

# **Ms. Njeri Mbure – Former Youth Forum Alumni- Kenya**

African World Heritage Day Remarks: “Youth, Entrepreneurship and Heritage Sustainability in Africa”

## **TOPIC: The role and prospects of African Youth in heritage protection**

Thank you very much Mr. Souayibou and African World Heritage Fund

The youth have been a driving force for change in every sector of the society, we've seen them expressing their views, revitalizing and recreating as innovators and they are using technology and are always finding new ways to change any sector they are in and so one of the things that I'm always asking myself; is why not change the heritage scene as well.

We need to start walking the talk, as the youth, we feel that most stakeholders have been talking about engaging the youth but we have not seen a lot of engagement when it comes to having the youth sitting at the table or even just influencing policies.

We want to see and get to a desired level of engagement, where stakeholders, the youth and say focal points see that we are actively engaging with them. This will allow for intergenerational solidarity when it comes to the protection of heritage, which is something we all wish to see.

For the youth to be actively engaged in heritage protection, they need to know what it is, they are protecting. You cannot protect what you do not know. We need broad sensitization when it comes to matters heritage. It is not once or twice that I have been asked what world heritage is, this means we are not yet done with raising awareness. If we can make the youth fully aware of what their role is in protecting heritage and where they can tap in, we will be able to meet our goals.

The youth need to feel they have a sense of belonging, as key stakeholders; they want to play different roles. Historically African countries have a centralized system of management when it comes to heritage, cultural sites etc. One of the things we feel as the youth that can help us get a place at the table, would be to diversify the demographics to include the youth when it comes to a voice, to ideas, to opinions and in policies. In Kenya we advocate for two thirds of women representation in parliament, we should also advocate for two thirds of youth when it comes to decision making processes.

Some of the roles that the youth have been involved in are;

- Safeguarding and preserving for future generations, we are able to have what we have today because someone cared enough to safeguard it
- Promotion- The youth are active users of smart phones, social media. We can use this technology to promote our world heritage sites.
- Conservation- e.g. world heritage action camps with practical conservation activities at the sites
- Participation- Use what you have, to do what you can, using their skills and talents to become heritage entrepreneur.

## Prospects

- There are a lot of gap areas in which the youth can contribute, especially in the safeguarding processes i.e. inventory, communications, education, and promotion (not necessary to have heritage formal training) Creation of new opportunities in terms of creative and economic development
- The above will greatly contribute to the high rate of unemployment among African Youth Creation of jobs through heritage safeguarding and still contribute to sustainable development goals
- Endless career opportunities to help us meet SDGS 1 (No Poverty), 4 (Quality education), 8 (Decent work and economic growth)
- Virtual museums and site tours in times of covid19
- Capacity building in formal and informal education & Increased education and research in Heritage
- Broad sensitization of heritage especially through intergenerational dialogues
- Collaboration with youth led organizations to implement projects

## **Lessons from African World Heritage Youth Fora:**

- A cultivated passion for world heritage
- Empowerment through inclusion and capacity building (periodic reporting, WHC)
- Lasting World Heritage networks in Africa and beyond
- Collaboration with other participants
- International exposure and understanding broader global perspectives from the World Heritage Committee
- Practical field work and team efforts to create working documents that pave the way forward for youth e.g. Declaration and Action Plans