



Youth Engagement Podcast Series

From the Accountability Pill Podcast - Your Minidose of CSO Accountability

Part 5 with Stephen Musarurwa (Climate Live and Fridays for Future) and Tatiana Natalie Kondo (Voice2Rep)

Facilitated by Katie McCarthy (Accountable Now)

Brief Description: In Part 5 of the Youth Engagement Series, Stephen and Tatiana join Katie to talk about activism – art and activism – and its relation to the climate justice scene. They share how they've seen art used as a tool for positive social change. They also pull from their personal experiences in international climate change conversations to talk about the barriers to youth representation and how youth representation and capacity building matters.

Transcript:

Introduction (00:00):

[theme music starts] Welcome to Accountable Now's Accountability Pill Podcast, your mini dose of CSO accountability. [theme music stops]

Katie McCarthy (Accountable Now) (00:14):

Welcome back! We are back with another exciting episode of our Youth Engagement Series. Today we have two wonderful guests, both with impressive backgrounds in activism – art and activism. They'll share their own take on the power of art, as a poet and as an advocate. We'll also hear about their experiences in international climate change settings, and chat about the importance of local representation in youth engagement.

I'm Katie McCarthy, a fellow with Accountable Now, and the facilitator for today's discussion. I'm a scholar of human rights, looking at the intersection of arts and human rights. I'm also a musician and I view art as a powerful tool for instigating social change.

With that, I'm very excited for today's conversation, but first I'd like to just point out that each new episode has a transcript found in the episode description. Maybe you may prefer or maybe you may need a transcript to follow along to podcasts, so be sure to check that out.

With that, I'd like to introduce our very talented guests, Stephen Musarurwa with Climate Live and Fridays for Future and Tatiana Natalie Condo with Voice2Rep. Welcome to both of you!

Stephen Musarurwa (Climate Live and Fridays for Future) (01:24): Oh, thank you so much.

Tatiana Natalie Kondo (Voice2Rep) (01:26): Thank you so much – really excited.

Katie (01:28): Same here. So, let me first introduce Tatiana – known by her stage name Banshee, she's an award-winning hybrid artist whose primary art form is spoken word poetry. Born and raised in Harare, Zimbabwe, she's become one of the most sought-after creative advocates in the country. Banshee has represented Zimbabwe on various international platforms, including COP21 in Paris, France, Defend Defenders in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the Caravan of Hope Tour in Mozambique and Malawi.

Also with us is Stephen Musarurwa. He's Botswana's National Coordinator for Climate Live and the Fridays for Future Movement. He's also a passionate climate justice advocate and activist. Through his work with Climate Live and other affiliations, Stephen has coordinated various activities, including the Children and Youth Pavilion at COP 28 in Dubai.

All right, we're going to jump just straight in with a really broad question – What is the potential of art as a way for youth to engage in driving social change in their communities?

Tatiana, why don't you start?

Tatiana (02:37):

All right, thank you so much for the opportunity. This is such a great one. And with reference to the question that you just asked, I honestly feel that art is an effective tool when it comes to driving positive change in that it just doesn't only touch on aspects that relate to policy from an intellectual or rather factual perspective, but rather it touches or rather interlinks with the emotional aspect of humanity.

So when we're talking about affecting positive change, we're just not talking about those that are equipped for such work with reference to academia or like their qualifications, but the passion that they have to fix change within the communities that they come from.

And I honestly feel that as humanity, we are not just physical beings, we also have an intangible aspect. So when we're talking about activism, which is activism with reference to art, we're also touching on the intangible aspect of humanity that is redressing their psychology so that they can want to change for the betterment of the society that they're living in, from a very intangible close to home angle. And I also feel that when we're talking to, we're speaking to communities, art bridges like the gap that exists within different communities or people who are existing from different, who are coming from different angles or different aspects of life – like if we're talking about differences in ethnicity or language or culture or race or anything like that. I honestly feel that art bridges that gap and allows people to interact and find solutions to the problems that they have, regardless of the situations that they are coming from. So art is such a universal language and I feel like even if people don't really understand like, for instance, the policies that exist within the communities that they live, or even their rights art, makes it easier for people to be able to consume or rather speak out when their rights are infringed – because art makes it more comprehensible. And also we're able to interact with leaders within

the communities that we exist in from an angle that they also can relate to because even when we're speaking to like general differences in generations we're able to communicate on the same level because we are existing at the same angle because of the art that we're communicating or using as a medium.

So I honestly feel that art can really help us when it comes to activism because it is such a universal tool.

Katie (05:33):

I love that. I love the concept of art being a language— its own way to communicate and make people feel different things and that's great. Thanks. Stephen, do you have anything to add?

Tatiana (05:41):

Thank you.

Stephen (05:45):

Wow. I think Tatiana, you're like reaching for my mind, you know, everything, you said was definitely what I was gonna say – but, you know, you know, we have to understand that, like, people have to understand music is a way, art is the way to express whatever feeling that you have inside. You know, as much as you know that I'm a member of Climate Live, I organize Climate Live – with Climate Live, we believe that music is a universal language that we can use to communicate with anybody, of course, the entire world.

So, like, what Tatiana has been mentioning, that, you know, music is a way that you can use to engage the youth.

Number one, we can use music as a way to raise awareness of the critical situations and understand that, you know, music is more and more influential than politics itself. It is a way that can touch a person's heart – that's why you see when people are down they are listening to music. So, music is a way to express all these things. Music is a way that can amplify the voice of the youth, and it empowers them to advocate for change.

Music also cultivates the issue of creativity. You know, within the societies, that's why, like you see nowadays, we can a little bit even communicate directly to politics, you know, as much as we are climate activists, as much as we are advocates for change, you cannot just go to the streets and say, 'Ah, this is what I want to gain,' but you can say it through music, you can communicate through music.

Last time I was at COP, we discovered that we have different people from different countries, and they were playing their music. We would understand the feeling they're feeling, the oppression that is happening in their countries. You know, these are the people from Amazon, these are the people who are from Brazil, and the forest is being destroyed each and every day [here Stephen shares a rate, but the unit is unclear]

And the countries and the people who are responsible for that, these are the these 40 people that are up to money – but no they use music as a way to say, 'Guys, this is what we're going through.' You understand the vibe, the influence, within the music.

So, me I believe just from what Tatiana, I think she said, oh, most of the things, but music is the one which can inspire change. That's why you see, even when we want to go to the streets, we

sing music because we understand the leaders who understand the music chants. People can use art, it isn't just about music, also art itself. Someone can draw something, someone can do some dances and stuff. All these things are to express, the oppression, is to express the voices of the voiceless.

So I think I've said a lot about it, but I support what my colleague, Tatinana, says. And right now, I'm even jealous that I'm among the people who are artists, you know, the only one who is an advocate for change, but also I use music, but I really do understand. Thank you.

Katie (08:37):

Yes, thanks for sharing that, Stephen. It's so great to bring in various art forms into the equation. And also advocates are super important stakeholders in these conversations, so don't sell yourself short.

Alright, so you both have been involved in many international climate change conversations, Stephen you just mentioned a few, and I'm curious, so here is my next question.

In these international climate change conversations, what were barriers to youth representation and what are young people doing to have their voices heard in these spaces?

Stephen, why don't you start.

Stephen (09:13):

Well, thank you so much for bringing up that issue. You know, at COP, you discover that they can recognize we [youth] exist, right? But they don't capacitate us. They don't give us the necessities for us to make the decisions, you know, it is quite unfortunate that – I was kind of happy at COP28 because most of the youth, they were having participation, but looking at previous COPS and stuff, there is kind of developing. But we still facing all these things, they undermine the voice of the youth. They don't give up the platform – you just hear a decision of being made. You're not allowed to enter these spaces. So it's one of the major problems that we experienced as the youth.

[we are not certain of the exact acronyms in this section, so they are denoted by XX]

And there is not that credibility, that they recognize us. You know I was talking to the XX Executive Secretary last time at XX it has been, we're asking them, 'How could you say that you're choosing 100 youth over 150, 100-and-something countries, you know? We have countries which are experiencing a lot. So how come you come with 100 people and already we have countries more than 100? So which means there are other countries which are not being represented.'

So there is this thing in the system that does not allow you to be there, but as XX we are not even given the opportunity to enter the meetings where they are making a decision, you are not allowed to raise your hand to make a point.

So these are one of the problems that we are facing, especially as youth who are trying to make change in these international spaces, you know, because sometimes it may be kind of political, you know, we are afraid of being politicized on the other hand. So it's also a major major blow for us, that at the end of the time, you see we are going to systematically have a dropdown of climate activists being scared to be in the movement.

So it's one of the problems that we are experiencing, but the system is not quite clear – the system does not allow youth to speak for themselves.

That's why you see they give us a very small pavilion, they say 'you have the children and youth, but you do your things there,' but whatever we did there is not going to be accounted in the draft resolution they are making. It's a procedure of recognition, but without any impact. So even if you are recognized, but what are they gonna do? They give us the status, but they don't fund us.

Also another problem, we are not financed to do all these things. It is the will of the NGOs. So you can recognize me, but if you don't capacitate me to be there, there is nothing, you have done nothing. So this is one of the major problems that you're facing as the youth in the movement– because you can give me a badge, but if I don't attend a conference, what is the use of the badge? So it's one of the problems that the youth are experiencing.

Katie, we live in Africa where most of the people that live under a dollar, the poverty is that line, people are very, very poor.

We don't have capacities. We are not being given the necessary capacity building to capacitate ourselves to understand what is going on in the system.

So at the end of the time, you see we have a very small amount of people contributing to international contributions, because they are not being given the platform.

So It's one of the problems that we're experiencing. I'll pass it on back to you, Katie.

Katie (12:30):

Yeah, thanks for sharing all that insight. Recognition is just recognition and without putting the money, putting the resources, capacity building, where that recognition is, it just falls short.

Tatiana, do you have anything to add in the conversation around international spaces and youth barriers to representation?

Tatiana (12:50):

Yeah, so I'm going to speak specifically to my experience at COP 21. When I did attend the conference, I was very young, and I was one out of, I don't know, an expanse of people who were coming from different places within the nation.

And it was really difficult because being a young person was coming from a marginalised community and not have enough people back me up, wasn't very conducive for me. Because for instance, when we're talking about participation with reference to like, minority groups, especially those that are coming from disadvantaged communities within Africa – as a young person, because I was speaking on panels representing the young girls, the young people from different African countries, which I felt was kind of a burden, because I could only speak from the position of the angle that I was coming from as a Zimbabwean young woman.

So then I feel like representation with reference to like having young people coming from, like diverse groups coming from different countries in Africa to speak on climate issues was very important, but it wasn't really done in that respect.

And I feel like there is a need for capacitation when it comes to engaging young people from different parts of these marginalized communities, because you cannot have one person speak for numerous people of different, you know, cultural backgrounds or different experiences. And for us to really affect climate justice, I feel like we need to be engaging in conversations with possible solutions, understanding that people have different problems that they are facing and they need a just solution to these problems.

And I also thought that after attending the conference, like what Stephen had alluded to, there wasn't much done with reference to capacitating us after the conference.

So you might have passion, or like be very passionate about climate action and climate justice, but then you can only do so much as an activist. And there is a need for those in higher authorities or those with the capacity to capacitate us to actually work with us after we have attended these conferences.

But it is a great opportunity, was a great opportunity, and it continues to be like every single time that I represent my country in a different country, I feel like I have to do so with all the passion that I have. Because I'm representing the people that I'm like, the community that I'm coming from. And to be able to learn from other young people who are coming from different communities is such an honor. And sometimes you might have a generic response to the problems that you're facing but then when there's that cultural exchange, then you can have like a diversified solution to the problem that you have.

And I feel there's also a need for a specification when it comes to like activism specifically because there is a lot of, you know, big jargon like spoken in these conferences. And sometimes you're just there (Stephen: Yeah) like, 'Okay, I'm here but like I'm not really understanding everything in its fullness.' So there is a need for us to really appreciate those that are pursuing activism in the arts scene so that we can make this information comprehensive when we're coming back to our home countries.

And yes, safety as well. Like for a young woman, I feel like there is a need for an increase in safety, especially as a human rights defender.

Because when you are speaking on issues that are happening from the angle that you're coming, like from home, it's very now unsafe for you to then come back home, because you don't know if you said it in the right way.

So there is a need to protect human rights defenders, paying particular focus to the agenda, because I feel like women are disproportionately affected, especially when it comes to the activist movement.

And there is a need for security and protection so that we can further the work that we do on a global level.

But then it was a really good experience for me. And I hope to continue to amplify the voices of the young people that I represent in my country. And also capacitate other young women and other young men to be able to do the same. But I don't want them to experience that shortcoming that I experienced as I was doing my activist work in, like, foreign countries, and just make it more conducive for them and more safe for them as they move forward or pursue activism.

Katie (17:43):

Wow, that was, yeah, that was really great. I really appreciate you being honest with the shortcomings you experienced, the lack of power through, and then also the positive forward looking perspective you had.

Also really great to get that gender perspective included in this conversation, mentioning hints of intersectionality in the activism space.

I'm curious, just looking at the amount of time we have left, if you both could talk about some solutions you see moving forward. From your perspective, what are ways civil society organizations can support young activists in raising their voices through art?

Tatiana, can you start with this one?

Tatiana (18:25):

I honestly feel that there is a need for mentorship with reference to capacitating human rights defenders like I had said in the previous, like when I was referring to the question that you asked me previously.

I honestly feel that there is a need for mentorship and also for leaders within different communities at different angles to be forked out specifically from the community that they're speaking from, so that they can then be taken to the next level through mentorship by those in high authorities.

So if we're going to be speaking specifically to a community such as Mbare, which is like one of the oldest high-density suburbs here in Zimbabwe, you would want a leader who is also coming from Mbare to be able to speak on these issues from that angle. And also engaging the youth participation— because our population is mostly constituting of the youth. So it is important to engage them so that we can have policy implementation, policy reform from that angle so that the youth can also participate at that level.

And also when we're speaking about activism, when it is referring to art, I feel like there is a need for specification when it is with reference to art. Because a lot of times when people speak about activism, they don't really specify so it's not really just. So there is a need for that demarcation so that each and every person who's participating in activism can be capacitated at the level that they're at, rather than just being watered down to a few of what activism is supposed to look like.

Because a lot of people can do so many different things at different angles – we've got activists online, we've got activists offline. People have engaged in conversations on social media and those that actually host events, such as myself, and it is important to also have all these different activists come together for them to be able to exchange ideas as well. So these platforms need to be made so that these different activists can come together and share ideas and expand because I honestly believe in collaboration – synergy is very important.

So I can do what I am doing but it won't go as, like further as I would have expected if I do not engage other young people who are doing incredible work that may not necessarily be in the same form as me.

So that is also important and I also think that they need to seed or fund our projects because we can be very passionate, very forthcoming, very engrossed in what we're doing but we can only do so much if we don't have the right financing.

So I think there is a need for that and also for them to help us when it comes to grant applications – how to actually do that because sometimes there is funding but you don't really know how to access it.

So yeah, that's what I can share. But if I have more to share, I will definitely do so.

Katie (21:32):

Thanks Tatiana, that's a great list of ways that CSOs can really help young people. I love the concept of community building between different art forms that you touched on.

And of course, money is important in today's world and making sure that young artists, young activists have resources to apply for funding is really important.

Stephen, do you have anything that you want to add?

Stephen (21:56):

Yeah, I just want to support Tatiana from what she's saying. I think also I have to mention that civil societies on the other hand, if they want to support that they should stop the spread of like the tokenization problem. You know, the civil society (Tatiana: Absolutely) as they come to us, then after they come, they had to go again to the system. So if they really want to work with us, they have to show us who they are and that they really want to engage with the youth.

You know, it is very important that civil societies, they play a critical role in the youth development. As much as I'm concerned right now, due to the political situation and all this thing, the relationship between the youth and the civil societies is downgrading, it's going down.

Why? Because there's interference of politics number one. Number two: them, themselves, civil society, they don't know what they stand for. So it's a point that the civil society is supposed to stand with the youth in these things. Like what my colleagues have been saying. We need the issue of capacity-building. You cannot expect us to know something that we never taught. You cannot expect us to have something that we don't have.

Like what I said before, that many people in Africa, they are poor already, that's number one. They need help, they need support, like what Tatiana said, we need financial support.

Sometimes these grants might be available, but you discover that there are so many youth who are not able to apply. So they need to go to the society, they need to make sure there is this tangible relationship with the society. Because everything that the country does, it comes from the society, the society, the backbone of the country. That's what people have to understand.

So the civil societies, they should continue playing the critical role of resource mobilization, but it's very critical. I can tell you that I think that Tatiana can vouch for me on this one, that for COP, there are so many who did not attend COP because there are no resources for them to attend.

So we need more representation, we cannot be represented by one person over a thousand. That's not democracy. It's never democracy.

So we need a system, we need a space where civil society is playing a critical role, not going out to the government, they do deal with them, they come to us, they do deals with us– at the

end of the day there is confusion. There is no security for us. Now we'll be scared to work with these NGOs, because at some point you discover that you've endangered yourself and you endanger your information and all these things. So it's very important that the civil societies, they have to play a role in making sure that they use their capacity.

The most important thing is capacity. They have to capacity us. When we talk of adaptation – how we're going to adapt to, if we don't have the knowledge? We need the knowledge to adapt to the system. We need something to adapt. Right now, we're talking of the people who are dying in hunger and starvation. Yes, I understand that in other countries there are ways of adaptation, but the people don't know the ways to adapt to the situation. There's nothing to we can do worsen damage. It already happened, but we need ways to adapt to the system, we need ways to adapt us to survive.

So the civil society is now there, playing a critical role to make sure the people, they receive the necessary information. They also disseminate information, like we have societies that don't speak English, we have people that don't even know how to read and write. They should play a critical role in making sure that information reaches out to all the people that need to understand the information.

Right now, if you look at all the documents that have been written at COP — many people don't understand them. Many youth in villages, in remote, they don't understand them. Why don't the civil society play a role? They translate all those documents, and put them in the local language, you people can understand. Do all the road shows and many things. It helps the people to understand the information that is being done by our leaders.

Yeah, I have a lot to say, but with the time, I think that is what I will say. But I think that Tatiana, she raised many many important points. They have been looking in certain situations in Zimbabwe and Mbare, and all those things. But yeah, thank you so much.

Katie (26:26):

Yeah, thanks, Stephen, for explaining the important role of capacity building that CSOs can support. And also just highlighting the language that people use.

I think that's really interesting to think about in conversation with the first couple questions that we had about music being a universal language and art being a universal language and how they can also play a role in these sort of information spreading campaigns.

All right, well, I would love to ask you a million more questions, but looking at our time, I think we have to end it here. I just want to thank you both again so much for your time and participation. You shared quite interesting stories and quite valuable insights. I am sure that our listeners would love to follow up with you guys. So where can people find you online? – on Instagram, Facebook, what are your social media?

Stephen (27:20):

For me it's Stephen Musarurwa, Official, it's just Stephen Musarurwa on all social media platforms, but on Instagram, my Stephen is with a blue check. So you can find that Stephen. I think I'm the only Stephen with a blue check. But that's all I can say, thank you so much for the platform and the opportunity. Thank you.

Katie (27:41):

Of course!

Tatiana (27:42):

Okay, so I mostly use Instagram. So on Instagram, it's Banshee_ZW. And then on Facebook, it's Tatiana Natalie Kondo.

And then And on X, it's Banshee Tatiana K. So I'm not going to spell that one, because I feel like I've done so. Yeah, thank you so much for the incredible opportunity.

Katie (28:19):

Yes, I'm so glad you both could join us today. Thank you so much for sharing your perspective and your time. It was a really great conversation.

So, we've reached the end of Part 5 of our Youth Engagement Series, talking about art and activism with Stephen Musawrurwa and Tatiana Natalie Kondo.

Thanks for tuning in. Until next time. [short theme music, fades out]