civil society dealt with integration now and in the past, and what does this say about Germany's future? Kim Harrisberg joined a group of

journalists from around the world on an information tour run by the German Federal Foreign Office that focused on the complexities of immigration and integration in the country.

Oscar Wilde's famous line, 'Life is too short to learn German', still brings knowing smiles to German faces. But for the near half a million refugees applying for refugee status in Germany amid the global refugee crisis, not learning the country's language could mean a lifetime of marginalisation and hardship.

This is an all too well-known topic at

Hunsruck Primary School in Kreuzberg, a district of West Berlin, Germany. Here, parents embrace their children as they run from the school gates with giddy excitement. Fingers are intertwined, bags are offloaded from small shoulders and dangling legs are lifted onto bicycle seats. Varied accents and languages mingle with the excited shouts, singing and laughter of primary school children released into the world after a long day of classes. Hunsruck Primary School is one of the estimated thirty schools offering 'Welcome Classes' to newly arrived refugees, predominantly from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Afghanistan. These classes offer a vital

service across the country to refugees aspiring to embrace the language of their new and foreign home.

"I don't really like to call them 'Welcome Classes,'" admits Frederike Terhechte-Mermeroglu, a teacher of 30 years who coordinates many of the classes. "In many ways, the refugees are still fleeing." The school is meant to provide a transitional space for students who arrive in Germany after fleeing conflicts and urgently need to learn German, both to progress in school and to integrate into German society. It is not an easy process, largely due to underfunding, few teachers and even fewer translators.

These students are part of the one million refugees that recently crossed over Germany's borders, and the 65 million displaced worldwide following conflicts predominantly in Syria, but

also in political violence in Eritrea, Iraq and Afghanistan, among others. But migration is not a new topic within the country. According to the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, twenty percent of all Germans have a migration background. A guest worker agreement with Turkey in the 1960s and 70s saw numbers in the labour force rise according to Stephan Sievert, in his presentation on behalf of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development.

Understanding the statistics, and the stories behind them, are central to filtering through the stereotypes and debates surrounding migration and integration across the globe. This is relevant even in places like Hunsruck Primary School.

“The teachers are afraid...of what they do not know,” says Frederike, explaining

that the starting and finishing times of the Welcome Classes are different to the rest of the school in order to avoid any conflict with the other students. She is sitting on a desk in one of the now empty classrooms. Self-portraits of the children decorate the walls, capturing the nuanced appearances of the diverse student body. It is this classroom, with German words scribbled on sheets of paper and the landmarks of Berlin up on a board, which captures the urgency of these classes in integrating the hundreds of thousands that are now a part of Germany’s society.

Nonetheless, Fredericke thinks it’s not enough. “We have one student who can never have his back to the door because he jumps every time someone enters the class. Some have never been inside a classroom before. Health insurance for the students does not cater for psychotherapy,” she explains. She seems

jaded by the poor state response to the urgent needs of such Welcome Classes, yet believes that “the strongest of all are the children themselves”. It is this, and the prospect of the educated children being able to help their families and future generations in Germany, that pushes her through the more difficult moments.

Radical Voices and Civil Society’s Response

Some Germans do not feel the same way as Frederike. South of Berlin is the city of Dresden, capital of the Eastern State of Saxony. Among other things, it is home to the now rebuilt architecture of the 1700s that was destroyed during WWII. The right wing populist movement, Pegida (an acronym for the English translation of ‘Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West’) has a strong presence here. The

two are closely linked. The annual memorial of the city’s destruction in 1945 attracts many from the fascist network, which is one reason why Pegida has prevailed in Dresden while fizzling out in other cities.

“What is Pegida?” asks Professor Werner Patzelt, a political scientist at the Dresden Technical University and the author of a book on the organisation titled ‘Pegida: Warning Signs from Dresden’. He is sitting in a classroom of the Political Science department within the university. “It is the tip of an iceberg,” he responds, referring to the deeply complex, hidden and potentially dangerous movement that has grown out of a Facebook page formed in 2014. The Facebook page was purportedly a reaction to a pro-Kurdish workers party that sparked fears of Muslim immigration in Germany. Far right radicalism is not unique to Germany, with

countries like Poland, France, England, Italy and Hungary battling against xenophobic and nationalist sentiment. Yet, it is Germany's past that makes an organisation like Pegida a wound in the side of Germany's need to show the world that history will not be repeated in their country.

Today, Pegida still persists predominantly on Facebook (with around 250,000 likes), yet there are also weekly meetings in Dresden where thousands come together to light candles, hear speeches and to be 'comforted by one another' according to Dr Patzelt. In the past, these ceremonies saw over 15,000 demonstrators, but today it's closer to 2,300 to 3,500. They speak about their fears of immigration, integration, economic competition and national identity. But Pegida is an organisation that Dr Patzelt believes the media has misunderstood by focusing

too much on an extreme minority. It is a view which has made Dr Patzelt a controversial figure with many saying he is giving too much credit to what is largely seen as a dangerous neo-Nazi organisation.

Nonetheless, Dr Patzelt says civil society has pushed the radical voice of Pegida out of other German cities and is trying to do the same in Dresden. The letters 'FCK PGDA' on a street pole outside Dr Patzelt's office capture the fact that many living in Dresden do not want to be affiliated to the organisation that has come to taint their country's reputation.

German and refugees Graffiti outside the Dresden Technical University. 'Dresden - Place to be' is an association of academic staff from Dresden Technical University that was founded at the same time as Pegida. They have

organised numerous events that bring together refugees and locals living in Dresden through concerts, conferences, races, food festivals and social media campaigns among other events. They have been busy, with at least ten events in two years catering to tens of thousands of people at various points. "This is not only about people who think the same," insists Annegret Shlutecke, one of the leaders during a talk explaining the organisation's events. "It often brings people who want to know more; people who have yet to form their opinions or who are curious to meet others."

Indeed, a plethora of civil society organisations and volunteers is trying to fill the gaps left by the state in Germany. Günther Schulze is one of these people who is now dedicating his retirement to 'Willkommensbündnis Steglitz-Zehlendorf', a refugee welcoming committee.

"We are an organisation of volunteers founded in 2014 that assists refugees in many ways," he explains. "We assist with emergency housing, government advice on housing locations, donations, linking up volunteers with refugees and more. We receive no funding from the state, everything is volunteer-based. We are doing things the state should be doing, we are doing too much. We can do it now, but we can't do this for the next 18 years."

Refugees are given 600 euros a month for housing, yet finding spaces where refugees are welcomed is a difficult task. "Waiting is a part of the system," he explains. "If refugees wait long enough they will be tempted to leave, and people know this." Yet he remains optimistic. "I receive, on average, around 30-40 emails from people a day. They offer beds, chairs, a car ride, anything. I think I have received a total of 20,000

emails. Among these around seven were from AFD accusing refugees of being terrorists. But most people want to push against the fear of a neo-Nazi propaganda. As a child born just after the war, I think much of the way Germans have responded to the refugee crisis is linked to its history, and of not wanting it to be repeated.”

But is the state aware of the role civil society is playing in filling the vacuum left by what should be state responsibility? Member of Parliament, Frank Tempel, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Internal Affairs, speaks openly at the Buntestag about what the state has done right and wrong regarding immigration in the country. “A lot has been done by volunteers that the state cannot provide. Several tasks have not been adequately addressed by the state. There is little money to provide for them. The government

needs to provide funds to municipalities to fund schools and teachers,” he says. As a former policeman, Frank has been exposed to numerous accounts of xenophobia and criminality, making him privy to the complexity and importance of working closely with communities on the ground. “I know that a lot of the subcultures in Germany are homemade.” Frank believes the state needs to invest in refugees both for financial and social rewards in the future.

Self-portraits of the children from Hunsrück Primary School where many have a migration background.

