

**COMMONWEALTH YOUTH  
PEACE AMBASSADORS  
NETWORK (CYPAN)  
PROGRESS REPORT FOR  
OCTOBER 2021**

October was a very good month for CYPAN, though there were some downsides like the increase of dengue fever cases in Pakistan and the increased political tension in Gambia.

We have recorded an increase in membership, Pakistan finally being able to hold physical meetings, mobilise and embark on membership drive campaigns.

CYPAN Gambia has also doubled its efforts to ensure the presidential elections do not become an avenue for youth exploitation as violent political weapons.

The executive team has progressed with the Commonwealth Peace Connectivity initiative as the country coordinators formed a focus group to help in the conceptualization of the project.

## **COVID 19, HEALTH AND NATURAL DISASTERS**

Botswana is doing considerable well when it comes to the fight against Covid-19, currently out of an estimated population of 2.4 million, 280 440 are fully vaccinated while 703 802 have received the first dose. The vaccination circle has now moved to include individuals aged between 18-30 years. To make the vaccination process accessible to all and prevent further spread of the virus, the government came up with a drive-through campaign across the country.

Though COVID 19 cases are not so alarming anymore, Pakistan is now fighting Dengue. Dengue fever has been a recurrent epidemic in Pakistan, though not as deadly as COVID, dengue fever if not properly treated can lead to death.

The first cases were recorded on 8<sup>th</sup> October and is steadily on the rise especially in the rural areas of the capital city Islamabad. The CYPAN Pakistan country coordinator is currently suffering from dengue fever.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA, STAKEHOLDER AND VISIBILITY ENGAGEMENT**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 2021, the Membership Manager of CYPAN Botswana attended and represented CYPAN in a Consultation meeting organised by the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Culture Development in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The

objective was to review the Botswana National Policy of 2010 to provide an in-depth review of the National Youth Policy, Programmes and Strategies, taking into account the recent developments, socio-economic issues and the changes in the long term vision, National Development Plans and Transformation agenda of Government and how they mainstream youth development and empowerment.

The membership manager, Mr. Goabaone Sematho presented on CYPAN's mandate, projects or programs and challenges. He also gave suggestions on how the policy can be revised for better service delivery in terms of issues on peace building and security.

CYPAN Country Coordinators on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2021 held a discussion on the Commonwealth Peace Connectivity Initiative, a novel project by the Commonwealth Peace Desk. The Project seeks to create a portal that will proactively deal with issues of violence and largely promote peace amongst member states. This discuss was first amongst many phases of consultations with global partners and stakeholders.

The meeting at the plenary sort to discuss ideas aimed at making the Peace Connectivity Initiative a success. Looking at innovative means to adopt, suggestions included deliberate steps by the project ambassadors and volunteers to have a target group i.e. the Youth and focus on explaining to them the need for peace and make them agents of peace within their very own circle and actively using social media and regular online engagements.

The use of Music, Arts, Culture and Entertainment was also discussed at the plenary. Members were of the view that Music is a universal language and the use of it will go a long way to help with the initiative. Also, the power of Celebrities within the entertainment circle can be used due to the number of following they have.

Internet connectivity was a major challenge that members anticipated. Another possible challenge is the overly clustered sprinter Peace Groups that may be all over with the same aim of promoting peace. This if not well managed will hinder the success of the initiative

Moving forward, members were admonished to consult further to get more inputs from their members at the country level. There will be a draft time table to structure the level of engagement with CYPAN and the Commonwealth Secretariat will keep the CYPAN team updated on further engagements accordingly.

## **DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY**

On Saturday October 30<sup>th</sup>, CYPAN Gambia was invited by Beakanyang to join leading Civil Society Organizations on a National Dialogue on hate speech and peaceful elections under the theme, Ensuring Peaceful Democratic Processes in the Gambia. The dialogue was focused on countering hate speech in building a resilient democracy before, during and post elections. Participants were equally taken through the indicators in detecting hate speech and the preventive measures to be employed by civil society organizations to put an end to hate speech and negative stereotyping.



## **OUTREACHES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND PROJECTS**

The training team of CYPAN headquarters held a training on Leadership, Governance and Activism, on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2021 on zoom. The training was facilitated by Ms. Kaajal Kumar, the founder of Aspire Network and moderated by Dunola Oladapo, CYPAN country coordinator United Kingdom. The aim of

the training was to equip members with more leadership and governance skills, getting funding for their projects and to learn effective communication with the general public on social media.

Ms. Kumar elaborated on issue of finance, stating that funding rarely is easily secured, hence organisations have to be strategic and initiate projects that will be self-financing. She also stated that since leaders are normally the point of contact, they receive first-hand information on opportunities and so are responsible for information dissemination to their members.

As part of its schools' outreach program, CYPAN Gambia on 30<sup>th</sup> October and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 sensitized students who are above the ages of 18 and are eligible to vote on the need for peace before, during and after elections and to set themselves apart not to be used as agents of political violence. The team engaged Masroor Senior Secondary School and Mingdaw Senior Secondary School respectively. The engagement saw the convergence of over 150 students who were taken through the effects of violence, the mitigation measures and the role of young people.



As a result of the engagements, the participants had the opportunity to share real life incidences and inspiring poems which prompted many of them to personally commit to ensuring a peaceful co-existence and serve as ambassadors of peace. CYPAN received technical support from Rise of The Young (RoTY).

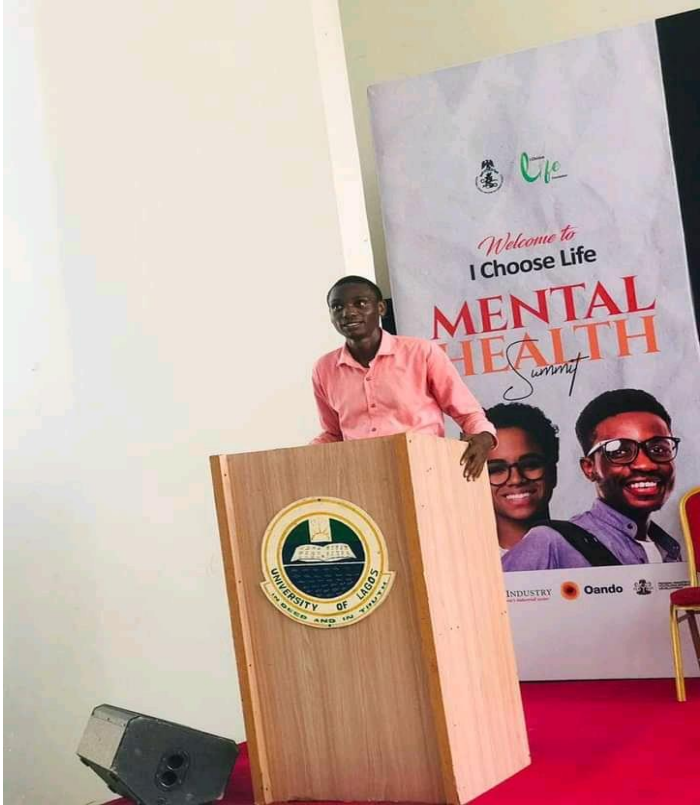
CYPAN Gambia has formed a new partnership with RoTY and has created CYPAN clubs in two high schools.

Nigeria welcomed 50 new members culminating into a total of 300 CYPAN members in the country. A formal welcome session will be held for them.

The Pakistan country coordinator held a familiarisation meeting and discussion session with the members. The agenda was to discuss, plan and chart an action plan for the network. They will be targeting university students and will be utilizing focus group activities to spread word about the existence and the work of CYPAN in Pakistan.

The country coordinator for Nigeria, Victor Okechukwu Chimezie was invited by I Choose Life Foundation Nigeria and the Country's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to speak at the Mental Health Summit 2.0 that held in Lagos on the 29th of October 2021 as a panelist to discuss on "Mind over Matter: Strategies for confronting drug abuse. The abuse of drugs is directly linked to violent behaviors among the youth.





## **CHALLENGES**

- CYPAN Botswana is battling with unresponsive members; the members do not engage with invitations shared with them.
- Unstable internet connection during the Leadership and Governance training made some participants miss parts of the training.
- Gambia is yet to find a solution to its need of financial support for their projects as they are capital intensive.
- The country coordinator for Pakistan is suffering from dengue fever.
- Nigeria had almost all its key CYPAN leaders seriously ill and this affected scheduled programs and also apathy is on the rise among the members. The zeal and passion shown seems to be waning. The book distribution project had to be halted due to some challenges.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER**

- Gambia is an expected guest speaker at a Zoom Panel Discussion organised by Peace Hub on the theme, The Role of CSOs in Combatting Hate Speech and Negative Stereotypes. The schools' outreach will also be continued to access and impact more young people.
- Pakistan plans to hold informative sessions with university students and communities and partner with other organisations to further CYPAN activities to the rural areas in the South Region.
- CYPAN in Partnership with the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism will be hosting a virtual training. This session, hosted by the GIFCT programming team, will focus on tools, tips and best practices for developing, launching and evaluating online peacebuilding, PVE and CVE campaigns. The discussion will include links for activist safety settings, information about flagging violating content online, and how to ensure your content is reaching the right audiences online.