



Editor

Where social volcanoes erupt

Youth unemployment, migration, conflicts – education creates change leaders.

Governments are overthrown by the military coups¹, migrants are burned by xenophobes², girls are married at the age of 10, refugees and sans papiers demonstrate against home governments³ – lack of access to quality education leads to youth unemployment, food insecurity, migration, lack of basic equal and human rights - unrest. Climate change, retirement provision, globalisation, migration and wars are among the 10 most important issues facing the Swiss population, according to the Swiss Worry Barometer⁴. A small Swiss organization tackles these problems at its core – pragmatically, comprehensively and sustainably. A live talk provides insight – learn more and join the discussion.

Africa is in the media and the global powers are responding by admitting the African Union to the G-20 countries⁵. This is an important step towards bringing about change and stability at a global leadership level.

But what about the population? In Africa, too, the future lies in digital networking. Those who only complete compulsory schooling have no chance on the labour market. Knowledge is lost through migration; emigration is just as big a problem as immigration in many countries, as it leads to brain-drain. This is also evident in Zimbabwe.

Loss of knowledge and digital illiteracy hinder stability

There is a lack of experts and skilled workers to address challenges such as sustainable agriculture in times of climate change, the effects of poor waste management and the challenges of digitalisation. Many young people, especially girls, drop out of school after secondary 1. Using Zimbabwe as an example, we see how this leads to problems such as youth unemployment, child marriage, brain-drain and thus a lack of expertise in dealing with the challenges of climate change, globalisation, and digitalisation. Globalization and loss of expertise in producing goods and foods have led to a dependency on importations from neighbouring South Africa, Ukraine, China, and other low-cost producing countries, leading to food insecurity and the currency disintegrating.

Teachers and professionals are leaving the country, the infrastructure is collapsing, electricity, water and internet are only available sporadically, waste management is overloaded, school and exam fees have tripled, which has led to a wave of school dropouts, especially among girls. Young people migrate to neighbouring countries, where they live without residence or work permits and are exposed to xenophobic attacks⁶. They live in squatted houses under the worst conditions, as the recent fire in

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/articles/cevz0qvjnyo>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66339528>

² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122612>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-66694149>

⁴ <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/sorgenbarometer-2022-die-stimmung-in-der-bevoelkerung-truebt-sich>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-66763446>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47800718>



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Johannesburg has also made us aware⁷. Many underage girls marry older men to support the family with the bride price.

While almost 80% of Zimbabweans receive 8 to 9 years of education, only about 30% graduate with a high school diploma or apprenticeship. Almost 60% of young people are unemployed. Less than 10% of the population has sufficient IT skills to find a job at a reception desk or in an office, not even if they otherwise have a high school or university diploma. This is despite the fact that almost everyone owns a smartphone or tablet.

A pragmatic approach that makes a difference.

This has been recognized by a small Swiss association. Together with a group of local teachers who make a specific effort to offer education to vulnerable school dropouts, the vast majority of whom are girls. Their upper secondary education focuses on ICT application skills, mathematics, natural sciences, business studies and languages based on the Swiss dual education system.

Learners work on their smartphones at their own pace and in study groups, receive internet and individual coaching at the learning centres, and apply their knowledge in projects designed to solve their community's challenges in an innovative and pragmatic way. Waste management is a major challenge. In the poorer areas, where water is often only available for a few hours a day and the waste is only removed once a week, while often a whole family lives in one room, thus creating an enormous amount of waste per household leading to the waste being deposited in front of the door outside collection hours. There are no opportunities for recycling. Thus, the organic waste ends up in the same bag as glass and plastic. Animals try to get to the organic waste. While baboons are adept at stealing the orange from the plastic packaging, many an elephant dies from swallowing plastic. But this is not only dangerous for animals. The litter attracts rats, diseases spread. At the same time, however, the soil is becoming increasingly infertile because chemical fertilizers are used instead of compost and climate change has led to more drought.

What are the students doing about it? In their interdisciplinary semester projects, they research how they can raise the groundwater level by planting tree-lined avenues⁸, and they do practical work by composting the organic waste directly in the soil and comparing the growth with that in the neighboring bed, and by processing the non-compostable, organic waste with bokashi into valuable fertilizer. As a result, they improve soil quality, contribute to food safety and community health, and create a small income.

Another semester project is to make solid shampoo-conditioner-shower bars. Often they can't afford shampoos. Either they cut their hair short or they use cheap soaps that harm the scalp and hair. With the shampoo-shower bars, they not only improve community health and hygiene, but the materials are also more natural, thus more soil and groundwater friendly, and they avoid plastic waste.

IT skills as the key to success

AI simplifies our everyday lives; robots mow the lawn and plant trees. Everyday digital life in Switzerland is very different from that in Zimbabwe, where a large part of the hard work is still done by hand, which puts girls, women, and seniors at a disadvantage in the labour market. At the same time, many companies also need employees with computer user skills, be it at the reception, in the commercial area or in sales.

For this reason, empowermefirst builds on training computer skills, from the first steps in the use of smartphones and computers, to commercial application, online research and use of artificial

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66695688>

⁸ <https://www.worldagroforestry.org/about/agroforestry>



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intelligence in research and production of work, online marketing and sales, multimedia editing, IT support and programming.

This not only opens up access to the local but also the global labour market and can counteract the shortage of skilled workers in Switzerland⁹ without exacerbating the challenges posed by migration.

A pioneer on a visit to Switzerland

From 6 to 25 October, Conium Nyathi, the head of countries of empowermefirst, will come to Switzerland to present the project in Zimbabwe. He speaks in different cities and is available for an interview. He has been involved in the Swiss association since its foundation¹⁰ and has been campaigning for years with his own school for more educational justice in Zimbabwe by offering quality education for vulnerable school leavers.

Contact us for an interview or attend one of our events:

Contact:

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Conium Nyathi



Preparations for composting



Students with Swiss volunteer

⁹ <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/business/demographic-shifts-cause-swiss-labour-market-crunch/48250862>

¹⁰ Gönnerverein von empowermefirst.college (CHE-333.933.822), Conium Nyathi is a member of the board.