We CAN Sports and Arts festival held at Stanmore in Gwanda Ward 4 recently. The event was organized by Habakkuk Trust to encourage young people to play an active role in decision making and in particular to register to vote.

Sports and Arts were used as tools to mobilize, build sense of ownership and interest amongst young people to act and make a difference in their community.

This event was a follow up to the Youth Leadership Camp and the Coaching Clinics where young people from Gwanda District were empowered with requisite knowledge and skills that will enhance their participation in decision making at all levels. Pro-youth mobilisation strategies were used as effective mobilisation strategies that have the potential to promote active citizen action amongst young people.

Victory Siyanqoba led by award winning artist Desire Moyo and renowned artists Clement Magwaza thrilled the community with their impressive performances and the grand finale of the day was a soccer match between Gwanda Ward 6 soccer team against the former Highlanders Football stars.

The event was also attended by Zimbabwe electoral Commission Matabeleland South Provincial voter education coordinator Mr. Andrew Tlou, Headman Thebele, Village Heads, Matabeleland South Senator Bheki Sibanda and Councilors from the participating Wards.

The We Citizens Act Now acronym WE Can is a new project by Habakkuk Trust which specifically targets youths with a specific goal of encouraging youths to participate in decision making. The project has been piloted in Gwanda District with young people from the District undertaking logically linked activities such as a youth leadership camp, arts, clinic, a sports clinic and a huge arts festival which was held at Stanmore, in Gwanda Ward 4. Specifically, WE Can seeks to involve youths in the electoral process with the first bit being mobilizing youths to register under the Biometric voter registration process which was the cause for low number of registered youths in their areas.

“We don’t have much information on the voter registration exercise because most of us do not attend community meetings where such information is usually relayed,” Prince Gumbo from Gwanda Ward 6 said. “Most youths participate in meetings where they are given something.”

Habakkuk Trust Chief Executive Officer Mr. Dumisani Nkomo advised the youths to participate in decision making processes. Most importantly, the camp was to help the youths to come up with youth friendly strategies to mobilize other youths to participate in the Biometric Voter Registration process which was the cause for low number of registered youths in their areas.

“Anything that is established without young people does not have a good foundation and is not sustainable,” he said. “You should participate and mobilize other young people to participate in decision making processes happening in your areas. If you don’t take part, your elders will decide for you and your interests won’t be considered.”

Habakkuk Trust convened the youth camp to build the capacity of youth leaders to influence local processes, mobilize other young people to register to vote and actually vote in the elections.

Over 900 people braved the rainy weather to attend the WE CAN Sports and Arts festival held at Stanmore in Gwanda Ward 4 recently. The event was organized by Habakkuk Trust to encourage young people to play an active role in decision making and in particular to register to vote.

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The fruits of the project are still there for everybody to see as the young people who were trained at the youth camp demonstrated that which paints a picture of the kind of nation and community they would like to live in.

Young people certainly can contribute to this end. The Project has now seen young people from Gwanda rural converging to draw up a vision of what they would like to live in.

Now is the time for increased youth participation in development planning, budgeting and Youth Engagement Tool was thus very effective this end. The Project has now seen young people from Gwanda rural converging to draw up a vision of what they would like to live in.
Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) Matabeleland South Provincial Education Coordinating Coordinator Mr. Andrew Tlou has applauded Habakkuk Trust for youth orientated programmes on voter registration in Gwanda District.

Speaking at a Sports and Arts Coaching Clinic organized by Habakkuk Trust in Mzimuni, Gwanda Ward 3, Tlou said his main concern were the young people and their lack of participation in important electoral processes.

“I am very impressed by the electoral processes. People and their lack of Gwanda Ward 3, Tlou said his speaking at a Sports and Arts gurus, Styx Mhlanga and Joseph Mugoshi, regarding the latest developments in the discipline. Those interested in art had a great time with legendary arts gurus, Styx Mhlanga and Witness Tavarwisa, who coached them on acting, poetry and music. The youths were also encouraged to use sports as a way of mobilizing the community to participate in development and decision making processes.

Habakkuk Trust brought in the renowned Highlanders Football Club legend Ronald Gidza Sibanda and Gift Lunga Junior to share their skills and knowledge with young people.

The coaching clinics, held in Gwanda Wards 3 and 6, are part of Habakkuk Trust’s efforts to increase youth participation in development and decision making processes and most importantly, register to vote.

Habakkuk Trust brought in the renowned Highlanders Football Club legends Ronald Gidza Sibanda and Gift Lunga Junior to share their skills and knowledge with young people.

Brighton Phiri from Mzimuni in Gwanda Ward 3 said they extracted in their Wards.

Youths in Gwanda have urged local leadership to include young people in all developments and decision making structures.

The youths explained that they are being left out in most community initiatives. Decisions that affect them are formulated by adults which makes it difficult for the young people to fully participate.

Youths who spoke on separate occasions during Youth Hub meetings organized by Habakkuk Trust to draft a Youth Charter explained that most development structures are dominated by adults and requested their local leadership to include them so that they can be able to influence decisions at local level.

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Youths in Gwanda have lent poor network connectivity an area adding that this has heavily disadvantaged them from accessing valuable information. This modern form of technology has the potential to bring awareness on issues affecting rural youths like poverty, HIV/AIDS, unemployment therefore improving their quality of life and that of their communities.

In a youth hub meeting organized by Habakkuk Trust to draft a Youth Charter, youths from Gwanda Ward 3, 4 and 6 explained that they need internet cafes in their Ward so that they can browse the internet and access school and employment opportunities.

Limited access to internet services has translated to a relatively low uptake of social media especially WhatsApp.

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