

**SOCIAL MOVEMENT BUILDING ACROSS AFRICA: PLANNING
WORKSHOP**

2ND TO 4TH NOVEMBER 2022, NAIROBI, KENYA.

**Mathare Social Justice Centre
REPORT.**

2022



African Social Justice
Network

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was a convening of social justice movements from diverse African contexts in Nairobi, Kenya 2022 organized by the Tshisimani Centre For Activist Education and hosted by Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) as a build-up to the larger convening in 2023 Africa whereby social movements in Southern and East Africa will come together to share, strategies', learn, and strengthen activism. The two-day gathering brought a lot of learning through group discussions, readings, artistic processes, engaging pedagogy, cultural night, and site visits to the Ukombozi library, Mathare Social Justice Centre, and Kayole Social Justice Centre.

Objectives

- To provide for activists from different countries in the region to connect, share experiences of struggles and deliberate on strategies of pushing back against the neo-liberal agenda that dominates political discourse in the continent.
- To facilitate the drawing of linkages between activist formations and forge solidarity beyond national borders.
- To critically engage with key issues that intersect our struggles in the context of growing authoritarianism, neoliberal capitalism, and neo-colonial politics
- To center the agency of women and youth in the agenda of movement building across-borders.

Participants/Organisations

Tshisimani Centre For Activist Education

Mathare Social Justice Centre

Organic Intellectuals Network

Abahlali Basemjondolo

Action 54 Dignity and humanity

Equal Education

Inner City Federation

Kongamano La Mapinduzi

Lubanga Social Justice Centre

Macua Wamua

Organisation For Good Governance

Revolutionary Young Girls Movement -Elat

Youth 4 Parliament

Vuvulane Orphans & Vulnerable Children Outreach Foundation

CONTENT

1.0 DAY 1 WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER

2.0 DAY 2 THURSDAY 3RD NOVEMBER

3.0 DAY 3 FRIDAY 4TH NOVEMBER

1.1 INTRODUCTION BY TSHISIMANI AND MSJC

The program officially commenced at 9:00 am on Wednesday at the Qaribu Inn Hotel. Tshisimani (Tshivenda Minority language) institute through its Co-Ordinator opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and introduced their work through a unique chart and what was to be anticipated in the 3-day Workshop. The Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education is an organization based in Cape Town that is specifically mandated to provide critical, pluralistic, and accessible political education to grassroots movements and activist organizations in the South African and wider African context. Some of the key issues it focuses on include land, Youth, Feminism, and queer liberation politics.

The meeting was meant to create a robust engagement between different social movements on how to work together within our political contexts and also build up for the 2023 social movement convening.

A series of questions and deliberations followed after Tshisimani introduction such as the issue of land being a major issue cutting across the continent, land conflicts, Ecological justice, minerals, and evictions. A Kenyan example was given on the demolitions of houses in Mukuru last year. Land conflicts and inequality is historical since the era of independence in most African states as neo-colonial structures/systems were not abolished.

The host Mathare Social Justice Centre was next and through their admin elaborated on their work through a video that was showcased and is available on Youtube. (MSJC) is an initiative by young members of the community to promote social justice in Mathare. For years Mathare has been a place where much violence has been allowed to go on without any redress for the community, especially as most continue to live in fear of the consequences of standing up for their rights. These forms of structural violence include, but are not limited to, land grabbing, forced evictions, police abuse and extrajudicial killings, political impunity, and other economic, social, and psychological violations. This grassroots organizing has sparked other centers of the same model across the country which form the social justice movement in Kenya.

1.2 Mapping Out Issues

After the introduction, the next session was mapping out issues within our contexts from different countries, common problems, merging of struggles, and having a way forward on how to tackle these issues. Comrades formed different groups as per country, both Kenya and South Africa had two groups due to their numbers, and other countries were Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Sudan, Burundi, Zambia, and Eswatini. First, every organization was to put its work and description on a chart that was put on a wall.



The Chart with the description of each organization present at the Convening.

The discussion was guided by the following questions.

- What is the political climate in your country and how does it affect young people and activists?
- Are Specific groups targeted more than others?
- What are the key issues affecting youth in your country?
- In what ways are young people responding to the ecosystem you described?

After the group deliberations, comrades gathered again to discuss and listen to the different issues affecting each country. The issues were pinned down on a chart per country and tied down with a string to individual countries on a colorful huge map put on the floor.



The African Map

South Sudan.

Main issue- Hostile Political Environment.

Shrinking civil space

State surveillance

Wars and Conflict

Corruption

Militarized politics

Poor health system

Uganda

Corruption

Impunity and complete disregard for the rule of law

Extra-judicial killings

Climate change

Quality Health access only to a certain class.

Burundi

Corruption

Political intolerance

Closure of civic spaces

Unemployment

Lack of quality education

Political violence

Zambia

Disengaged Youth

Political Violence

Unemployment

Inadequate Education Resources

Lack of opportunities.

Ethiopia

Political Climate, violence, arrest, and torture.

Corruption

Political apathy

Political Surveillance.

Systematic exclusion based on ethnic lines.

Kenya Group 1 & 2

Commodification of education

Privatization of health

In-equality

Employment

Corruption

Extra-judicial killings



Group discussions Day 1

South Africa group

Land

Environmental Justice

Racial inequality

Mozambique.

Disregard the constitution

Gender Inequality

Climate change

Common issues and Response.

It was clear looking at the charts that there are common issues such as land, lack of opportunities, shrinking civil space, environmental justice, Gender inequality, and commodification of education. Ethiopia and South Sudan both experience war and conflicts and political militarization.

Some of the ways people respond to these issues depending on their concrete realities include organizing communities through forums, dialogues, protests, and petitions.

1.3 SITES OF STRUGGLE- Ukombozi Library and Mathare Social Justice Centre.

In the Afternoon after having lunch Comrades left to visit two sites of struggle, the Ukombozi library and MSJC. The first stop was at the library where a team of outreach helped to familiarize Comrades with the library.

Ukombozi Library was established in 2017 by a group of progressive African libraries and information activists. The Ukombozi Library has an initial collection of almost a thousand titles of progressive material, mostly books but also pamphlets, videos, and photographs. It incorporates December Twelve Movement's underground library set up by Nazmi Durrani in the 1980s. A majority of these are classics that are either out of print or cannot be found in the local bookshops. The library has become the hub for social movement in Kenya and it's also where the Organic Intellectual's Network in Kenya which is one of the participants in the convening get their books for reflections.



At the Ukombozi library.

After the introduction comrades were given an opportunity to ask questions and give remarks.

- Its was noted from one participant that the library also acted as a site organizing for social movements and communities in Kenya.
- The library inspired participants and some suggested starting the same concept in their respective countries.
- It was also suggested that the books be digitized as anything could happen that could lead to the loss of the books and materials. Library assured participants that they were in the process of doing so.
- Lastly, comrades commended the efforts and the importance of establishing such a space in Kenya and Africa.

Mathare Social Justice Centre

The second site of the visit was the MSJC (*description given in the introduction*). Comrades were received by comrades of MSJC and community members at the office, the office has colorful murals on liberation heroes and quotes. After the introduction participants were given an aerial view of Mathare and its history at the center rooftop.



Office.



A view of Mathare.

Afterward, participants were taken to MSJC creative hub. This session began with revolutionary songs both from South Africa and Kenya before participants introduced themselves and their organization's/Regions.



MSJC

Creative hub.

Participants commended the efforts of the comrades of Mathare in setting up the center while other issues emerged such as the importance of art in liberation, which is not often used in contemporary struggles. Survival and the struggle for social justice activists and the sustainability of Social movements were also discussed. The importance of having economical input for movements was stressed as one way for enabling activists to survive. Participants encouraged comrades from the center to participate in policy making and also in the political arena where these kinds of decisions are made.

The session ended with performances from artists in Mathare.

2.0 Day 2 Identifying key areas to structure the 2023 Convening.

The second day of the workshop entailed a focus on topics/themes to help structure the 2023 convening. The day began with a recap of the previous day and more so on the common areas that cut across Africa such as corrupt gender-Based Violence, land, and ecological justice.



DAY 2

On the first day, the workshop utilized exciting teaching techniques, and this day was no different as participants used a problem tree highlighting causes which are the roots and outcomes are the tree. To enable this, four themes/issues were created while participants were divided into four groups for discussion, then each group was to present it to the larger group.

Themes:

- > State violence
- > Exclusion
- > Education
- > Social protection

State Violence Group



Outcomes- Enforced disappearance, Shrinking civil space, poverty, extrajudicial killings, Arbitrary arrests, exclusion, and surveillance.

Causes- Neo-colonial state, Protection of means of production, unholy alliance btw state, corporates, and local elites.

In their presentations to the participants, some of the issues/questions that emerged were instruments of power that enable state violence such as the police but it was emphasized that we don't look at violence on a face-value perspective as this deflates the root cause of the issue.

Exclusion Group

Outcomes. Hinders the success of the revolution, no political space, state violence, dependency syndrome, Apathy/hopelessness and hinders the development of a country.

Causes. Political economic area, colonization, classism, capitalism, dictatorship, tribalism, and domination.

The group presented its view and discussions, it was agreed that most young people are excluded from political spaces, there exists lots of barriers for them to participate.

Education Group

Outcomes. Miseducation/loss of memory, consumerism culture, wage slavery, cultural disinheritance, gender inequality, and language.

Causes. Neoliberalism, the commodification of education, and lack of popular education.

In its presentation the education group focused on Miseducation which is deliberate distortion of information and how it has affected the continent. An example of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya was given of how it was erroneously portrayed in history. An emphasis was also made on the effect of neoliberalism on education on the entire continent.

Social protection

Outcomes. Lack of adequate housing, health facilities, poor infrastructure, mental health, food security, lack of unemployment, and costly electricity.

Causes. Corruption, lack of accountability, lack of state capability, lack of political will, race, class, and gender.

2.1 SITES OF STRUGGLE- KAYOLE COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER.

In the afternoon participants made a visit to KCJC for their third site of struggle visit. KCJC is part of the larger social justice movement in Kenya based in Kayole east part of Nairobi informal settlements. Participants were taken on a tour on Kayole including sites of murals, it is one way the center use to communicate and maintain touch and educate the community. The first mural we gather around is a Che Guevara mural and the second one highlighted Military Industrial Complex in Africa.



Kayole visits



In One of the Murals



Kayole Community Justice Center

Afterward, participants were taken to a rehabilitated dumpsite done by the ecological team from Kayole and then return to the center office for a brief session on questions/remarks. The team in Kayole spoke on their work on advocacy, Saba Saba protests, water crisis, and the way the community responds

to their work- some acknowledge their work while others put resistance sometimes due to local landlord mobilizing against activists demanding water as they aim to privatized it.

The session concluded as one comrade from South Africa was leaving the same day. Participants burst into revolutionary songs both in South Africa and Swahili.

Participant's headed back to the hotel to conclude on resolutions and solutions to the prior conversations on a forest tree.

2.3 Cultural Night

In the evening participants gathered for a cultural night planned by Stone face from MSJC. Participants were required to wear African wear representing their culture.

Every Participant gave a history of their **identity, culture, and its significance**. The experiences were unique as each country had its own unique culture showcasing the diversity within Africa. Later as the session was being concluded it was noted that we still need to learn more on our history and cultures



Cultural night

3.0 Resolutions and Checking Out

On the third day of the workshop participants met to complete the resolutions of the convening.

1. That a steering committee would be implemented with one representative from each country present. For South Africa, there would need to be one other organization besides Tshisimani to act as the South African representative.
2. That the youth festival in 2023 should take place in either Lusaka, Zambia or Arusha, Tanzania. The Steering Committee is to make the decision based on inputs and logistical considerations.

3. That the festival should take place sometime between June-August 2023.

4. That Tshisimani would send out a Google Form to fill out where each representative from the convening will fill out:

- Names of movements/orgs that we believe would need to attend. All must be involved in the active struggle on the ground, with evidence of this. We must also ensure gender equality in this.
- Names of performers/artists/musicians who could bring cultural and creative vibrance to the festival
- Ideas for forms of activities we would like to see at the event
- Ideas for cultural exchange, similar to what took place on Thursday evening

5. Once the steering committee is convened, we would form a new WhatsApp group where only the steering committee could post, so that updates can be given from there. Emails and scheduled Zoom calls will also be used to communicate as necessary.

6. Of emphasis for the festival next year, whoever is hosting us guides and shares with participants the struggles of their movement. The festival must be based in the lived grassroots struggle of people on the ground, not simply a celebration, enjoyable talk shop, or networking event.

7. Tshisimani is to consolidate and write up all the proposals for the festival's outcomes (the ones we submitted on Friday morning) and share this with the larger group. This will form the basis of a concept note for the festival - together with the inputs and presentations from the focus areas we worked on in groups.

After affirming the resolutions participants checked out on the 4th morning.