

Reports to Niwano Peace Foundation

Assigned fiscal year: 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

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Organization name:

Positive Youths Africa (PYA)

Project Title:

Afrogiveness Choir

I submit hereby following reports:

- Activity report
- Financial report (General)
- Financial report (Details)


Submitted date:

DD/MM/YEAR : 30-April-2023

Name:

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Signature:



I- BACKGROUND

The Afrogiveness Choir, funded by the Niwano Peace Foundation(NPF), was established to use the universal language of music to heal, connect and empower mentally traumatized survivors of interfaith and intercultural conflicts. It created a safe space through which meaningful relationships developed between survivors at opposing camps of interfaith and intercultural conflicts while enabling mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. The entire journey- from auditioning to coaching to song writing and even music production was fulfilling and even after our budget was exhausted, the choir remains a “home away from home” till date.

Among other milestones during the realization of the Afrogiveness Choir Project, we won the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence, the King Abdullah II-UN World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize and our President, Franca Ma-ih Sulem Yong, was invited to deliver the keynote address to 1500 legislators and delegates at the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union which held from 11-15 March in Manama, Bahrain titled : “Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance.” On another striking news, the Afrogiveness Program under Positive Youths Africa (PYA) morphed into an independent movement of its own and became registered as an organization, using various arts to promote tolerance, forgiveness, empathy, human fraternity and peace.

Guided by professionals, choristers were trained in Peace Education, songwriting, singing, emotional intelligence/healing as they harnessed their musical talents. and uplifted each other, allowing for inter-religious and intercultural co-existence.

The overriding mission of the project, which sought to use music to raise public awareness about values like; tolerance, forgiveness, empathy, human fraternity and encourage habits like peaceful co-existence and harmonious cooperation between people of all religion, cultures or background, was attained to a good extent. The choir grouped 50 survivors of conflict from diverse cultural and religious, cultural, ideological and socio-economic backgrounds and it helped to foster social cohesion between youths in host communities and forcibly displaced youths (Internally Displaced Persons from Cameroon and refugees from 7 countries-Sudan, Rwanda, Central African Republic, Congo, Togo, Niger and Chad), who all learned the values taught by the project.

On a more general level, the project was successfully completed thanks to the strong commitment and involvement of the Afrogiveness team, under Positive Youths Africa(PYA) which has since 2015 achieved deep impact in advancing tolerance and peaceful co-existence between people of different faiths. However, the project, which is currently being sustained, came with many challenges which can be overcome with more funding and lapses which can be filled if we learn the hard lessons from the project. Activities were climaxed by the Afrogiveness Choir performance at the annual “Tolerance Show”, organized in partnership with the National Commission for UNESCO on the international day of tolerance (November,16). This report presents the activities, strengths, weaknesses and lessons of the event.

II-GENERAL PROCESS AND ACTIVITY BREAK DOWN

Activity 1: Establishment of the Choir

In May, 2022, the Afrogiveness Choir was established. We achieved this activity by running outreach programs to spread the word to people who met our target in churches and mosques here in Yaounde and by tapping from our pool of beneficiaries who are survivors of interfaith and intercultural conflicts. After a rigorous audition from an extraordinary pool of talent, we auditioned 100 people and selected 50 choristers. The Afrogiveness Choir, consisting of both muslim and christian survivors of the religious-based Boko Haram Conflict and both anglophone and francophone survivors of the culture-based, Anglophone Conflict as well as host community youths who had survived interfaith/intercultural intolerance. The choir currently hosts 30 youths who have remained even after the grant was exhausted.



1) Auditions for the Afrogiveness Choir

Activity 2: Training on Peace Education

Key on our agenda was ensuring that choristers were blessed to learn about values that kept them at peace with themselves, with others and with nature. Thus, during the entire course of the project, we continue to employ expert trainers from organizations like the World Peace Initiative (WPI), Welisane Foundation and African Initiative for Health and Research Promotion (AIHRP) to train the youths on choristers on how to nurture, practice and spread values like tolerance, forgiveness, empathy, human fraternity and

peace.



2) *Training on Peace Education*

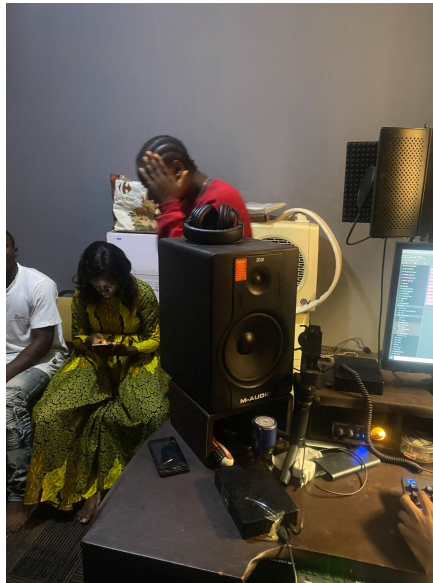
Activity 3: Training on Music and Songwriting Work with professionals to harness the musical talents of Afrogiveness Choristers, while giving them an opportunity to release war trauma, make friends and cross-fertilize ideas about tolerance and peace. Choristers were grouped into their various voices but while each chorister was given the opportunity to write his or her own song, all choristers were compelled to jointly learn and rehearse the songs written by a fellow chorister.



3) *Training on music and song writing*

Activity 4: Music Recording, Mixing and Mastering

After the songs were written and thoroughly rehearsed and mastered by all choristers, we proceeded to recording the songs. The recording of the songs was very daunting for 2 main reasons; firstly, although the Ministry of Arts and Culture had initially agreed to record the songs free of charge. Their recording studio suffered a major hitch which compelled us to cover the cost of recording with the Niwano Foundation Grant. After a series of difficult experiences with 4 recording studios, we finally found a studio to record all 7 songs which made the “Solidarity” album.



4) Recording

Activity 5: Performances

Afroginence Choir is becoming one of the fastest rising music groups which specialize in using music to promote values in Cameroon. Throughout the project, the choir was invited to perform at several events notably the Orange Evening, organized by the British High Commission in Yaounde, the Red Carpet Fundraising event, organized by the Welisane Foundation, Women Rise Show, the CREAM Childrens show among others. Afroginence further organized the “Tolerance Show” on international day of tolerance through which choristers use their art to promote tolerance, forgiveness, empathy, human fraternity and peace.



4) Performances

Activity 5: Promotion

As at this activity, even though funding was almost finished, we found leverage to popularize songs of the Afrogiveness Choir on a popular radio program. These included the "Holiday Workshop" program.



5) Promotion

Activity 6: Video making

The making of music videos, while the last activity on the radar, was the most demanding financially. We were at the thick of the covid pandemic in Cameroon, where few events were happening and the cost of video making had become very high. It became so difficult to find a video maker who met our budget. But at last, we succeeded in finding a videographer who met our cost.

Music videos have been uploaded to Youtube and can be viewed as follows

- 1) Aïmons nous : https://youtu.be/cxM52T92_pM
- 2) Solidarity : <https://youtu.be/jLJfbtoBg8U>
- 3) Never Give it Up : <https://youtu.be/QOa4IdeCBrQ>
- 4) Working Woman : <https://youtu.be/F3RZJ3uLOvs>
- 5) Africa Play : <https://youtu.be/Vn8s674liQ4>
- 6) Melody : <https://youtu.be/4yf53s66iZc>
- 7) Corona : https://youtu.be/idUc8lGTc_Y



6) Video making

III-ACHIEVEMENTS

-The UNESCO Tolerance Prize: Thanks to all our projects (including the Afrogiveness Choir), we won the prestigious UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence (<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/franca-ma-ih-sulem-yong-winner-unesco-madanjeet-singh-prize-2022>). The UNESCO tolerance prize money is being used for the construction of the Afrogiveness Centre: a multi-arts psycho social center meant to empower mentally traumatized survivors of conflict and intolerance.

-The UN-King Abdullah II World Interfaith Harmony Prize

The Afrogiveness Choir performed at the “Fraternity Walk” during World Interfaith Harmony Week. This , among other aspects, earned us the UN-King Abdullah II World Interfaith Harmony Prize.

-Keynote Address and Intervention at the 146th IPU Assembly: Our President was called upon to deliver a keynote address at the 146th IPU Assembly. Her interventions at the 146th Assembly of the Inter Parliamentary Union(IPU) helped to hatch the historic Manama Declaration:Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance and a resolution on Cybercrimes: The new risks to global security. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abFMpYqt90w&t=10422s>).

IV-FUTURE PLANS

Haven won the UNESCO Tolerance Prize, we hope to use the prize money and many other resources, not only to take the Afrogiveness Choir to a more professional feat which would be income generating for choristers but also to continue to promote tolerance, forgiveness, empathy, human fraternity and peace. A whole lot still needs to be done to bring the choir up to speed. Although our budget is exhausted, the Afrogiveness Choir “Solidarity” album is still ongoing. We are still applying for grants and trying to gather resources to achieve the following;

- **Do Halal versions of audio recordings :** Up to 15 muslims quit the choir on grounds that the use of musical instruments are considered “haram” or abomination in muslim culture. Only 2 muslims accepted to participate in music videos for the same reason. This pushed our team to do research as to how to include the muslims in all processes. Through our research, we came across a muslim led music enterprise known as Halal beats which specializes in doing vocal based soundtracks that respect muslim culture. We have reached out to this company and they are willing to record “Halal” versions of our songs. As soon as we get the funds, we opted to have 2 versions of recorded songs: the inclusive edition which uses musical instruments and the Halal edition which uses vocal-based soundtracks. This idea has satisfied both christians and muslims within the choir.

- **Do more professional videos :** The initial music videos made for the Afrogiveness Choir “Solidarity” album as seen above were low cost videos which could meet the budget. With more funding, we would be able to generate highly professional videos which could generate millions of views on youtube. We would also make “Halal” versions of music videos to encourage muslim choristers to join in the videos.
- **More media coverage and promotion:** The Solidarity album received limited publicity owing to lack of finances. With more resources, we could popularize the songs to reach the nooks and crannies of Cameroon.
- **Organize a launch party for the solidarity album :** We are yet to do an official launching ceremony for the solidarity album, reason why the videos have been published “unlisted on youtube” until we launch the album officially.