

Breaking the Culture of Silence

An educational project in which 3,000 young people through increased self-esteem and insight into their life dare break with authoritarianism, take action and ultimately influence Zimbabwe's development.

Short brief on project objectives

Breaking the Culture of Silence aims to enlighten and educate vulnerable young people about their democratic rights, giving them the tools to influence their own life and break the cultural barriers that exist in Zimbabwean society.

The project is focused on protecting young people against political abuse and help them to a better future by teaching them to become leaders and role models for other young people. In addition, young people with inadequate knowledge about gender equality, HIV/AIDS, their own rights and poor reading skills acquire new essential knowledge and basic schooling.

Breaking the Culture of Silence targets both vulnerable suburban youth in the capital Harare and in rural Nkayi, nearly 700 km south of Harare. Young people will receive education one day per week for six months. Principal activities include:

"The situation in Zimbabwe makes it impossible for young people to express themselves freely. In Shona we say 'zvinhuzaam' - there is something wrong. But if you say that, you risk being beaten by the police." Overton, 20 years, Harare

Youth Leadership Training - A leadership training where young people learn about the economic and political situation in Zimbabwe, their democratic rights and not least how they can influence their own lives.

'Life skills' training - A training program designed to strengthen young people's self-esteem, social skills and create positive health behaviour in relation to for example gender, sexuality and sex. The latter is not only a valuable knowledge, but a matter of life and death for young people in Zimbabwe.

Basic school skills - Calculating, reading and writing courses are offered to young people who have dropped out of school. At the same time internet cafes are established that in addition to training in computer use will help the youth network and pressure groups with research. Those who participate in the basic school skills programme, will receive training three days a week.

Primary target group

1200 unemployed young people from the suburbs of Harare aged 17-28 years. The gender distribution is 50/50. Approximately 60% of the pupils are orphans, while 40% are single mothers. 1800 unemployed young people from southern Zimbabwe, aged 17-28 years. None of the students have completed primary school. 2/3 are girls, because traditionally there are many young single mothers in rural areas.

Secondary target group

Parents and children will be influenced by the students' changing self-image, autonomy and view on women. The local community, which will be facing young people who seek influence and demand that their wishes and rights are met. Local

authorities, for example the police that will change behaviour towards the young people, because they are in dialogue with the young people and know them through various activities.

Project Period: 2010-2013 (3 years)

Project Cost: 6,065,844 DKK

If more money than budgeted are collected, the extra money will go to expand the number of teams in the Harare suburbs.

Short description of Zimbabwe

Since the early 1990s, Zimbabwe has been in an economic and political crisis. Most recently the population has lived through a spring with extensive political violence and human suffering that has resulted in more than 1,000 deaths and 200,000 now living in exile and extreme poverty. The violence was mainly carried out by young people who have experienced a life of political oppression and extreme poverty.

The country currently has an unemployment rate of over 80% and an annual inflation of 11,250,000%. The galloping inflation means that the few who have a job, have to rush out and spend their entire salary immediately after they have received it. If they wait, it's a sure thing the prices will have made food so expensive that wages have become worthless.

The amount of money that in 2004 could buy a house, can now not even buy a banana. The reason for the crazy inflation is that the Zimbabwean government, led since 1979 by Robert Mugabe, have been pressing so many notes that the value of them permanently diminished.

The low confidence in the currency makes it difficult to run a business and as numerous small and large shops and companies have gone bankrupt, unemployment has exploded and now exceeds 80%.

The education system, which once was one of the best in Africa, has deteriorated catastrophically as the country's economy has been decreasing. 10 years ago almost all primary school children completed school - today it is only 70%. Alternative education is therefore crucial if we shall not lose a whole generation of young people. The country's current situation, logically enough, leads to big frustrations in society, especially among the young, where the depressing situation makes it difficult to

Facts about Zimbabwe

Location: Southern Africa, between South Africa and Zambia

Area: 390,580 km² (about 9 times as large as Denmark)

Climate: Tropical with rainy from November to March

Terrain: Mostly hilly plateau with mountains in the east

Average life expectancy: Men 40 years, women 38 years

Population: about 13 million

Capital: Harare, 1.7 million inhabitants (1999)

Ethnicity: Africans 98% (Shona 82%, Ndebele 14%, other 2%). Mixed and Asians: 1%. White: less than 1%

Religion: Traditional African religions (55%). Christians (45%)

Language: English (official). Shona, Ndebele, and some minor tribal dialects

maintain faith in yourself and the future. Not least because traditional training is no longer enough to guarantee young people a future in peace and freedom. One can wonder how the 83-year-old president Mugabe can stay in power under the current circumstances. Part of the explanation can be found in the fact that Zimbabwean community is built around ancient traditions and norms, where authority is rarely challenged. A culture as 'The Culture of Silence' means that young people are brought up not to speak in assemblies before the older have expressed their views - and then not to speak against the older. In addition, women must obey men - and no one is questioning the authorities' actions - whether you know about corrupt politicians, or have been victims of violence.

Young people are being exploited by the system that should appreciate them as society's driving force and future leaders. However, the only time where young people in today's Zimbabwe gain political attention, is when President Mugabe has to show his power. Here they are in turn popular because they are frustrated, uneducated, raised to believe in authority and are thus easy to manipulate. When rioting and participation in demonstrations is at the same time paid for by free food, booze and drugs, the choice is not difficult for the unemployed and neglected youth. But there are bright spots: Despite the harsh living conditions, there are organizations that try to break the political and cultural patterns in Zimbabwe. Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke (MS) is working with two small organizations, YAZ and BUIYSAP, that support and educate young people to become independent and critical individuals. YAZ and BUIYSAP are trying to give young people a meaningful life, so they can actively take part in creating a better future for themselves and Zimbabwe. Both organizations, however, are small and cannot complete their training programs without support.

MS's current support for the two organizations consists mainly of support to their organizational development, financial management and to strengthen their democratic structure.

Precisely because Zimbabwe is on the verge of collapse, it is also predictable that things may soon change. Public discontent has been steadily increasing and the West and neighbouring countries are also asserting pressure. When changes come - and it must come soon - it will be a golden opportunity for the young to influence the country's development. In addition the young people are the majority: more than half of Zimbabwe's total population of 13 million are young people under 30 years. For the opportunity to be exploited, it is essential that as many as possible are trained to organize, get experience with lobbying, break with the trust in authorities, and generally get the competencies to take action in a changing society. Those are the competencies that YAZ and BUIYSAP, with help from Operation Dayswork, can give 3,000 young people between 17 and 28 over the next three years - eight times as many as the organizations are currently educating.

NOTE: Because of the chaotic inflation in Zimbabwe, the project will not be conducted in the local currency but in U.S. dollars.

Expected results

YAZ and BUIYSAP wished, with support from MS and Operation Dayswork, to pull more than 3,000 young people away from political violence in Zimbabwe, by giving them the competencies and a belief that they can change the situation of poverty and oppression. The pupils will through the project learn to use a wide range of life- and leadership tools that will enable them to say no to violence and oppression, and instead focus on rights and their own possibilities of democratic influence.

The program will through student-centered training prepare young people for meetings and discussions with local politicians and traditional leaders, and will help to show young people and others in the community that there is a democratic and non-violent path to a better life.

The young people will, as part of the course, not only learn about leadership, rights and democracy in the classroom but also take part in a series of practical exercises that can help them to get their confidence and motivation back.

BUIYSAP has already experimented with a variety of platforms in this process and has so far been very successful in putting the young people in charge of arranging and participating in sports events and small business ventures. Small businesses have proven to be a success, both in giving young people their self-esteem back and to help them be accepted by traditional leaders. It is only a few who understand how to do business during the difficult economic conditions in Zimbabwe, so when the young succeed there, it is hard not to acknowledge them as worthy participants in local decision making.

Sports events will, in addition to giving the young organizers experience and confidence as leaders and participants, contribute to a reconciliation between young people in Zimbabwe, who are sharply divided over the political orientation and social divides.

Many young Zimbabwean living in close family networks without much contact with other young people and with limited knowledge about what is happening in society. The vulnerable young people in *Breaking the Culture of Silence* are given an opportunity to discuss their problems with peers in the same situation. These networks will, with support from BUIYSAP and YAZ, form the basis for the dissemination of the idea of a Zimbabwe free of cultural and political oppression.

The education programme will give the young people the following skills:

- Improve their personal and organizational skills to take decisions that are more long term - while giving them a clearer focus and goals for what they want with their lives and the courage to bring their plans into action.
- Train them to identify and analyze problems and express their positions in negotiating situations.
- The ability and courage to express their opinions and act as role models for other young people, when they start their own business or arrange events.
- The possibility of influencing local decisions and regulations affecting their lives through the formation of pressure groups.
- Enhance their health awareness in relation to HIV/AIDS (20% of the population is HIV positive), and knowledge about sex, sexuality and gender.
- Improve reading and writing skills. Without such knowledge, it is very difficult to independently acquire new knowledge, as well as making people easy victims of manipulation and political propaganda from people like President Mugabe.

The existing legislation on youth is very vague and does not give young people a real opportunity to be heard or to influence decisions affecting their lives. Therefore, part of the work of YAZ and BUIYSAP focus on getting a closer cooperation between youth organizations and the State Ministry of Youth and community youth services.

Sustainability

For development projects to be sustainable, it is often expected that the project country will take over the funding, when donor money runs out. But what to do in countries where the state is part of the problem?

Breaking the Culture of Silence's sustainability lies in the community and family structures that the young people will affect through a different world view, a democratic mindset and a strong self-confidence. YAZ and BUIYSAP will also initiate cooperation in which the materials, experiences and training programmes could spread to other self-financed education and youth organizations.

To ensure that the two organizations can grasp the dramatic expansion of their projects, there will be recruited a development worker who will focus on making the two organizations' structure and financial management able to manage so much money.

In order to support the pressure and lobby groups which are generated by the training programs, there will be made open sessions, where former pupils every 14th day can receive guidance and coaching in the work they do, even after they have completed their course.

Youth leadership training

The training consists of many components, each of which is to create active young people who can act independently to change the chaotic and oppressive social and political system in Zimbabwe. Harare's suburbs and the southern rural areas have many common features but also some different.

This is also reflected in the project. In rural areas the focus is more on young people's lobbying work in relation to changing social and cultural norms, whereas in the capital region more emphasis is put on skills in rhetoric, that should ensure that young people can take advantage of the easier access to mass media in the city. However, it is central to both city and country, that young people learn about leadership and democratic principles and that after six months, the basic school skills, such as reading and writing, are in place.

Lobbying

Students who participate in youth leadership training learn through teamwork the small tricks, which are needed to make their activities happen. An example from YAZ is that they (unofficially) contact the local police officer, and thereby shorten the otherwise lengthy process it is to get a police permit. Part of the lobby work is to know the business processes and have good contacts in the political system. Officials who sit in the Youth Ministry, has minimal interest and knowledge of the reality of young people's lives. The policy in this area does not reflect the young people's needs or visions for the future. Therefore, it is a challenge for young people to gain access and influence over decision-making processes that concern their lives.

Rhetorics

In Denmark, most young people are raised up to think critical and ask questions if there is anything they cannot understand. In Zimbabwe it is just the opposite. Here, traditionally you do what you are told, if it is an authority that speaks. If young people in Zimbabwe challenge the rule that older people, husbands or authorities are per se always right, it is necessary to be aware of the culture and be able to argue your case precisely and firmly.

The ability to do well in discussions is not only about being eloquent. It comes also through a belief in that all people are equal and therefore you should not let yourself be dictated by others. And culture can change. YAZ has experienced their students reject representatives from the ruling party that in the middle of a football tournament came and demanded that everybody should participate in a demonstration in support of President Mugabe. In reality it does not require much for change to happen. The authorities, whether they are local officials or people from political parties, are not accustomed to resistance and can therefore often be confused when people counter-argument and not blindly accept the authority they face.

'Life skills' training

'Life skills' training is training in the development of vulnerable young people's social and personal skills by strengthening their decision-making capacity and self-esteem. The young people are challenged and strengthened in their ability to make decisions and translate knowledge from the classroom into something useful in everyday life. This process of translating knowledge into action is especially important for young people living in isolated local communities, where education is often deemed unnecessary and a waste of time.

Life skills' training is training in the development of vulnerable young people's social and personal skills by strengthening their decision-making capacity and self-esteem. Here they are challenged not only on their knowledge of a particular topic, for example gender equality and sexuality, but are also strengthened in their ability to make decisions and change their attitude to what is perceived as culturally acceptable/unacceptable. Thus they are affected to take independent decisions on what is best for themselves in relation to existing social structures, but also on how they, if they stand together, are able to achieve a better life.

HIV / AIDS

'Life skills' training will focus on educating young people about HIV / AIDS, because this a huge problem in Zimbabwe. It is estimated that more than 20% percent of the adult population is infected and that nearly 1 million children and adolescents have been orphaned due to the disease. There are informed a lot about AIDS in Zimbabwe, but because of American pressure, first and foremost with the assumption that young people must abstain from sex before marriage. Both YAZ and BUIYSAP has recently acknowledged that this approach is not effective enough. *Breaking the Culture of Silence* will instead focus on how young people can protect themselves against HIV and provide access to condoms instead of preaching sexual abstinence.

Gender and equality

Zimbabwe is a society of traditional African gender roles where the woman has her place in the home under the man's supervision. Women are not regarded as able to participate in political decision-making processes.

The same is true for the youth. And it is hard to change these values. It is easy to get boys to see gender as a positive good, when there is nothing at stake, but harder when it costs anything in their own freedom. That is why the two organizations work specifically with strengthening girls' self-esteem, knowledge and rhetorical skills. And as the discussions are taken up several times, the work starts bearing fruit. For

example, the girls in BUIYSAP succeeded questioning, that they were always fetching water for the tea breaks, so much that this informal rule was dropped. Today it is those who come too late who has to make tea - regardless of gender. This progress may seem modest, but nonetheless telling for a change of attitude, which also has implications beyond the classroom.

Networking

Many of the young people's networks, especially in rural areas, consist entirely of family and relatives. It is the family that make decisions for them - particularly if they are girls - and close contact with other young people is often limited and discussion of political and cultural oppression is a rarity. Through life-skills training work are done to stop this trend - the training is therefore in groups and there are given small social home work assignments to be made in pairs or small groups. This has for example in BUIYSAP led that the young, single mothers are realizing that their situation is not unique and that they do not have to be ashamed. Instead, they have gained an understanding of their problems, as something that is not necessarily their own fault, as they are traditionally told, but that their situation is much more an expression of society's norms than their own mistakes.

Basic school skills

This course is a new component of the organizations' work and it will give the students the basic school skills needed to be able to acquire new knowledge and communicate in writing with others.

The courses will work together with the creation of small internet cafes, in which there will be given computer training and training in how to use the internet for research. This combination of basic school skills, youth leadership training and life skills training gives young people the practical tools to change their life significantly. And hopefully also become part of the new generation that will break down some of the political and cultural barriers that are so undermining in Zimbabwean society. The total education will make young people able to break out of their narrow networks, address their own life situation and not least to participate actively in the development of society.

About Mellefolkeligt Samvirke (MS)

MS's work is bound together by a vision of a peaceful world with better conditions for poor and marginalized. Central to our work is the goal of promoting democracy and empowerment of the poor youth in developing countries.

Where other organizations supply medicine, roads or money, MS's focus on training, education, self-organization and sharing of experiences. MS believes that development for poor people should be guided by their wishes and are therefore working with people-driven development based on supporting local partners. MS has about 200 partner organizations in Africa, America, Asia, Middle East and the Balkans. Through these local partners' work MS supports the world's poorest people in the struggle for a better life. Our partners are ranging from large national organizations to small village-based organizations dealing with education, local community development, environment, HIV / AIDS, human rights and much more.

MS was founded in 1946 and today has over 7,500 individual members, many have been send out as development workers through the years. MS also has a large youth exchange program, Global Contact, where 800 young people each year journey out to do development work in a shorter period.

In addition we have a growing network of volunteers in Denmark, which makes everything from fair trade festival over G8 summit's participation to campaigns on Danishness.

MS is currently one of the few foreign organizations that are still working in Zimbabwe. Recent years of political constraints and boycotts have scared most other aid agencies away. The Danish government stopped its foreign aid in 2001. MS, however, has chosen to remain in Zimbabwe because we do not want to fail our partners at a time where they need assistance more than ever.

About the partners

'Breaking the Culture of Silence' is carried out in collaboration with two small organizations that work against youth marginalization in Zimbabwe.

YAZ (Youth Ahead Zimbabwe)

YAZ is a ten-year-old organization having great experience in working with vulnerable young people in one of the capital Harare's suburbs. The organization is rooted in its local community with a network of other NGOs and public authorities, including police and local politicians. YAZ offers annually 60 young people, primarily women, a 6-month training in sewing, using knitting machines or welding. As part of this training 20% of the time is used at youth leadership training and life skills training, based on a learner-based approach in education.

Vocational training is fine, but difficult to use with the massive unemployment. Even young people with an education find it difficult to get jobs afterwards. So YAZ suggested that with Operation Dayswork's support, youth leadership training 'life skills' training are quintupled, so it can be extended to take place in other suburbs of Harare.

YAZ has found a number of small organizations working with similar training, but who do not have the student-based approach and methodological strength as YAZ's teaching have. With the support of Operation Dayswork YAZ will be able to expand their program to include these organizations.

BUIYSAP (Bulawayo Integrated Youth Survival Alternative Project)

BUIYSAP has existed since 1998 and is led by a board where half the members must be under 30 years old. The organization has its headquarters in Harare, but operates primarily in Bulawayo and in the countryside in Nkayi, barely 700 km from Harare in southern Zimbabwe, where the opposition is strong. Approximately 1/3 of the country's population live in the Bulawayo region. The area is characterized by being very dry and less developed compared to the rest of the country. The support the opposition enjoys in the region has resulted in that President Mugabe's government for decades has "punished" the people by not investing in development of the region. There are fewer schools, hospitals and limited educational opportunities.

BUIYSAP also has a professional technical training, but as with YAZ the money from Operation Dayswork will only be used to expand the already existing training program where the starting point is the young people's everyday lives, aspirations and self-defined needs.

Through Operation Dayswork's money the program can be increased tenfold, and

they can offer mathematics, spelling and reading courses to the many who drop out of school (none of BUIYSAPS current students have completed primary school). The courses must ensure that students have basic school skills so they can acquire new knowledge and compare their own knowledge to attempts of manipulation by the government, husbands or other authorities. These courses will be a new component for BUIYSAP and will be created with technical assistance from the development worker.

Cooperation between YAZ and BUYISAP

The two organizations have had cooperation through membership of an umbrella organization. This cooperation will in relation to the project be resumed to share experiences, both professionally and organisationally. The formal part of the collaboration will be supported by a development worker who will be employed in the project.

Budget

Breaking the Culture of Silence Zimbabwe 2009-2012			
	YAZ	BUIYSAP	%
1. Activities			
<u>Youth leadership training</u>	1,005,000	1,201,000	
* Advocacy and lobbying			
* Rhetorics training			
* Organization training			
<u>'Life skills'-training</u>	200,250	230,450	
* Gender and equality			
* HIV / AIDS			
<u>Basic school skills</u>	168,300	315,000	
<u>National advocacy and lobby</u> (cooperation between YAZ and BUIYSAP)	210,000	210,000	
Subtotal	1,583,550	1,956,450	58%
2. Investments			
Motorbike, YAZ	13,750		
Motorbike * 2, BUIYSAP		27,500	
2* (12 PCs and 3 printers and 3 scanners)	110,550	110,550	
Subtotal	124,300	138,050	4%
3. Employees			
Program officer, YAZ, (2009-2012)	124,575		
Bookkeeper, YAZ, (2009-2012)	124,575		
Program officer, BUIYSAP, (2009-2012)		124,575	
Bookkeeper, BUIYSAP, (2009-2012)		124,575	
Development worker from Zimbabwe (shared between YAZ and BUIYSAP), (2009-2012)	392,724	392,724	
Subtotal	641,874	641,874	21%
4. Local administration			
Rent, electricity etc.	92,400	62,400	
IT, phones etc.	69,300	69,300	
Office supplies	125,483	125,483	
Gasoline	30,000	45,000	
Subtotal	317,183	30,183	10%
5. Evaluation and monitoring			
Half-year evaluations	47,190	47,190	

	Monitoring, board meetings in YAZ and BUIYSAP	15,000	15,000	
	Halfway and end evaluation	25,000	25,000	
	Subtotal	87,190	89,190	3%
6. Total project costs		2,754,097	3,125,747	97%
7. Audit		33,000	33,000	1%
8. Subtotal		2,787,097	3,158,747	98%
9. Administration in Denmark		60,000	60,000	2%
10. Total		2,847,097	3,218,747	
10b. Total	Total for both organisations	I alt	6,065,844	
* the amounts are calculated in US\$ and afterwards converted into DKK due to the massive inflation in Zimbabwe.				