



with



in

# Conversations With The Living Future

MidTerm Review

June - December 2022



Kufunda Village- Harare



ORAP- Bulawayo

## Background

The purpose of this series of conversations with Zimbabwean youth at ORAP in Bulawayo and at Kufunda in Harare is to explore how the past is living in the younger generation, and what is calling them from the future. The conversations come out of a recognition that the needs and potential of Youth were a key part of the initial impulse of Gateway Zimbabwe, which we have never fully responded to. In a conversation with Arlene from CFOR in early 2022, this impulse came back again very strongly.

As part of this accompaniment process, we had planned to host 6 conversations (3 in Bulawayo and 3 in Harare) with young people - activists, social entrepreneurs, artists, etc, and let the conversation be guided by their interest, inspiration and needs. After having hosted 3 in Harare and 2 in Bulawayo, it is very clear that in order to support a deepening of the roots of this work, we need more conversations and more regularly. It is also clear that these conversations have taken different shapes in the 2 cities in response to what is needed and what is possible.

## Overview of The Process

Kufunda has done work in the village and surrounding areas such as Epworth and Arcturus which made inviting youth in those areas a smooth process. ORAP had been working programmatically with youth living with disabilities and youth in the Richmond area on skills development. This was an invitation into a conversation where the youth identify their priority areas and are supported in exploring them further. The intention right from ideation was for these conversations to be informed and planned with and by the youth.

## Kufunda

Session 1- The first session at Kufunda was a full day process where the youth started the day with song and dance followed by a Story Exchange process for them to get to know each other and as a way of harvesting themes that would guide the process. These themes were;

- Education: A desire to complete high school or go further into tertiary or skills training.

- Teenage pregnancies and early marriages: High rates of school dropouts and marriage being an escape from poverty and struggle for young girls who often end up worse off.
- Substance Abuse: Hopelessness leading to checking out by taking alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants to escape reality.
- Livelihoods: Lack of employment opportunities, desire to use their skills to generate income or seek start up funds for small businesses.
- Self organizing: At first this point seemed binary to the request for start up funds yet the way it was explained is not either or but both needing support and not waiting for the support to come in order to get started.
- Resilience: "Everyone has a story of trials and yet we are still here and everyday we take a step forward." There is a sense of pushing forward through the hopelessness and uncertainty to an unknown but positive destination.

These themes were explored through an afternoon of process work and what came out of this constellation was the sense that there is so much darkness that is not spoken of and that the darkness, pain and grief is coexisting with the dreams, hopes and ambitions.

Session 2- This was 1 day however, participants arrived at lunchtime, had an afternoon session then dinner around the fire and a continuation in the morning till lunch. This allowed more free interactive space which brought a deeper level of connecting to each other and to intention by taking what was emerging into unstructured conversation and dream time. What was clear from session 1 and 2 was that there is a distinction between the youth that have grown up in the grounding and nurturing space at Kufunda who are confident and clear while the youth coming in from surrounding areas are fearful and shy. There are a few new faces stepping in each time and even then, those who were returning having participated in the first session were able to bring their voices in more. Play was used as the learning medium with the youth being given turns to lead. This created a safe and non threatening space to discuss heavy issues building off the first session and what they encountered in their every day lives between sessions such as drug abuse, lack of education and employment opportunities and early child marriages. It was also the beginning of exploring the possibility that with appreciative inquiry which gives us the boldness to dream, the youth could begin to speak of their dreams although they have already come to life in the present. It became clear that 3 sessions with work in between, which was the initial plan, would not nurture the depth required to support the youth in this work and so the budget is being restructured to enable Kufunda to host more sessions at as little cost as is possible and to strengthen relationships while also doing capacity strengthening.

Session 3- Who do I choose to be? This session, supported by [Pauline](#), worked with personal intention, encouraging the youth to speak as though they have already achieved their goals and dreams. We awoke the dancer then danced into the future and spoke from that place in the here and now. Here are some of the things that were shared: It's January 2023, October 2024 etc and I am...

- In my shop, well dressed with fine gold jewelry and stocking up with the help of my shop assistant. I am excited because my network of friends is growing and I am now 100% responsible for myself. I am grateful.
- I am a facilitator at Kufunda also working on the beehive project in partnership with Tinashe.
- I am selling honey at the supermarket and packaging for export. I am also teaching the community how to make beehives. I have completed my first year of the football coaching course and I am engaging youth through sport by teaching young girls and boys football.
- I am operating an organic garden from which I supply organic products and agricultural produce. I am completing my degree in Supply Chain Management and I am preparing to grow my business to be able to export my goods.
- I'm off to university to study to be a lawyer.
- I am a nurse who also works as a youth leader and facilitator.
- I am advocating for women's rights while studying feminist journalism and working as a TV presenter part time.
- I have reopened my barber shop and I am also pursuing filming and video editing as well as graphic design and passing Shona and Ndebele examinations (to enable to communicate more efficiently).

2023 has begun with reconnecting to those dreams and seeing where the youth are at on their journey.

## ORAP

Session 1 was a loosely structured conversation with the youth in the Richmond area, guided by the questions, "What do I care about and what can I do about it?" What came up strongly were 2 points:

- Support to either start or grow diverse projects and some which were listed were in the area of farming, media and technology and skills training to accompany the growth.
- Inclusion of differently able bodied youth in the community in ORAP programs and processes.

Session 2 felt like a continuation building off a foundation that had been laid not only in session 1 but in numerous engagements that had been held over the years. There were familiar and friendly faces around the room and the energy was that of readiness to dive right in. We began the morning by introducing ourselves with the meaning of our names and what we were still journeying with from the last interaction which was on the challenges and aspirations of the youth. This cohort was integrated with differently able bodied youth and they quickly put the organizers to task on ORAP's progress with framing a disability policy which ensures that differently able bodied members of the community are included in every aspect of programming which came as an action request from the last session. A few youth shared their progress on goals they had set for themselves since the last meeting.

- One young man who wanted to use trench farming for potatoes reported that he bought 100 plants which are now flowering. He estimates that each plant can give him about 5 bags of potatoes.
- A young lady has started a podcast where she interviews different people on sustainable development. She wants to partner with the youth projects in the room to give them visibility and a platform for networking and resource mobilization through her podcast.
- One young man has started maggot farming which is profitable and serves the community as well. He buys flies, collects dumped, decaying fruit and vegetables from the market for the production of maggots which cleans up the streets, he feeds the excess to animals on the farm as well as adding to compost to enrich the soil, flies lay maggots, the maggots are sold to fish farmers and the flies that do hatch become the next group to lay eggs which turn to maggots and the cycle continues.

There were 2 new ideas to the group that had already built up some momentum as follows:

- The chairman of the Richmond youth has identified a disused resource in the community- backyard swimming pools. Because of the shortage of water and high cost of maintaining functional swimming pools, many in the area have been drained and are lying idle. He wants to propose turning them into fish farms for a low cost, creating employment and a way to generate income. There was also a discussion to partner with the maggot farmer.
- One youth has been training in sign language and would like to create a platform for more youth to learn how to sign then be invited to convenings to provide the service thereby creating employment for those who can sign and also making convening spaces more inclusive as those with hearing and speech impediments can participate.

These became the anchoring groups for a generative and dynamic pro-action café which was followed by a Story Exchange and setting of next steps. Key of which was to gather for the next session which is planned as a video proposal making workshop which will enable the youth to create video proposals that will be housed on a crowdfunding platform and assist in accessing support to strengthen their projects. The second was for a Story Exchange facilitation training with a few youth that showed interest in learning how empathy can be a way to build relationships and bring people together in their community.

Real and lasting change takes time and 2023 is going to be a year to delve deeper at the roots and to grow higher and wider from the trunk to the branches and leaves like the image of the Baobab tree.

#ItsUsAndItsNow