



Y-Fem Amplifying young women's Voice, Money, Body through Action!

VOICE

I Write What I Like by Steve Biko is my favourite book. That is the same principle we as young women need to adopt, for our voices still don't go beyond the storytelling fire in reaching a global audience. We must be the ones in control of our own stories and must be seen as leaders, connecting the dots in the realisation that we are global citizens. With our voice and great agility we can make lives change; lives will be respected; our hopes and visions for change will be manifested.

Gone are the days of one-dimensional media coverage. Gone are the days that you had to be a reporter to share a story. With the new age social media, you and I are both published authors of our own stories. However, and even more urgently, African young women's voices are still not adequately amplified. Social media challenges traditional media and we are redefining social media to become a tool for advocating and marketing; to network, and to learn and share information.

I discovered Feminism through literature. However, my hunger for African stories and, most especially, stories of young women like me, is not yet satisfied. Y-Fem has started a SHE SPEAKS feminist poetry reading programme. SHE SPEAKS aims to promote the creative expression of young women to share and tell their stories, and be advocates for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

MONEY

It is a traditional myth that women are not to be interested in money matters, even though we are the drivers of the

economy in Namibia. Y-Fem conducts consciousness-raising meetings, critically analysing how young women spend their money, and at the same time also looking at the different Labour Acts and trade unions. Many young women expressed their frustrations about unemployment and poverty. So many young women want to pursue their studies but don't have the financial means to pay the tuition costs. Many young women have also challenged their employers that wanted to violate their human rights by requesting them for sexual favours in exchange for employment. Many still fall prey to transactional sex to obtain financial security, which often leads to young women not being able to negotiate safe sex.

BODY

All the feminist consciousness-raising meetings we have organised started with the 'Who am I?' factor: How are we as young women supposed to know our rights if we don't know who we are? What makes us happy, and what makes us sad? How are we supposed to practice safe sex if we don't know our bodies? Loving ourselves and respecting our bodies before anything else is of utmost importance. Y-Fem is also advocating for comprehensive sexuality education in formal and informal settings in order to promote young women's ownership and control over their sexuality.

ACTION

Creating safe spaces for girls and young women unlocks the myths we internalised as a result of living in a patriarchal society. We learn to love ourselves and build up a collective power in order to bring about change. We strategise; we organise our voices, thoughts and

stories, and contextualise our actions to use our collective voices to reach out to our communities, allies and Government. Y-Fem is a movement building networks of young women's groups. Y-Fem believes in collective activism, peer mentorship, diversity and flexibility. Feminist leadership is important for social transformation and social justice. We need more young women to participate meaningfully in decision-making spaces in all stages of design, monitoring and implementation of sexual and reproductive rights policies and programmes on national level.

Through our community outreach in Erongo, Khomas, Otjozondjupa and Oshikoto regions, we have organised informal discussions on sexuality with groups of young women. We believe in transformative leadership and young women being the driving force of the young feminist movement in Namibia. Through the consciousness-raising meetings we have created young women's groups in Grootfontein, Swakopmund, Karibeb, Tsumeb and Otjiwarango.

We believe that young women should be the champions for the change they want to see. To this end, Y-Fem is also planning to organize community dialogues with Traditional Leaders and Local Government officials with the support of our networks in the regions.

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