



NAYCONF

National Youth Conference & Festival
BANJUL 2022



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DELEGATES CALL FOR MORE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

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**DISABILITY DOESN'T MEAN
INABILITY-ALAGIE BAJINKA**

EDITORIAL

Tackling the menace of drug abuse among youth

The issue of substance abuse among young people is becoming a cause for concern among many people in the country.

Young people must be told the truth to know that substance abuse have severe consequences on their growth and wellbeing.

No wonder, NAYCONF organisers created an opportunity for youth attending the biennial event to educate them on the consequences of substance abuse.

Recently the Gambia has seen a massive increase in the use and abuse of drugs promptly NAYCONF organisers to create a thematic session on substance abuse. In June 2022, the Ministry of Interior stated that The Gambia registered 1,698 illicit drug cases involving 1,699 accused persons from 2020 to date. These figures are worrying, and various stakeholders continue to call on the government to do more in fighting against this menace. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency-The Gambia (DLEAG) is responsible for fighting against illicit drugs in the country.

Currently, the number of young people involved in the usage of illicit drugs has reached a high proportion, a lot of young people are involved in crime as a result of drug abuse.

A lot of young people are mad as a result of the drugs they take. It is not abnormal to see teenagers involve in the use of the

harmful drug.

Our youth should know that they may likely end up drooping out of school, getting mental issues, poor relationships etc.

While there are many youth involve in substance abuse, many other youth are against it and renewed their call for the government and other stakeholders to do more in the fight against this worrying menace.

It had been said that even some of our young girls who are going to school are also abusing these drugs. The Gambia has porose borders which have resulted in smugglers smuggling a lot of drugs into the country from the Southern part of Senegal, Cassamance.

Nonetheless, a nation whose youth are addicted to drugs is one that will find it difficult to realized her developmental aspirations. prosper.

Marijuana, cocaine, heroin among others are drugs that the youth are heavily abusing in this country.

Fighting against drugs is not the business of one man alone, it requires a collective effort to combat this cankerworm that is eating the very crème of our society.

We, therefore, urge the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to intensify their community sensitizations targeting youth groups in the country.

KMYC Chairperson applauds Gov't for empowering youth

By Sulayman Waan

Isatou Secka, chairperson for Kanifing Municipal Youth Committee (KMYC) has applauded The Gambia Government for empowering the youth of the country.

Speaking to NAYCONF Daily in an exclusive interview, Mrs. Secka said: “For

youth empowerment I think the government is doing well because there are lots of opportunities available for the youth, especially when it comes to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) we are opportune to have National Enterprise

Development Initiative (NEDI), National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS),

Presidential International Award (PIA) and the National Youth Council (NYC).”

He added:“ These institutions are doing well in terms of capacity building for youths and coordination of youth organizations,” she said.

Concerning skills acquisition, she said, there are many skills centers, and

institutions in the country that are training young people at no cost, citing NEDI,

and the phased-out, Youth Empowerment Project (YEP).

Speaking further, the youth leader said the government has initiated a series of grants for young people to tap and venture into businesses or



expand their businesses.

She added that there are many peace and security advocacy groups and other youth organizations in the country. These projects and organizations, she added, are mostly funded by the UN System and The Gambia Government through NYC.

“Therefore, I felt that the government is doing good in terms of youth empowerment. Looking at this NAYCONF, the government was able to give D8.5 million and I think this is the first time the Gambia Government is bringing that huge support for youth. So, I felt that the government is empowering the youth,”

she said.

However, Mrs. Secka said there is a need for the government to empower the youths at the grassroots through their youth structures such as the Regional Youth Committees (RYC).

“Whenever those youths have a problem they always come to us (youth leaders) and not to the highest authority; therefore, I appealed that if such supports come let it be passed through the right authorities,” she said.

Mrs. Secka called on the youth to get up from their ghettos and reach out to youth leaders to know the available opportunities for youth.

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By Banna Sabally

Delegates attending the ongoing the National Youth Conference and Festival(NAYCONF) have called for more effective youth participation in politics. Participants expressed concerns over young people's limited involvement and meaningful participation in politics. The call came from participant taking part in one of the breakout sessions that focused on youth political participation in The Gambia.

Despite constituting over 60 percent of the Gambia's population, youth participation in politics remains very low.

Young people have always blamed unfavorable environment created by political parties and other societal factors as main factors hindering their effective participation.

Consequently, the few who sought interest to contest elections at the political party level are mostly elbowed by old folks in the race.

Essa Sanneh, a member of the National Youth Parliament and a delegate from the Kanifing Municipality highlighted that NAYCONF has enabled him and his

colleagues to identify some of the challenges contributing to youth under-representation in politics and how to overcome such challenges.

According to him, young



people are willing to effectively participate in the politics but are worried about the socio-cultural and economic barriers.

"My concern is how we will convince our leaders in our various communities and societies, to give young people the opportunities to take up leadership roles," Essa lamented.

He added: "Sometimes when we want to participate in politics it is the family and the people in the community who discourages us especially when planning to contest against an elderly person."

Binnet Roberts, a delegate representing Banjul echoed similar frustrations. She said young women in particular find it extremely hard to take part in politics.

She blamed the stereotypes associated with women's ability to take part in politics by society. "I think young people should be patient and climb the ladder together

and work collectively in knowing

their societies to become better leaders despite the current challenges," she said.

She said sometimes the problem is not even the older people, but the young people, 'they do not want to work together and usually don't help each other to achieve their political goals'.

She advises young people to not allow themselves to be used by politicians as tools for political violence.

Ansumana Camara, a youth activist from Activista The Gambia was the resource person for youth political participation and inclusion thematic session.

Speaking to the NAYCONF Daily, he said, the session has revealed the need for the 'Not Too Young Campaign' to be institutionalized to solve the issue of limited youth participation and involvement in politics.

Delegates attending the thematic session are anticipating that resolutions that would be passed by the NAYCONF would prioritise effective youth political participation and representation. They called on the ministry of youth and sports to continue to follow up on ensuring the government implements the resolutions of NYACONF once they are passed.



Young entrepreneurs call on NAYCONF participants to patronise their businesses

By Alieu Jallow

Young entrepreneurs exhibiting products at the ongoing National Youth

Conference and Festival (NAYCONF) have called on about two thousand delegates attending the weeklong youth gathering in Banjul to patronise their businesses.

Speaking to NAYCONF Daily, Fatoumatta Jawo, the founder of Kaddija's Collection, she invited delegates and dignitaries visiting NAYCONF grounds to visit their stalls and purchase their products.

She also recommended that the location where they displaying

their products should be move to a place where some of the major activities are taking place to help them make more sells.

Abdourahman Bah, founder of Bah Arts Design, he suggested that the exhibition should be mobile to help them expand its network range.

He complained that the place they are given to display their products and services is being used as a parking lunge thus creating some discomfort for them.

Mansi Jabang, a dealer in design products also called for a better location to be provided to them for more visibility by participants.

"It would have been better if

the stalls were put at strategic points, this will enable customers to see what we do," he complained.

Reacting to their concerns, Mr. Abdou Kabirr Daffeh, Program Manager for NEDI

and one of the resource persons at the NAYCONF, stressed that the objectives of this kind trade fairs is for businesses to network and not virtually intended for sales.

"I am discussing with the committee to see if there is a possibility of bringing them to St. Joseph where most of the activities are taking place to see what actions will come out of it," he said.



NAYCONF Delegates call on authorities to intensify the fight against drug abuse



By Sulayman Waan

Several delegates at the ongoing National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF) in the City of Banjul have called on the government through the Ministry of Interior to intensify efforts in combating drug abuse in the country.

The delegates were participating in a thematic session on drug and substance abuse.

The session provided participants the opportunity to further discuss ways and means of combating drug abuse to ensure productive youth in the country.

If unchanged, the issue of substance abuse may lead to social, physical, emotional, and job-related problems for the country's youth.

In June 2022, the Ministry of Interior stated that The Gambia registered 1,698

illicit drug cases involving 1,699 accused persons from 2020 to date.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency-The Gambia (DLEAG) has apprehended more than 6 tons of cannabis, close to a quarter ton of hashish, almost 3 tons of cocaine, and a significant amount of controlled and prohibited drugs ranging from diazepam, clonazepam, ecstasy, methamphetamine, skunk, kush among others.

However, the youth called for reinforcement of the fight against drug abuse in The Gambia.

In an interactive discussion at the Peace, Security, and Substance Abuse thematic session, Ndey Fatou Nying, a delegate, said drug abuse has a great impact on the peace and security of the country. She blamed drug abuse for many criminal activities happening in the country.

She called on authorities to intensify efforts to combat drugs to ensure a productive youth in society.

Fanta Darboe, a delegate from the West Coast Region also said a series of crimes happen in the society due to rampant usage of drugs in the society.

She claimed that many young people are into stealing invaluable materials just to purchase drugs which she said often causes conflicts in society.

"Many young people are not comfortable using drugs at their homes. So, they often go to the beaches to smoke cannabis. One day, I went to the beach with a friend and I was surprised to meet young people from my area smoking cannabis. I was surprised and could not spend there much time, I had to return home," she recalled.

However, Ms Darboe called on Gambians to collectively work together to combat drug abuse in the country.

Jainaba Sanneh, a delegate from Banjul expressed concern over the importation of tobacco into the Gambia despite all knowing that it skills. Sanneh opined that the government should introduce tobacco control in particular in the country's education syllabus to enable youngsters to

know the effects of drugs on human health. Concerning cannabis, she said, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency-The Gambia (DLEAG) should endeavour to apprehend the drug cartels instead of focusing only on drug users.

Aji Marie Saint, a delegate, said there is a greater need for parents to care for their children, saying drug addiction mainly started at an early age. "Drug addicts sending children to buy drugs is the major factor

responsible for children's involvement in drugs," she added.

"It is the responsibility of the parents to take care of their children but many will not do that until their children are affected by drug abuse," said Amadou Y. Colley, from the Ministry of Interior. Mr. Colley further said there are several drugs in the country different from cannabis and tobacco. Therefore, he opined that all should work together in getting

rid of drug dealers in society.

"Eliminating drug abuse is everybody's business. So, all of us should fight it collectively," he added.

Alhagie Jarju, a delegate from West Coast Region said to stop drug business, the government should create more job opportunities for youth.

'Many young people get into drugs due to lacked of opportunities in the country,' he added.

Mayor Bensouda Visits NAYCONF Daily



By ALIEU JALLOW

Talib Ahmed Bensouda, Lord Mayor of Kanifing Municipality Council (KMC) on Monday visited the National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF) Daily Newsroom located at St. Josephs Senior Secondary School in Banjul.

The visit was part of his tour of the places hosting NYCONF delegates to have firsthand information about their condition

especially delegates of his municipality.

Talking to NAYCONF Daily, Mayor Bensouda urged his fellow political leaders to visit the NAYCONF venues to get firsthand information about the condition of their regional delegates.

"Its good to get firsthand experience about what NAYCONF is all about. It's not just about the tournaments on the field, but

also the preparations behind the scenes, accommodation, feeding and condition of our participants," he said.

He added: As decision makers, it's good to get this firsthand experience. So when next our committees come to us, we can also understand what they're talking about".

"We've combined investment of 1.7 million, which I think is doubled to the next host Banjul. So we hope that number keeps just increasing and increasing, because we want our youth to feel encouraged when they compete. And this is what builds them up to be future leaders," he said.

KMC mayor was received at the media center by Mr. Nfamara Jawneh, deputy editor of NAYCONF Daily who briefed him their work.

He was accompanied by the deputy executive director of National Youth Council, Mr Pamalick Ceesay.

NAYCONF impacting businesses in Banjul

By Sulayman Waan

As the National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF) gathered over two thousand young people across the country, business persons and hotel owners have said the youth gathering has improved their business activities due to Banjul hosting of NAYCONF.

The youth gathering also comprises various sports activities including football, volleyball, athletics competitions, and draught. These games have attracted several spectators which increased the number of people in the Island City.

However, The NAYCONF Daily has been monitoring the trade activities within the city since the beginning of the 2022 national youth gathering and discussed with business persons.

Speaking to this medium at the gate of Saint Augustine Adama Jallow, a vendor of bananas, oranges, groundnut, and other fruits said the importance of the NAYCONF to her cannot be over-emphasized. She noted that the youth gathering is absolutely booming her business beyond anticipation.

“Left to me alone this event will not stop because my business is booming and anytime I bring goods these people will buy all in a short period. I have to provide for others to continue selling,”

she said.

Mrs. Jallow said since the youth week-long event started she sold more products compared to previous days. She is optimistic about business growth before the end of the event due to the good market provided to her by the event.

Mama Darboe, another fruit and groundnut vendor said the event has immensely boosted her petty business compared to previous days.

“My business is going well because normally if the school closes I will not sell on the weekend but now I am selling on weekends because I believe my business will boom due to a large number of people in the area,” she said.

She added: “I expect to sell more before the end of the event. This programme is good and I am happy.”

Muhammed Sissohor, managing director of Carlton Hotel along the independence drive described the NAYCONF as a great opportunity for his hotel. He admitted that Hotels in Banjul are often experienced scarce customers, but NAYCONF provides us with enough customers and is boosting businesses.

“The hotel has 18 rooms and NAYCONF occupying ten rooms of the hotel is a plus for us. Normally we will stay a month

without giving out ten rooms but thank God that all the rooms have been occupied because of NAYCONF. “I wish this event extended to two or three months,” he added.

Mr. Sissiho said the money earned from the NAYCONF would obviously contribute immensely to the development of the hotel, noting that it will help them to do some renovation and purchase other important materials for the hotel.

Jainaba Jallow, deputy managing director of Princess Diana Hotel said: “Since the NAYCONF started we have lots of benefits from it because many of their participants are lodged here.”

Ms Jallow noted that 42 guests have been lodged in the hotel occupying 21 rooms for about seven days. She added that the hotel is making lots of money from this national youth gathering.

“I have understood that the event is just one week but I wish it is prolonged to two or three months so that we earn more money,” she said.

Ms Jallow said lodging such a number of guests will enable them to earn much money and then use it in the development of the hotel such as renovations and buying valuable materials for the facility to ensure standardization.



NAYCONF National Youth Conference & Festival BANJUL 2022
THEME: "THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND SECURITY FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY; CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES"



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Jah Group donates over D161,000 worth of fuel to NAYCONF

By Lamarana S. Jallow

Jah Oil Company Limited under the Jah Group on Tuesday 20th December 2022 donated D161,788 worth of fuel to the National Organising Committee (NOC) of the National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF) at a presentation ceremony held in Banjul.

The gesture is amount to 2200 litres of fuel. It is aimed to ensure effective transportation of NAYCONF participants within the City of Banjul. It will also enables the NOC and Local Organising Committee (LOC) to travel in and out of the

Island City easily throughout the youth gathering.

From now drivers assigned on NAYCONF duties can receive fuel from the Jah Oil Company Limited. However, it the fuel is limited to the aforementioned amount.

In presenting the donation, Momodou Hydera, General Manager of Jah Group, said the gesture is

part of Jah Oil's corporate social responsibility to the young people and the country as a whole.

Speaking further, he said, this is not the first time Jah Oil is supporting the country's young people, noting the company has provided support to all regional delegates across the country.

This gesture, he said, will ease transportation of delegate from their various regions to Banjul.

For his part, Alagie Jarju, Executive Director for the National Youth Council (NYC) thanked Jah Oil what he called timely intervention.

He said the gesture will go a long way in easing transportation of participants, delegates and NOC within the city.

Saikou K. Sanyang permanent Secretary at the ministry of youth and Sports equally thanked the Jah Oil Group on behalf of the chaired of the NOC who double as the Minister of Youth and Sports.

Delegates urge Gov't to empower young entrepreneurs



By Aisha Tamba

Delegates at the ongoing National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF) in Banjul have called on the government to provide more financial support to young entrepreneurs to expand their businesses.

The NAYCONF is a biennial gathering that brings the nation's youth together to discuss issues affecting their lives as well as their role in national development. The Conference affords youths, through their accredited representations the opportunity to discuss, matters of common interest, and their role in national development.

The entrepreneurship sessions at NAYCONF is being coordinated by National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI), the enterprise arm of the Ministry of Youths and Sports.

Their conversations focuses on attitudinal change, entrepreneurship mind-set, and importance of technology in trade.

Pa Modou Gaye, participant from the North Bank Region called on the government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports to ensure that there is access to finance for young entrepreneurs. This, he said would help them to expand their businesses.

"When young people are given access to loan with soft interest rate will help them expand their business. Currently, I have a loan with small ruminant's project definitely the charges they make is reasonable but the accessibility is also a problem," he said.

He added: "There are thousands of youth out there who have very brilliant ideas if they are supported, they can for sure do well." he said.

Abdoulie Mballow a delegate from Basse also a person with disability was one of the participants at the session. He urged government to support persons with disability with operational cash to commence or strengthen their businesses.

"Most of the persons with disabilities wants to adventure into entrepreneurship but lack sponsorship that will help them

to start-up a business. "Most of us persons with disabilities want to engage into business and therefore need government support," he said.

He opined that there is a need for the government to provide specific funds for persons with disabilities that could be access at all times across the country.

Mariama Samba, Program Officer, NEDI, said the national event provides young people opportunity to talk about issues, share ideas and to bring in solution draft resolutions at the end of the weeklong event.

"The resolutions will help the government to see how best to address some of the challenges."

Ms. Samba said many young entrepreneurs are faced with challenges of accessing funding to expand their businesses. "Inadequate funding is still a problem for many young entrepreneurs. "If the government can help young people to have start-up capital to start their business is going to minimize the challenges," she added.

She said Gambian youth have very good business ideas but they lack financial support to start their businesses.

"If the government can at lease increase the budget to be able to provide grants and more loans for young people to be able to start something. I believe this will help in addressing a lot of challenges in the entrepreneurship eco-system," she said.



Disability doesn't mean inability-Alagie Bajinka

By Lamin Fadera

It has been said that disability is not inability, sports unite the global village where people with different cultures, traditions, races, and colours can fit in The Gambia, Despite persons with disabilities sometimes facing some challenges to board a vehicle or to use congested traffic to find their way to different destinations yesterday at the Manneh Sillah court, they made an amazing exhibition of skills and talents was portrayed by the Paralympic basketball team.

Alagie Bajinka former Gambian international in wheelchair track, field and Basketball coached Team A, yesterday Basketball played

with Sainey Colley's Team B.

"People should consider us very well because disability doesn't mean Inability; you know disability is everyone's sports. Today I am a person with a disability but tomorrow who knows so the disability issue should be everyone's responsibility." Sports is something that is very good for our health and as a wheelchair athlete I believe what a man can do we can also do, this is our nation and we are proud to be part of NAYCONF," he said **NAYCONF participation** "Our participation in NAYCONF is very important and by playing Basketball here we have shown what we are capable of definitely. This is not the first time we are

participating in the NAYCONF, is the third time, I was in Jarra Soma in 2014, and in 2017 I was in Basse but this year's event is the best event we ever participated in. Because we are considered here and they have given care and attention to us," he told NAYCONF daily. Mr. Bajinka is appreciative of the number of people who took their precious time to watch them exhibit their skills and talent

Sainey Colley the head coach of Team B yesterday expressed delight for them to be given the opportunity to take part in the NAYCONF. He said the National Youths Conference and festival has impacted the lives of the differently able



people within the Gambia. 'we are happy to take part in the competition and the NAYCONF is a good one for us because a lot of people think persons with disabilities cannot do sports, but we have manifested that we can do what a lot of people can't do.'

He urges the Ministry of Youths and Sports and other stakeholders to help the Paralympians in this country with more funding so that they will be able to help themselves.

Challenges

Despite having a great time in this year's youth convergence with his colleagues, Sainey Colley raised concern

about the lack of quality and good wheelchairs they can when they are in competition.

'When we go to competition outside the Gambia, we do struggle because we don't have our original wheelchairs to use.

The one we are using is not original because the original wheelchair is 26 centimeters in the ring but the one we are using is 24 centimeters and their wheels are very short and this affects us whenever we go out for competition.

The Ministry of Youths and Sports should help us with original materials because we have talented Basketball

and Athletic team in the Gambia' an emotional Colley told NAYCONF daily.

Salifou Tamba plays Basketball and Athletics for the Gambia; he was excited to participate in the NAYCONF in the capital city. He said his wish is for the NAYCONF to continue and for them to play on a daily basis. Yesterday Salifou scored the highest number of points in yesterday's Basketball gameplay during the NAYCONF, he said playing in the NAYCONF champions is an absolute joy for him and wishes the events will continue for a very long time.

