

By Guardian Correspondent

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

Fostering a science culture of learning through hands-on scientific exploration

SCIENCE and technology innovations serve as the bedrock for socio-economic development of any nation. In Tanzania, the recognition of science and technology as catalysts for progress has led to the emergence of organizations like the Young Scientists Tanzania (YST), which is dedicated to nurturing young people and fostering a culture of scientific inquiry and problem-solving technologies.

Established in 2011, YST embarked on a mission to empower Tanzanian youth by equipping them with practical scientific knowledge and skills.

At the heart of YST initiatives lies the science outreach and mentoring program and workshops that enhances scientific literacy among secondary school students and educators. The workshops are organized by 31 regional coordinators and the YST science advisors.

Joseph Clowry is the Co-founder of YST, he emphasizes that the organisation's approach is rooted in the belief that practical science education is pivotal in addressing societal challenges effectively and an important driver for economic development of any nation.

The YST science for development initiative fosters a science culture of learning through hands-on scientific exploration, asserts Clowry, adding the organisation has witnessed a surge in student engagement and enthusiasm for science.

"Since its inception in 2011, the outreach program has positively impacted a substantial number of individuals. More than 14,766 secondary school students have benefited from YST initiatives, while over 2,394 teachers have received training during the outreach sessions," the Co-founder of YST told the Guardian.

He added that YST exhibitions have seen the participation of over 3,085 students and 1,489 teachers from secondary schools across Tanzania. Notably, YST has awarded over 45 university scholarships through its sponsorship by Karimjee Foundation to Overall Winners and Special Education Awardees, further incentivising excellence in scientific exploration and academic achievement.

Aligned with Tanzania's national development agenda and the African Union's Continental Education Strategy Plan (CESA 2015-2025), the science outreach program serves as a strategic intervention to bolster the country's scientific capabilities. It empowers students and science teachers in secondary schools and contributes to the cultivation of a robust scientific culture essential for sustainable development.

YST's efforts align with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the United Nations, par-



Tabora Boys Secondary School students David Anyano and Carlos Lugusi (in yellow T-shirt) showcase their project alongside students from St Joseph's Cathedral High School. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

ticularly goals No. 4 (Quality Education), No. 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and No. 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

By focusing on science education, innovation, and collaboration, YST is playing its part as an NGO in advancing global efforts towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

Clowry added: "The YST program is not just about science education but science for development in Tanzania. By equipping young Tanzanians with the skills and knowledge needed to tackle local challenges, YST is driving progress and development within the country."

Looking ahead to 2024, YST's commitment to advancing science education remains unwavering. The organization

is hosting a comprehensive training sessions for 412 science teachers from across all 31 regions of Tanzania.

The operation has been made possible by a generous support of the Karimjee Foundation (KJ). The foundation's invaluable contribution enables YST to continue running the vital programs that shape the future of science education in Tanzania. KJ has been a supporter of YST since 2012.

The workshops were conducted between March and April to equip educators with the necessary tools and pedagogical approaches to effectively impart scientific principles to their students.

YST anticipates more than 1,000 research and innovation ideas will be submitted to its judging panel. This year

the deadline for submissions is April 12th 2024. Submitted ideas will undergo a thorough selection process before selected projects are further mentored for research and development.

"Application is open to all secondary schools; we encourage students, teachers, and schools to actively participate in such programs. YST places special emphasis on encouraging both female science teachers and female students to take advantage of the opportunity and carve out their space in the STEM (Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields," insisted Clowry, noting students, teachers, and schools can visit YST's website at www.youngscientists.co.tz to submit their ideas and engage with the scientific community.

Engaging in scientific research and innovation not only enhances academic learning but also fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity. It sets a positive trajectory for students' learning journeys, providing them with invaluable experiences in their early lives that will shape their future endeavours.

Dr Gozibert Kamugisha, another Co-founder of YST, elaborates on the program's multifaceted approach, highlighting its expansion into diverse spheres.

In 2024, the science outreach program will encompass a broader scope, including initiatives aimed at fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and exploring new frontiers in scientific research, thus fostering innovation and advancement within the scientific community.

YST stands at the forefront of science and technology advancement in Tanzania, championing the transformation of the nation's educational landscape.

Through its innovative programs and unwavering commitment, YST not only empowers youth but paves the way for a prosperous and scientifically literate society, contributing to the global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

IWD 2024: Donors urged to invest in women human rights defenders

By Ananilea Nkya

IN celebrating the International Women's Day 2024, dozens of women human rights defenders in the country have called for development partners to invest more in women's human rights organizations because their works contribute effectively in bridging the gender economic gap.

The intergeneration women human rights defenders from both Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar made the appeal during a round table discussion on this year's International Women's Day (IWD) with a theme 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress'.

To make IWD celebrations a worthwhile undertaking, every year the United Nations create a theme which all nations focus on based on individual country's development context.

The 2024 IWD theme 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress' suggests that more investment is required to bridge gender equality gap in various aspects so that women can play their development role effectively in their countries' the similar to men.

The round table discussion for the country's women's rights defenders was organized in Dar es Salaam on March 6th 2024 by Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders Tanzania (CWHDT) in collaboration with Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC).

Each March 8 countries across the world mark the day and the whole month of March is considered as women's month. The aim is to enable each country to reflect on progress made in bridging the gender gap and brainstorming strategies that can be adopted to make further progress in the coming year.

Opening the round table discussion, Chairperson of THRDC Pili Mtambalike said it is important to invest on women human rights defenders because they face many difficulties and threats while executing their work.

Mtambalike noted that "human rights defenders organizations get insufficient financial resources to provide adequate and suitable protection to human rights defenders." This challenge was also noted by Racheal Boma who spoke during the round table on behalf of the UN Women Representative in Tanzania. Boma said that UN Women too these days get less and less financial resources from its donors.

It seems funding for women's human rights work is now a growing challenge. A study conducted by Oxfam GB in 70 countries across the world which analysed gender violence laws and policies against women revealed that the works of feminist activists produce big results although they receive small scale funding to pursue their agenda.

Similarly, in Tanzania, a brief desk study by Women Fund Tanzania trust (WFT) entitled 'Shifting power to provoke change for inclusive development through feminist funding' reveals that funding to women's rights organizations has fallen for more than half over the past 11 years today.

Yet, regardless of the scarcity of financial resources, the Oxfam study shows that women's rights activists influence changes because the most crucial and reliable factor driving positive transformation in relation to women's, girls' and children's rights is "feminist activism."

"Activism on women's right agenda is a risky undertaking", said Salma Haji Sadat a woman human rights activist from association of people with disability in Zanzibar.



Pili Mtambalike, Chairperson of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition

She added "enemies are not only from state but also from other sources including faith groups."

She cited a case whereby life of four women activists including her were threatened just after a group of Muslim leaders made a press statement calling for the government to arrest the women activists simply because they had demanded that women should be included as Kadhi in the Kadhi court in Zanzibar.

"For several months we lived in fear of being arrested by police or being harmed by religious activists", noted Sadat.

Threats and intimidation on women human rights activists has been a reality in Tanzania for many years.

Mary Rusimbi, a renowned women human right activist and former Executive Director of Tanzania

Gender Networking Program (TGNP) recalled how women activists from her organization were arrested by police just because they had organized a peaceful rally against International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials during the late President Benjamin Mkapa administration.

Rusimbi said when the Tanzanian government officials were meeting IMF official at the then Sheraton hotel in Dar Es Salaam, TGNP women activists went to the hotel and staged a peaceful rally outside with placards bearing different messaged connoting that IMF policies had far reaching negative impacts to the lives of the majority people especially women in the country.

"Police came and arrested the women activists", noted Rusimbi adding; "But the following day President Mkapa ordered the police to release the

activists saying they had the right to air their views". Many women in Tanzania have shown the courage of defending their rights and the rights of other women or children.

In recognizing the role played by women's rights defenders in bridging gender gap, CWHDT Executive Hilda Stuart Dadu said her organization has started offering awards to women human rights defenders who have done unique contribution to women human rights work in the country

Obviously, to continue giving worthwhile award to recognize and appreciate the best women human right defenders requires a huge financial investment so that many more women human rights activists in Tanzania including those who have engaged in such work throughout their life time get the award.