

Across Africa, a powerful narrative echoes through communities, particularly among the youth

Greener Pastures

The impulse to seek a better life is deeply human. :



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The Perilous Pursuit of Greener Pastures: When Dreams Turn to Dust

By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande

The Siren Song of Distant Shores

Across Africa, a powerful narrative echoes through communities, particularly among the youth: the promise of "greener pastures" in distant lands. The United States, Europe, and other developed nations are painted as havens of opportunity, where good-paying jobs and superior living conditions await, often irrespective of formal qualifications. This alluring vision, amplified by social media and anecdotal tales, fuels a potent desire for emigration, a longing to escape perceived limitations at home and embrace a life of prosperity and dignity. Yet, beneath this shimmering facade lies a stark and often brutal reality.



Homeless man in America

For many, the journey abroad does not lead to the promised land but to a harrowing descent into exploitation, hardship, and despair. This article argues that the pursuit of foreign dreams, especially without adequate preparation and verification, frequently culminates in lives irrevocably marred by unforeseen challenges, including forced labor, human trafficking, and involvement in illicit activities. It is a cautionary tale, designed to illuminate the shadows lurking behind the bright lights of perceived opportunity and to equip young aspirants with the knowledge to protect themselves from becoming victims of a cruel deception.

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A Crisis In The Classroom: The Silent Struggle Of Invisible Disabilities In Namibian Schools

Introduction

Namibia, a nation striving for inclusive development, faces a critical challenge within its education system: the pervasive and often unaddressed struggles of learners with invisible disabilities. While the country has made strides in promot-

ing inclusive education, particularly with the 2013 Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, a significant gap remains in identifying, supporting, and empowering students whose learning difficulties, mental health conditions, and chronic illnesses are not immediately apparent. Teachers,

the frontline soldiers of education, find themselves ill-equipped to recognize these conditions, let alone possess the specialized skills to assist affected learners. This deficiency leads to a tragic cycle: poor academic performance for these students, unwarranted blame placed on dedicat-

ed teachers, and the perpetuation of a system that, despite its intentions of "inclusiveness," effectively leaves a significant portion of its most vul-

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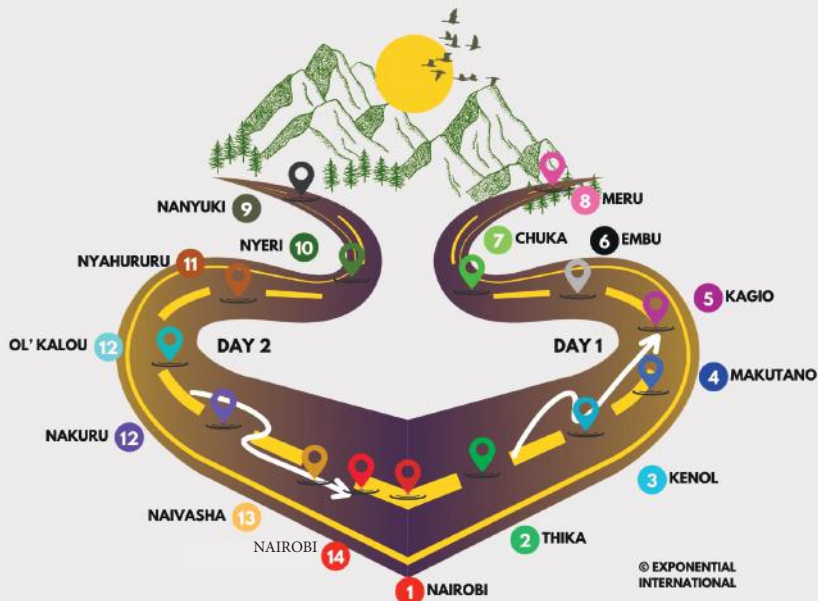
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The Five Pillars That Built—and Now Threaten— Ruto's Presidency

By: Dr Hesbon Hansen Owilla
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

• Ruto's master-stroke in 2022 was forging a powerful Mt. Kenya–Kalenjin alliance. Kenyan politics has long been shaped by ethnic alliances, what one scholar dubbed “the tyranny of numbers.” Ruto shrewdly positioned himself as Mt. Kenya's post-Uhuru protector, rallying a region once hostile to him and securing a near-sweep in Central Kenya.

• But the cracks have emerged. That bloc is fracturing. Former allies are now vocal dissenters, emboldened by growing youth agitation that rejects tribal loyalty. The attempted impeachment of Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, and his replacement with a perceived mismatch, only deepened these divisions.



President William Ruto/FILE

I recently had a candid and refreshing conversation with Hon. Anthony Kibagendi—my brother, best friend, and a serving Member of Kenya's 13th Parliament. Our discussion, rooted in shared history and a mutual fascination with Kenya's political evolution, turned to the nation's current turbulence and growing public outrage against the regime.

What stood out most was Hon. Kibagendi's sharp analysis of President William Ruto's rise to power—and how the very pillars that elevated him to State House are now turning against him: public sympathy, ethnic bloc consolidation, the church, international goodwill, and the Hustler ideology. These pillars once formed a formidable political architecture. Today, under the weight of unmet expectations, missteps, and a disillusioned populace, they threaten to collapse beneath him.

Ruto's image as the sidelined Deputy President— isolated and betrayed by the very administration he helped build—resonated with many. He became the ultimate political underdog, a symbol of the ordinary Kenyan's struggle against elite exclusion. But sympathy, like political capital, is finite.

Now, Ruto is the establishment. With every police crackdown on peaceful protestors, every ostentatious show of wealth by his allies, and every tone-deaf policy pronouncement, he moves further from the man Kenyans once saw as one of their own. The outrage that once fuelled his rise is now being redirected toward him.

Ruto's masterstroke in 2022 was forging a powerful Mt. Kenya–Kalenjin alliance. Kenyan politics has long been shaped by ethnic alliances, what one scholar dubbed “the tyranny of numbers.” Ruto shrewdly

positioned himself as Mt. Kenya's post-Uhuru protector, rallying a region once hostile to him and securing a near-sweep in Central Kenya.

But the cracks have emerged. That bloc is fracturing. Former allies are now vocal dissenters, emboldened by growing youth agitation that rejects tribal loyalty. The attempted impeachment of Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, and his replacement with a perceived mismatch, only deepened these divisions. Ruto's campaign dripped with religious symbolism. He quoted scripture, donated to churches, and cast his mission in divine terms. In return, the clergy offered legitimacy and a moral shield. But today, the church finds itself scrutinised.

The same youth who once chanted “Hatupangwingwi” at campaign rallies now view the pulpit as complicit in silence amid economic pain and police brutality. As

public anger grows, many clergy are stepping back— acutely aware that continued proximity to power may cost them their moral standing.

In his early presidency, Ruto was a darling of the West. His digital economy push, green growth agenda, and reformist branding won him plaudits in diplomatic and multilateral circles. His charm offensive worked.

But the narrative is shifting. The killing of protestors, internet blackouts, and abductions of activists have triggered quiet unease in foreign capitals. Public rebukes may be absent, but reputational damage is mounting—and global partners are watching.

Perhaps the most powerful pillar was the “hustler” narrative. It transformed class resentment into political energy. Ruto promised a bottom-up model that included digital jobs, affordable credit, and inclusive prosperity. The mama

mboga and boda boda rider were no longer sidelines—they were central to the story.

But today, hustlers feel betrayed. Their lives have not improved. Their taxes have risen. Their economic hope has dimmed. They are no longer chanting slogans—they are in the streets. The betrayal cuts deep because the faith was once so strong. And in that vacuum, a new ideology is taking hold: an ideology of resentment.

To avoid complete collapse, this administration must return to basics: rebuild trust, govern with empathy, uphold civil liberties, and reconnect with the people. Because a presidency born of populism can only survive by remaining true to the people—or risk being brought down by the very populism that gave it life, now turned into fury.

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Japan

Japan heads to polls in key test for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba

By: BBC
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Japan Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba

Worth Noting:

- Japan's massive auto industry, which accounts for eight percent of the country's jobs, is reeling from painful levies already in place.
- Weak export data last week stoked fears that the world's fourth-largest economy could tip into a technical recession.
- Despite Ishiba securing an early meeting with Trump in February, and sending his trade envoy to Washington seven times, no agreement has been reached.
- For voters, tackling rising prices is also a central concern.
- The cost of rice, a staple food for Japanese households, has nearly doubled since last year.

Japanese voters headed to the polls on Sunday in a tightly contested election amid public frustration over rising prices and the imminent threat of US tariffs. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior coalition partner Komeito need to secure a combined 50 seats to retain an overall majority in the upper house but the latest polling shows they might fall short. This election comes at a difficult time for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and his ruling coalition as US President Donald Trump ramps up pressure on Tokyo during tense tariff negotiations.

Japan's massive auto industry, which accounts for eight percent of the country's jobs, is reeling from painful levies already in place. Weak export data last week stoked fears that the world's fourth-largest economy could tip into a technical recession. Despite Ishiba securing an early meeting with Trump in February, and sending his trade envoy to Washington seven times, no agreement has been reached. For voters, tackling rising prices is also a central concern. The cost of rice, a staple food for Japanese households, has

nearly doubled since last year. For the past few months, the government has had to tap into its emergency stockpiles to tackle the shortage. Since last year's lower house election, which saw the coalition fall short of a majority, the LDP has not been able to regain the trust of voters who are disgruntled with stagnant wages and relentless inflation. Meanwhile, the populist Sanseito party, which has been using social media to attract younger voters, has seen a surge in popularity. Polls show its "Japanese First" slogan has struck a

chord with some conservatives, although its hardline stance on foreigners has drawn criticism. The party wants "stricter rules and limits" on immigration, opposes "globalism" and "radical" gender policies, and wants a re-think on decarbonisation and vaccines. If Ishiba's ruling coalition fails to secure 50 seats, it will have lost majority in both chambers of parliament, which could threaten his leadership and lead to political instability. Ishiba's centre-right party has governed Japan almost continuously since 1955, al-

beit with frequent changes of leader. The last time the LDP and Komeito failed to win a majority in the upper house was in 2010, having already fallen below the threshold in 2007. That was followed by a rare change of government in 2009, when the now-defunct Democratic Party of Japan governed for a rocky three years.

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Ukraine seeks new round of talks with Russia

By: BBC
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Ukraine has proposed a new round of peace talks with Russia, President Volodymyr Zelensky has said, in a move aimed at restarting negotiations that halted last month.

Senior security official Rustem Umerov has offered to meet the Russian side next week, Zelensky said in his evening address, adding that everything had to be done to get a ceasefire.

Zelensky also repeated his readiness to meet Russia's Vladimir Putin face-to-face. "A meeting at the leadership level is needed to truly ensure peace," he said.

The proposal came hours after Ukraine was hit with another widespread air bombardment by Russia, which killed three people.

Ten regions of Ukraine, including several cities, were hit in the night between Friday and Saturday, Zelensky said earlier on Saturday.

Ukraine's military said more than 340 explosive and dummy drones and 35 cruise and ballistic missiles had been used, but many were downed.

Earlier this week, President Donald Trump said the US would send "top-of-the-line weapons" to Ukraine via Nato countries, while also threaten-

ing Russia with severe tariffs if a deal to end the war is not reached within 50 days.

Trump also warned that the US would impose 100% secondary tariffs targeting Russia's remaining trade partners if a peace deal with Ukraine was not reached by his deadline.

Two rounds of talks in Istanbul between Moscow and Kyiv have so far failed to result in any progress towards a ceasefire, but large-scale prisoner exchanges and deals to return the bodies of killed soldiers were agreed.

After the last round, which ended in early June, Ukrainian negotiators said Russia had again rejected an "unconditional ceasefire" – a key demand by Kyiv and its allies in Europe and the US.

Russia also outlined a list of demands, including calls for Ukraine to cede more territory and to reject all forms of Western military support.

At the time, Zelensky accused Moscow of "doing everything it can to ensure the next possible meeting is fruitless".

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia currently controls about 20% of Ukraine's territory, including the southern Crimea peninsula Moscow annexed in 2014.



President Volodymyr Zelensky

ANEMIA

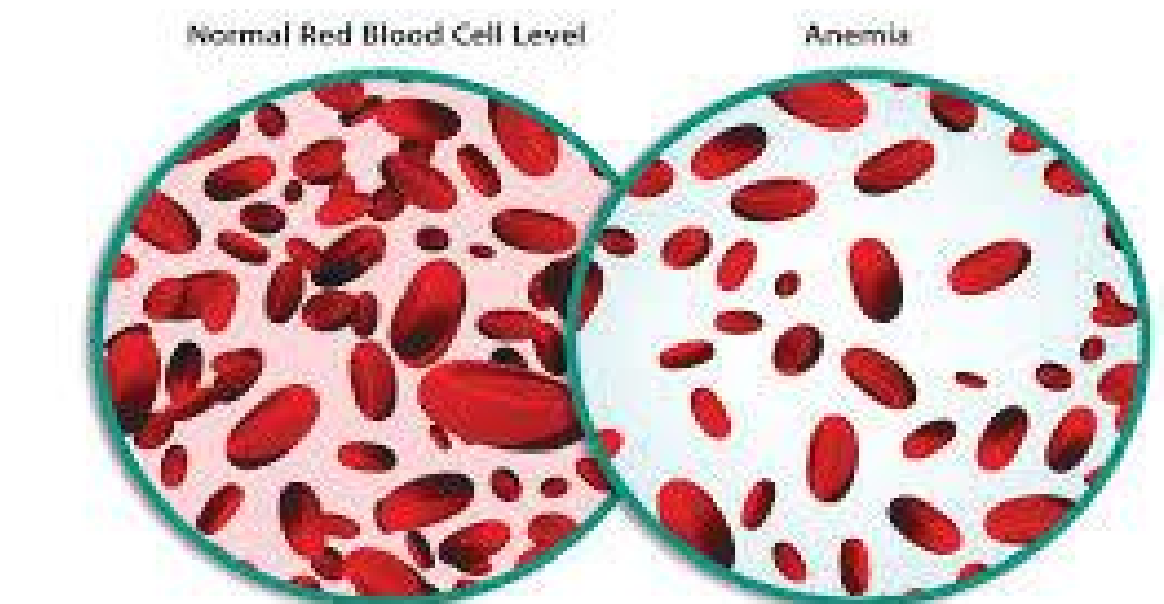
Home Treatment Of Anemia: An Overview



By: Abdurahmanova Dilnoza
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Introduction Anemia affects millions worldwide and manifests as fatigue, pallor, dizziness, and decreased physical capacity. It arises due to various causes including iron deficiency, vitamin B12 or folate deficiency, chronic diseases, and blood loss. Early management is essential to prevent complications. In many cases, especially iron deficiency anemia, home-based interventions can significantly improve hemoglobin levels and overall health. Causes and Symptoms of Anemia The most common cause of anemia globally is iron deficiency, often due to inade-

quate dietary intake, blood loss, or impaired absorption. Other causes include chronic infections, genetic disorders, and vitamin deficiencies. Typical symptoms include weakness, shortness of breath, palpitations, and cognitive disturbances. Home-Based Management Strategies 1. Nutritional Interventions Iron-Rich Diet: Consuming foods high in heme iron such as lean meats, poultry, and fish, and non-heme iron sources like legumes, spinach, and fortified cereals can enhance iron levels. Vitamin C Intake: Vitamin C improves non-heme iron absorption; thus, including citrus fruits, tomatoes, and bell peppers in meals is beneficial. Folate and Vitamin B12: These vitamins are critical for red blood cell production. Sources include leafy greens, eggs, dairy, and fortified grains. 2. Herbal and Natural Remedies Nettle Leaf: Rich in iron and vitamins, nettle tea may support hematopoiesis. Beetroot Juice: Contains nitrates and antioxidants that may improve blood quality and circulation. Blackstrap Molasses: A natural iron source often used as a supplement. 3. Lifestyle Modifications Avoidance of Tea and Coffee During Meals: These beverages contain polyphenols that in-



hibit iron absorption. Regular Physical Activity: Moderate exercise can improve circulation and stimulate erythropoiesis. Stress Management: Chronic stress negatively impacts nutrient absorption and overall health. Monitoring and When to Seek Medical Advice Home treatments should be complemented by regular monitoring of symptoms and hemoglobin levels. If symptoms

worsen or persist despite interventions, professional medical evaluation is necessary to rule out underlying conditions requiring specific treatment.

Conclusion Anemia management at home focuses on nutritional support, natural supplements, and healthy lifestyle habits to restore hemoglobin levels and reduce symptoms. These methods are effective

for mild to moderate cases and serve as preventive measures. However, severe anemia warrants prompt medical attention.

Medical work of the medical faculty of Alfraganus University 3rd student Abdurahmanova Dilnoza

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Poetry

Muhammad Yusuf: A Poet Of National Spirit And Cultural Legacy



By: Iskandarova Dilnoza
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Abstract: This article explores the poetic legacy and cultural significance of Muhammad Yusuf, a celebrated poet of Uzbekistan. It delves into his deep connection with the nation's history, his dedication to social justice, and his unwavering love for his homeland. The article also highlights the recognition of his literary contributions through national and international efforts, including translations and commemorations. Through an analysis of his poetry and reflections from literary figures, the piece underscores the lasting impact of Muhammad Yusuf on Uzbek literature and identity.

Keywords: Muhammad Yusuf, Uzbek poetry, national identity, literary heritage, cultural reforms, social justice, historical memory, international recognition.

Today, we speak about Muhammad Yusuf, the fiery-hearted son of Uzbekistan – a man as sincere and simple as his poetry, who sang of homeland, mother, friendship, and love. He entered the world of literature wearing an Uzbek doppi. He was astonished that Uzbeks had stopped wearing it. After all, if one wished to wear a doppi, there were many kinds available. Or had it suddenly become too heavy for our heads? Or perhaps we could no longer find one that suited us? The conclusion, however, was disheartening – not that there were no suitable doppi, but that there were no longer people worthy of wearing them. Yes, this was how Muhammad Yusuf wrote. He called white white and black black – his poetry knew no coercion, falsehood, or flattery. In his short life, he created numerous poems. His journey in life can be described in the words of Pushkin about Byron: “In his poetry, he involuntarily confessed his devotion to the passion and ecstasy of poetry.” Muhammad Yusuf was born on April 26, 1954, in the village of Qovunchi, Marhamat district, Andijan region, into a farming family. After completing secondary school, he studied at the Republican Institute of Russian Language and Literature, graduating in 1978.

From 1978 to 1980, the poet worked at the Republican Society of Book Lovers. Between 1980 and 1986, he was a journalist at the Toshkent Oqshomi newspaper. From 1986 to 1992, he worked at the G'afur Gulom Publishing House of Literature and Art, followed by a tenure at the O'zbekiston Ovozi newspaper and the Uzbekistan Information Agency from 1992 to 1995. In 1995–1996, he studied at the Academy of

State and Social Construction.

Starting in 1997, Muhammad Yusuf served as Deputy Chairman of the Writers' Union of Uzbekistan. He holds the distinction of being the youngest poet ever awarded the title of People's Poet of Uzbekistan in 1998.

The emergence of a genuine poet parallels the onset of spring, reminiscent of the genesis of lightning in the atmosphere – an extraordinary and transcendent phenomenon. This occurrence embodies a complexity and depth intrinsic to the creative process, comprehensible only to the divine source that inspires it.

In this light, the age-old adage that poets are born in the heavens yet reside on earth resonates with the timeless essence of Navruz. The meaning of this expression is unmistakable: no matter the hardships faced by humanity or the injustices that impede an individual's ability to live with dignity, all of these afflictions deeply touch the poet's heart. Any form of malevolence that threatens the moral and ethical foundations of humanity, leading not to its elevation but to its decline, stands as the poet's greatest adversary. This is why esteemed scholars from Europe have consistently underscored the poignant truth that when the world fractures, the first casualty is often the poet's heart.

The People's Poet of Uzbekistan, Muhammad Yusuf, authentically embodied the pain and aspirations of his nation. Not a single day of his brief life passed without him writing poetry, channeling his sorrows and emotions onto paper. Perpetually contemplative and absorbed in his thoughts, he appeared to engage in a continuous dialogue with the “mourning dove nestled within his ribs.” This, in essence, defined his existence.

O my homeland, sorrows without end,
Legends that make even stone hearts bend.

My soul aches thinking of days gone by,
For martyrs rest 'neath your endless sky.

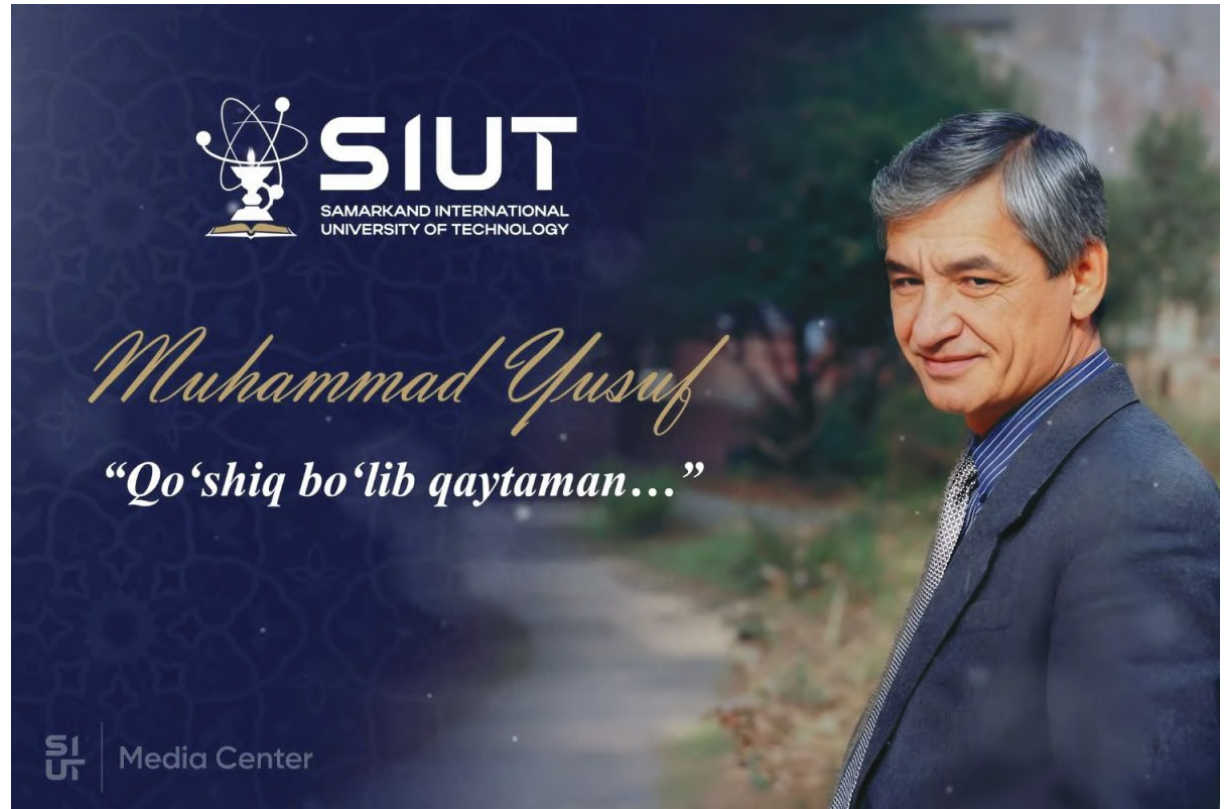
Today, in the vibrant heart of Tashkent – Uzbekistan's magnificent capital, home to nearly thirty-five million people – the Uzbekistan National Park proudly features the remarkable Alley of Writers. Always teeming with young people, book enthusiasts, tourists, and visitors, this literary haven has transformed into a true garden of Uzbek literature. Symbolizing the progressive policies of New Uzbekistan, this cultural landmark was recently established through the initiative of our nation's patriotic and literature-loving leader, our esteemed President. In this serene, expansive, and bountiful literary sanctuary, the statues of our great ancestors – Mir Alisher Navoi and Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur – stand beside our celebrated poets, the Jadid writers, and other cherished masters whose voices resonated in poetic melodies just six years ago, such as Erkin Vohidov and Abdulla Oripov. Among these illustrious poets, Muhammad Yusuf, who first captured the attention of our nation's leader during the “Zomin” seminars, now stands in a

contemplative and proud pose, his statue surrounded by swallows. This sacred monument to youthful poetry is never devoid of the footsteps of our fortunate sons and daughters, not even for a moment. It is as if the poet himself, addressing the youth, proclaims:

Uzbekistan – land of the brave and strong,
Wings of a free land, seek knowledge lifelong!
The great Sahibqiron, who built half the world,
Heirs of Alisher, let wisdom unfurl!
These lines resonate as if penned just yesterday, evoking the sense that the poet himself is reciting them to his devoted admirers. The unparalleled role and significance of literature in shaping human character have become increasingly clear in our social lives, particularly over the past two to three years. To speak candidly, in this era of advanced technologies and remarkable innovations, the growing enthusiasm among our youth for reading – echoing the President's sentiment – truly affirms that “Literature is the heart of a nation.”

The painful legacy of our Jadid ancestors, their challenging lives, and their literary creations imbued with dreams of national freedom have always deeply affected Muhammad Yusuf. He composed countless poems and epics centered on this very theme. Notably, his poem “Black Sun,” which honors the memory of those who suffered from repression, serves as a testament to his immense love for his homeland, his poetic devotion to its children, and his profound response to the tragedies of his people and his era. In his poignant tribute to Abdulhamid Sulaymon Cho'lpon, he crafted these sorrowful lines:

A poet may perish, but his words shall stay,
Forever alive through those on the way.
A true poet's grave is nowhere in sight,
For he rests in hearts, in love and in light.
The tragic fate of poets who perished young under harsh and merciless regimes, their dreams tragically unfulfilled, holds a significant place



in Muhammad Yusuf's poetry. Notably, Yusuf held a deep admiration for Cho'lpon's poem “Ko'klamoyim” (My Spring). Inspired by it, he crafted his own poem bearing the same title, dedicating it wholeheartedly to the esteemed Cho'lpon scholar, Ozod Sharafiddinov.

White streaks in my hair, I pleaded with spring,
Grant me a touch of your blossoming wing.

Through winter's embrace, I struggled to you,
O Spring, just a handful of green will do.

I'll cherish the sky with all of my soul,
Gaze upon blue till it makes me whole.

Will I return, or bid you adieu?
O Spring, just a handful of green will do.

In a similar vein, when reflecting on the legacy of Abdulla Qodiriy, Muhammad Yusuf often referenced his novels “O'tkan Kunlar” (Bygone Days) and “Mehrobdan Chayon” (Scorpion from the Altar). He crafted poetic reflections on their memorable characters – Otabek, Kumushbibi, and Zaynab. Yusuf's verses not only offer interpretations of these works but also convey his outrage against the oppressive regime, condemning the era's cruelty, jealousy, and treachery. Through his poetry, he reveals the harsh realities of ignorance and tyranny.

Beware, beware, a thousand times beware,
They march in gold with a lofty air.
Those who betrayed Qodiriy for fame,
From your shrine, scorpions came!

At this juncture, it is our duty to acknowledge a significant event in our literary and spiritual landscape – one that has profoundly resonated with millions of hearts. We must emphasize the historic and commendable decree issued by the leader of our nation, which recognizes the importance of literature and literary figures, particularly in honoring the memory of deceased poets and writers. Each of these decisions stands as a shining testament to our nation's respect for its rich history and literary heritage.

For example, the Presidential decree

commemorating the 110th anniversary of Usmon Nosir's birth represents a pivotal step towards illuminating the long-hidden chapters of our literary history. This initiative has been instrumental in reintroducing the previously overlooked literary contributions from an era marked by repression to the broader public.

Muhammad Yusuf held Usmon Nosir and his remarkable works in the highest esteem. As he poignantly noted, “Uzbekistan will one day fully recognize Usmon's fate,” he firmly believed that the time would come when Usmon Nosir's name and legacy – like a leaf severed from its branch – would be honored and cherished by the great Uzbek nation.

At this juncture, it is both our duty and responsibility to explore an esteemed and historical document that has significantly impacted our literary and spiritual lives, resonating profoundly in the hearts of millions. The reality is that every decree issued by our state leader in recognition of literature, its figures, and the memories of deceased poets and writers exemplifies a deep respect and reverence for our nation's history and literary heritage.

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At this juncture, it is both our duty and responsibility to explore an esteemed and historical document that has significantly impacted our literary and spiritual lives, resonating profoundly in the hearts of millions. The reality is that every decree issued by our state leader in recognition of literature, its figures, and the memories of deceased poets and writers exemplifies a deep respect and reverence for our nation's history and literary heritage.

For example, the Presidential decree celebrating the 110th anniversary of the passionate poet, translator, and playwright Usmon Nosir has been pivotal in revealing a fundamental truth. It has also played a critical role in studying and highlighting previously overlooked chapters of our literary history, particularly those pertaining to the era of repression.

Muhammad Yusuf held Usmon Nosir and his distinctive creative legacy in high esteem. He captured this admiration in his words: “Uzbekistan will one day fully recognize Usmon's fate.” Through his dedications, poems, and epics, Yusuf mourned the tragic fate of Usmon Nosir, firmly believing that a day would come when the name and memory of the poet, “torn away like a leaf,” would be celebrated by the nation.

Iskandarova Dilnoza: Student of the Uzbek National Institute of Music Art named after Yunus Rajabi

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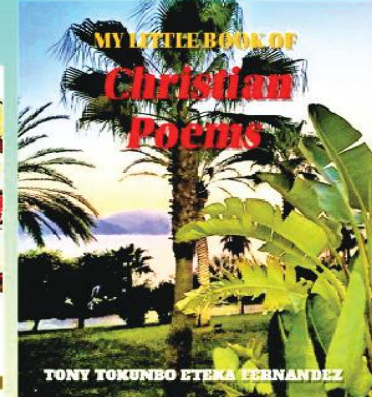
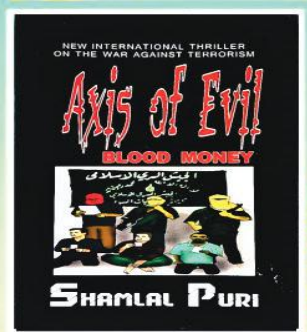
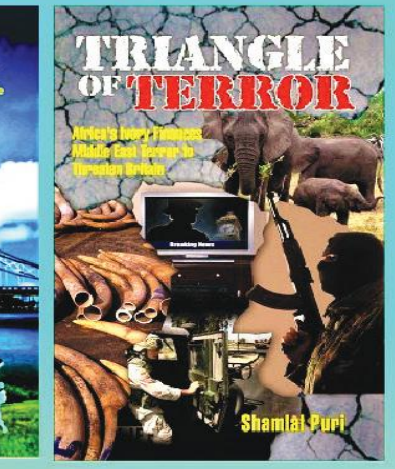
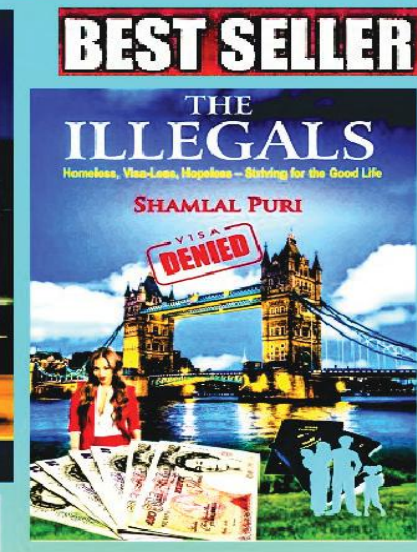
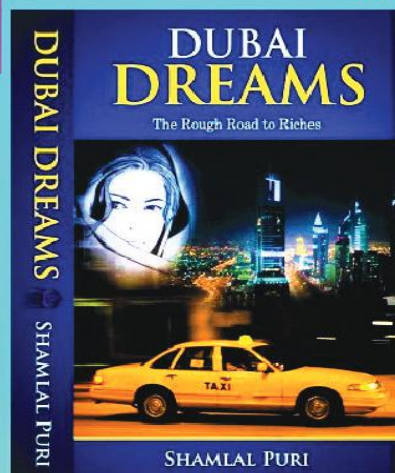
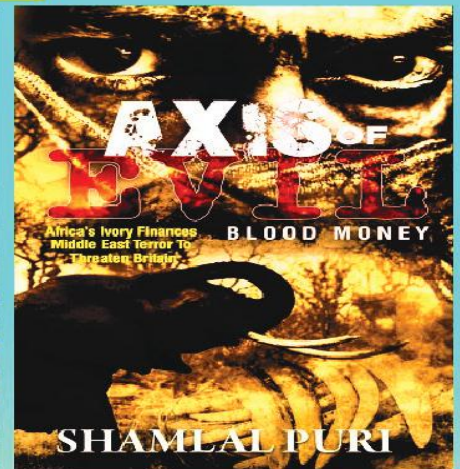
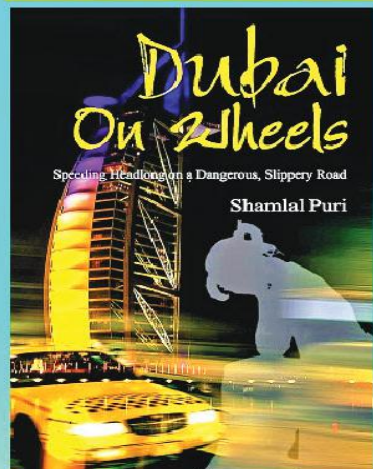
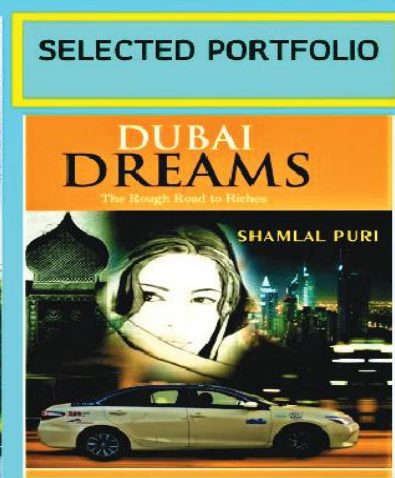
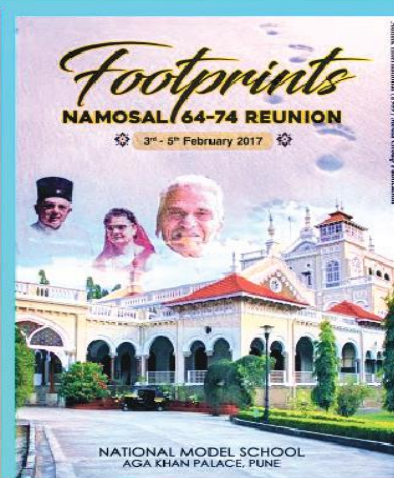
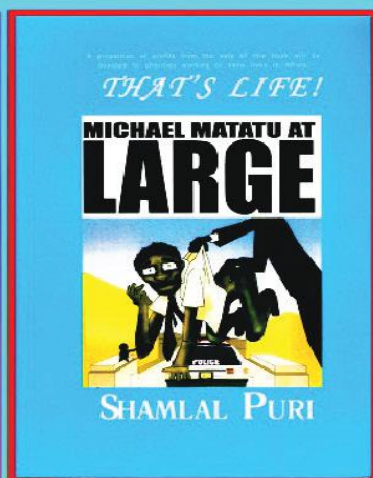
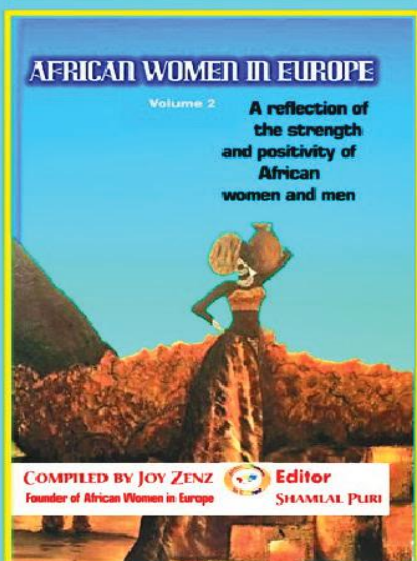
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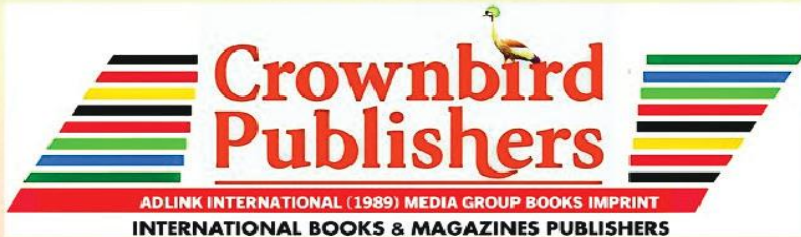
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African News

The Perilous Pursuit of Greener Pastures: When Dreams Turn to Dust



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande
@themtkenyatimes

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Worth Noting:

• **Unsafe Working Conditions:** Many end up in hazardous industries such as construction, agriculture, or manufacturing, where safety regulations are ignored. They work long hours, often 12-16 hours a day, seven days a week, with no breaks, inadequate protective gear, and exposure to dangerous chemicals or machinery. Accidents are common, and injuries are often left untreated, as employers fear attracting official attention.

• **Wage Theft and Debt Bondage:** The promised high wages evaporate. Workers are paid far less than agreed, if at all. Their passports are frequently confiscated "for safekeeping" or as a guarantee against "debts" incurred for travel, accommodation, or processing fees. This creates a system of debt bondage, where individuals are told they must work indefinitely to repay an ever-increasing, fabricated debt. They are trapped, unable to leave without their documents and facing threats against themselves or their families back home.

The Allure and the Deception: Why the Dream Persists

The impulse to seek a better life is deeply human. For many young Africans, the decision to leave their homeland is not born of a fleeting fancy but from a complex interplay of push and pull factors. Economic hardship, characterized by high unemployment rates, limited access to quality education, and a scarcity of viable career paths, often serves as the primary "push." The daily struggle to make ends meet, to provide for families, and to envision a future beyond subsistence living can be overwhelming. Simultaneously, the "pull" factors exerted by Western nations are formidable. Media portrayals, often romanticized, depict societies overflowing with wealth, advanced infrastructure, and abundant opportunities. Stories, sometimes exaggerated, of individuals who "made it" abroad further fuel this aspiration, creating a powerful social pressure to follow suit.

However, this aspiration is frequently exploited by unscrupulous individuals and sophisticated criminal networks. The deception begins subtly, often through informal channels: a distant relative, a friend of a friend, or an online advertisement. Promises are lavish: exorbitant salaries for minimal work, guaranteed visas, and facilitated travel arrangements. These offers are particularly enticing because they bypass the rigorous, often lengthy, and expensive official immigration processes. Agencies, some legitimate but many fraudulent, emerge as seemingly credible conduits, demanding significant upfront fees for services that never materialize or for jobs that do not exist. Vulnerable individuals, desperate for a breakthrough, are easily ensnared. They mortgage family assets, borrow heavily, and exhaust their life savings, all in the fervent hope of unlocking a brighter future. The initial investment, often framed as a necessary step towards prosperity, quickly becomes the first link in a chain of debt bondage, making escape increasingly difficult once the true nature of their predicament is revealed.

The Harsh Realities of Ex-



ploitation: When Greener Pastures Turn Barren

The moment of arrival in the foreign land often marks the shattering of the dream. The promised jobs are non-existent, the living conditions squalid, and the benefactors reveal their true, predatory intentions. The "greener pastures" transform into barren landscapes of exploitation, where basic human rights are systematically violated.

Labor Exploitation: The Invisible Chains of Modern Slavery

One of the most pervasive forms of exploitation is forced labor. Migrants, particularly those without legal status, are highly vulnerable. Their lack of official documentation, coupled with language barriers and an unfamiliar legal system, renders them powerless. They are often coerced into working in heavy and difficult environments with little or no safety measures, a stark contrast to the promised "good-paying jobs."

Unsafe Working Conditions: Many end up in hazardous industries such as construction, agriculture, or manufacturing, where safety regulations are ignored. They work long hours, often 12-16 hours a day, seven days a week, with no breaks, inadequate protective gear, and exposure to dangerous chemicals or machinery. Accidents are common, and injuries are often left un-

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Lack of Legal Recourse: Fear of deportation, combined with a lack of awareness of their rights, prevents victims from seeking help. They are often told that reporting their situation will lead to their arrest and immediate expulsion, or worse, that their families will face repercussions. This isolation and psychological manipulation keep them in a state of perpetual fear and compliance.

Examples: Countless individuals find themselves toiling in fields under scorching sun, in dimly lit factories churning out goods for global markets, or as domestic workers subjected to physical and emotional abuse, confined to homes and isolated from the outside world. Their labor fuels illicit economies, benefiting

criminal enterprises while they themselves remain invisible and unheard.

Human Trafficking: The Ultimate Betrayal

Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights, involving the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit individuals for labor or commercial sex. For many who embark on the journey for "greener pastures," the dream of a better life morphs into the nightmare of modern-day slavery.

Methods of Coercion: Traffickers employ sophisticated methods, preying on vulnerabilities. They might initially present as benevolent benefactors, offering to cover travel costs, arrange accommodation, and secure employment. Once the victim is in the foreign country, often isolated and disoriented, the facade crumbles. Passports are seized, communication with family is cut off, and threats are made against the victim or their loved ones.

Journey from Hope to Captivity: The journey itself can be perilous, involving clandestine border crossings, dangerous sea voyages, or long, arduous treks. Victims often arrive exhausted, disoriented, and deeply indebted, making them even more susceptible to control. The psychological manipulation begins early, with traffickers fostering a sense of dependence and fear.

Psychological Manipulation and Control: Traffickers use a range of tactics to maintain control, including psychological abuse, intimidation, isolation, and the creation of an environment of fear. Victims are often told that their families will be harmed if they try to escape, or that they will be arrested and deported if they go to the authorities. This systematic erosion of self-worth and autonomy leaves victims feeling hopeless and trapped.

Case Studies of Lives De-railed: Illustrative Examples

While specific individual cases are protected by privacy, the patterns of exploitation are tragically consistent. The following case studies, are non-fiction, draw upon documented realities of human trafficking and exploitation to highlight the devastating impact on individuals' lives but pseudo names have been used for privacy and safety reasons.

Case Study 1: The Promise of Hospitality, the Reality of Sex Work Trafficking ('The Story of Aisha')

Aisha, a bright and ambitious young woman from a small town in East Africa, dreamed of becoming a hotel manager. She saw an advertisement online for a

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By:
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Worth Noting:

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“lucrative hospitality position” in a European capital, promising a high salary, accommodation, company car, and professional development. A charming recruiter, who communicated primarily through social media, assured her that her lack of formal qualifications was no barrier, given her “natural talent and enthusiasm.” Aisha, with her family’s meager savings and a loan from a relative, paid the substantial “processing fee.”

Upon arrival, Aisha was met not by a hotel representative but by a stern woman who immediately confiscated her passport, claiming it was for “visa registration.” She was taken to a cramped apartment shared with several other young women, all looking fearful and withdrawn. The “hospitality job” was a lie. Aisha was informed that her debt for travel and accommodation had spiraled, and the only way to repay it was to engage in commercial sex work. Threats were made against her family back home if she resisted.

Aisha’s life became a cycle of abuse, fear, and degradation. She was forced to work long hours, her movements monitored, her communication with the outside world severely restricted. The psychological trauma was immense; she lost her sense of self, her dreams shattered, replaced by a constant, gnawing fear. She witnessed other girls attempting to escape, only to be brutally punished. Aisha’s hope dwindled, replaced by a profound sense of hopelessness and isolation, a prisoner in a foreign land.

Case Study 2: The Lure of Quick Money, the Trap of Drug Trafficking (The Story of ‘Kauluma’)

Kauluma, a young man from Namibia, was struggling to find stable employment despite his entrepreneurial spirit. He was approached by an acquaintance who boasted of easy money to be made by transporting “packages” for a seemingly legitimate international business. The acquaintance spoke of lavish lifestyles, designer clothes, and the respect that came with financial freedom. Kauluma was told he would be paid handsomely for a single trip to Brazil, a sum that could transform his family’s fortunes. The risks



Students abroad

were downplayed, presented as minor inconveniences easily circumvented.

Desperate to provide for his aging parents and younger siblings, Kauluma agreed. He was given a passport, a ticket, and the “package” – a suitcase with a false bottom containing illicit drugs. He was assured that everything was arranged, and he would pass through customs without issue.

However, upon arrival at a Brazilian airport, Kauluma was apprehended. The “arrangements” were a lie. He was arrested, charged with drug trafficking, and faced a lengthy prison sentence in a foreign country. The news devastated his family in Namibia, who had no means to assist him. Kauluma’s dream of becoming a provider turned into a nightmare of incarceration, isolation, and profound regret. His life, and the lives of his family, were irrevocably scarred by one desperate decision fueled by false promises. His case mirrors the tragic reality faced by many Namibians and other Africans who are exploited as drug mules, often unaware of the full extent of the danger until it is too late.

Case Study 3: The Factory Dream, the Sweatshop Reality (The Story of ‘Fatima’)

Fatima, a skilled seamstress from a West African nation, was offered a contract

to work in a garment factory in Southeast Asia. The recruitment agency, which had a glossy brochure and a professional website, promised excellent working conditions, fair wages, and the opportunity to hone her craft. Fatima, envisioning a future where she could send money home and eventually open her own tailoring business, readily accepted.

When she arrived, her passport was immediately confiscated, and she was informed that the terms of her contract had changed. The factory was a squalid, overcrowded building, and the hours were brutal – 18 hours a day, seven days a week, with no days off. The air was thick with dust and chemicals, and the machinery was old and dangerous. Her wages were a fraction of what was promised, barely enough to cover the exorbitant fees for her cramped, unsanitary dormitory accommodation. She was constantly monitored, and any attempts to complain or resist were met with threats of deportation or physical violence.

Fatima endured months of this grueling existence, her health deteriorating, her spirit crushed. She was in constant pain, both physical and emotional, and the dream of her own business seemed an impossible fantasy. She was a prisoner of debt and fear, her skills exploited, her dignity stripped

away.

Case Study 4: The Ultimate Betrayal – Organ Trafficking (A Stark Warning)

While less common, the most extreme form of exploitation involves organ trafficking. Individuals, often lured by the promise of high payments for “medical tests” or “donations,” are deceived into undergoing procedures where their organs are illegally harvested. This heinous crime preys on the most vulnerable, leaving victims with severe health complications, permanent disabilities, or even death. The promise of money turns into a brutal, life-altering betrayal, underscoring the absolute necessity of extreme caution when dealing with any offers that seem too good to be true, especially those involving medical procedures abroad.

The Role of Illegal Networks and Organized Crime

The exploitation of migrants is not random; it is the deliberate work of sophisticated illegal networks and organized crime syndicates. These groups operate across borders, leveraging global inequalities and vulnerabilities. They are adept at creating convincing facades, from fake recruitment agencies to elaborate online scams, making it incredibly difficult for individuals to

discern legitimacy from deception.

These networks thrive on the desperation of their targets. They identify individuals in economically depressed regions, those with limited access to information, and those who are culturally or socially isolated. They exploit existing trust networks, often using community members as unwitting or complicit recruiters. The global nature of these crimes makes intervention incredibly challenging. Traffickers move victims across multiple countries, exploiting legal loopholes and jurisdictional complexities. The case of Namibians stuck in Romania, or those arrested in Brazil for drug trafficking, highlights the transnational nature of these crimes and the immense difficulties faced by national governments attempting to rescue and repatriate their citizens. Victims are often moved frequently, their identities obscured, and their voices silenced by fear and intimidation.

The Psychological and Social Toll: Beyond the Physical Scars

The impact of exploitation extends far beyond physical hardship and financial ruin. The psychological and social

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TOURISM

Air Travel and Kenya's Journey Towards Five Million Tourists

Air travel is a vital pillar of economic growth, tourism, and regional integration. Yet for many Kenyans and international visitors, the experience remains costly, inconvenient, and at times frustrating.

By: Joseph Kithitu
xxxxxxxxxxxx



Dr Joseph Kithitu is the Managing Director, Hemingways Travel.

Worth Noting:

• Kenya's ambition to attract five million tourists annually cannot rely on marketing alone. We must rethink how travellers access and move within our borders. Improved air connectivity will be central to this transformation. When visitors can enter Kenya smoothly, connect directly to tourist hotspots, and access affordable domestic flights, the overall experience improves—and word-of-mouth promotion follows. Air travel should accelerate, not hinder, our tourism goals.

• To achieve this, we need smart, people-first aviation policies. Reducing taxes and airport fees, simplifying visa processes, and upgrading airport infrastructure are essential steps. A liberalised airspace will also foster healthy competition, lower fares, and expand route networks. But liberalisation must be approached responsibly, with support measures to ensure the viability of local carriers.

Air travel is a vital pillar of economic growth, tourism, and regional integration. Yet for many Kenyans and international visitors, the experience remains costly, inconvenient, and at times frustrating. While our aviation sector has made strides in safety and digital innovation, it's time to dismantle the systemic barriers that continue to stifle progress. One of the most pressing challenges is the high cost of flying. For many, air travel remains out of reach. Airlines face global economic pressures—including soaring fuel prices, high taxes, airport fees, and rising maintenance costs—that ultimately translate into higher fares for passengers. To attract five million annual visitors, we must tackle these cost drivers head-on. Government support through tax reforms and strategic incentives can help reduce operational costs and make air travel more accessible. For international travellers, the picture isn't much better. In addition to high ticket prices, they face visa bottlenecks and limited connectivity across African cities.

In fact, it's often easier to fly from Nairobi to Europe than to some African capitals. This lack of intra-African accessibility not only hampers tourism but also weakens trade and regional integration. Efforts to liberalise African airspace have been painfully slow and uneven. Nowhere is this disconnect more evident than in Mombasa. As one of Africa's premier beach destinations, it remains underserved by direct international flights. Tourists must typically transit through Nairobi, adding both cost and inconvenience. Opening up Mombasa and other coastal airports to more direct international routes would significantly boost the region's economy and enhance the traveller experience. Kenya's ambition to attract five million tourists annually cannot rely on marketing alone. We must rethink how travellers access and move within our borders. Improved air connectivity will be central to this transformation. When visitors can enter Kenya smoothly, connect directly to tourist hotspots, and access affordable do-

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As Chairman of KATA and Managing Director of Hemingways Travel, I've seen firsthand how these obstacles affect both leisure and business travellers. As an industry, we are actively engaging with government and regional bodies to push for reforms that create a more affordable, efficient, and welcoming travel environment. We're also deepening partnerships with global travel associations to elevate Kenya's status as a preferred travel hub.

The urgency of addressing high airfares in East Africa cannot be overstated. Our region's ticket prices are among the highest globally, driven by limited competition and restrictive regulatory environments. We can—and must—learn from the successes of low-cost carriers in other regions. With reduced taxes and collaborative strategies like route-sharing and improved fleet utilisation, local airlines can drive down costs while expanding their reach. Technology is another game-changer. From online bookings and mobile payments to AI-driven customer service, travel is evolving rapidly. These tools enhance planning, accessibility, and customer experience. Embracing innovation should be central to modernising Kenya's travel and tourism sector.

Public-private partnerships will also be critical. Government and private sector collaboration can unlock connectivity to underserved regions such as the coast and northern Kenya. These partnerships have the power to attract investment, create

jobs, and promote inclusive economic growth.

Kenya is ready for a more open skies policy—but this must be phased and deliberate. Supporting local carriers while opening up to international players is key to achieving a healthy, competitive balance.

To our aviation stakeholders, the message is simple: prioritise the traveller. Focus on affordability, expand connectivity, enhance service quality, and leverage digital transformation. These actions will reshape our travel landscape and unlock enormous potential.

Looking toward 2030, I envision a Kenya where air travel is not a luxury but a practical option for more people. A Kenya connected by air, welcoming to the world, and open for business. Achieving that vision demands bold leadership, strategic investments, and unified action.

The time to act is now.

Dr. Joseph Kithitu is the Managing Director, Hemingways Travel & Chairman, Kenya Association of Travel Agents (KATA)

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toll on victims is profound and often long-lasting, leaving deep scars that may never fully heal.

Isolation and Loneliness: Victims are typically isolated from their families, friends, and cultural support systems. Language barriers, fear, and restricted movement exacerbate this isolation, leading to profound loneliness and a sense of abandonment.

Depression and Trauma: The constant fear, abuse, and loss of autonomy often lead to severe depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Victims may experience flashbacks, nightmares, and a pervasive sense of hopelessness.

Loss of Trust and Paranoia: The betrayal by those who promised help, coupled with the constant threat of harm, erodes trust in others. Victims may become paranoid, suspicious of everyone, making it difficult to seek help even when opportunities arise.

Stigma and Shame: For those who manage to escape and return home, the ordeal is often compounded by societal stigma and shame. Victims may be blamed for their predicament, ostracized by their communities, or viewed as failures. This can prevent them from sharing their stories, seeking support, or reintegrating into society.

Broken Families and Communities: The ripple effect of exploitation extends to families and communities. Families suffer emotionally and financially, often burdened by the debts incurred by their loved ones, or grieving the loss of a child who never returned. The breakdown of trust and the erosion of hope can have long-term societal consequences.

Advice for Young People: Navigating the Diaspora Safely

The dream of a better life abroad is not inherently flawed, but the path to achieving it must be navigated with extreme caution, thorough preparation, and an unwavering commitment to legitimate channels. For young people contemplating emigration, here are essential steps to avoid becoming lost, used, and without a future in the diaspora:

1. **Research Thoroughly and Verify Everything:**

Verify Job Offers and Companies: Never accept a job offer without independently verifying the company's legitimacy. Search for their

official website, check business registrations, and look for reviews or complaints. Be suspicious of generic email addresses or communication solely through social media.

Scrutinize Recruitment Agencies: If using a recruitment agency, ensure it is officially registered and licensed in both your home country and the destination country. Check their track record, ask for references, and verify any claims they make. A legitimate agency will never ask for large upfront payments or promise unrealistic salaries.

Understand Immigration Laws and Visa Requirements: Research the specific visa and work permit requirements for the country you intend to go to. Understand the legal pathways for immigration. Do not trust anyone who promises to arrange a visa for you without proper documentation or through "backdoor" methods.

Consult Official Government Sources: Always consult your country's embassy or consulate in the destination country, and the destination country's embassy or consulate in your home country. These are the most reliable sources of information on legal immigration, work permits, and citizen services.

2. **Seek Official Channels and Avoid Informal Arrangements:**

Apply for Proper Visas and Work Permits: Insist on obtaining the correct visa and work permit before you travel. Do not travel on a tourist visa with the intention of working illegally, as this makes you incredibly vulnerable to exploitation.

Avoid "Under the Table" Arrangements: Any offer that suggests working without proper documentation or a formal contract should be a major red flag. These arrangements offer no legal protection and put you at extreme risk.

3. **Financial Preparedness and Awareness:**

Have Sufficient Funds: Ensure you have enough money to cover your initial living expenses, including accommodation, food, and transport, for at least a few months, in case the job does not materialize immediately or if there are unexpected delays.

Avoid Debt Bondage: Be extremely wary of anyone offering to cover all your travel costs or demanding large upfront payments for "processing" or "guarantees." These are common tactics used by traffickers to create a financial hold over you. Never hand over your entire life savings to an unverified individual or agency.

4. **Legal Awareness and Document**



Students abroad

Security:

Know Your Rights: Before you leave, research the basic labor laws and human rights protections in your destination country. Understand what constitutes exploitation and how to report it.

Keep Copies of All Documents: Make multiple copies of your passport, visa, work permit, contract, and any other important documents. Keep digital copies stored securely online (e.g., in a cloud service) and physical copies with trusted family members back home.

Never Surrender Your Passport: Your passport is your identity. Never, under any circumstances, surrender your passport or other travel documents to an employer, recruiter, or any individual who is not an authorized government official. If someone demands your passport, it is a clear sign of potential trafficking.

5. **Maintain Connections and Build Support Networks:**

Stay in Regular Contact: Inform your family and trusted friends of your travel plans, your itinerary, and who you will be meeting. Stay in regular contact with them, sharing updates on your living and working conditions.

Share Emergency Contacts: Provide your family with the contact details of your country's embassy or consulate in the destination country, and any reputable NGOs that assist migrants or victims of trafficking.

Connect with Legitimate Diaspora Communities: Once abroad, seek out established and reputable com-

munity organizations or religious groups from your home country. These can provide a vital support network, offer advice, and help you navigate challenges.

Know Where to Find Help: Familiarize yourself with local emergency numbers, police services, and organizations that assist victims of human trafficking or labor exploitation.

6. **Develop Skills and Qualifications:**

Invest in Education and Vocational Training: The best way to secure legitimate opportunities abroad is to possess in-demand skills and qualifications. Invest in education, vocational training, or apprenticeships before you leave. This significantly increases your chances of securing a genuine, well-paying job through official channels and reduces your vulnerability to exploitation.

Learn the Language: Basic proficiency in the language of your destination country can be invaluable for communication, integration, and seeking help if needed.

7. **Trust Your Instincts and Be Skeptical:**

If It Sounds Too Good to Be True, It Probably Is: Be extremely wary of offers that promise exorbitant salaries for little effort, guaranteed visas without proper documentation, or free travel. Legitimate opportunities rarely come without effort or risk.

Beware of Pressure Tactics: If someone pressures you to make a quick decision, pay large sums of money immediately, or discourages you from asking questions or consulting

others, these are significant warning signs.

Conclusion: A Call for Caution, Preparation, and Collective Action

The dream of "greener pastures" is a powerful motivator, but for many, it can quickly devolve into a harrowing nightmare. The stories of exploitation, forced labor, human trafficking, and involvement in illicit activities are not isolated incidents but a grim reality for countless individuals lured by false promises. As the experiences of Namibians in Romania and Brazil tragically illustrate, the pursuit of a better life abroad, without due diligence and adherence to legitimate processes, can lead to profound suffering, imprisonment, and even death.

This article serves as a stark reminder that while opportunities may exist beyond national borders, they are rarely handed out freely or without legitimate requirements. The onus is on aspiring migrants to exercise extreme caution, to thoroughly vet every offer, and to prioritize their safety and legal standing above all else. Governments, civil society organizations, and communities also have a crucial role to play in educating their citizens about the risks, providing accurate information on legal migration pathways, and offering support to victims of exploitation. Ultimately, true "greener pastures" are cultivated through knowledge, preparation, and resilience. For the young people of Africa, the path to a brighter future, whether at home or abroad, must be built on a foundation of informed decisions, not on the shifting sands of deceptive promises. The pursuit of dreams should never come at the cost of one's freedom, dignity, or life.

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A Crisis In The Classroom: The Silent Struggle Of Invisible Disabilities In Namibian Schools



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande
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nerable learners behind.

This article delves deep into this multifaceted issue, examining the various invisible disabilities affecting Namibian learners, the systemic failures that exacerbate their challenges, and, crucially, proposing comprehensive solutions to foster a truly inclusive and supportive educational environment.

The Landscape of Invisible Disabilities in Namibian Classrooms: A Detailed Exploration

Invisible disabilities encompass a wide spectrum of conditions that, while not physically evident, profoundly impact a person's daily life, including their ability to learn and thrive in a traditional school setting. In Namibia, these conditions manifest in classrooms across the country, often leading to misinterpretations of student behavior, academic struggles, and emotional distress. Understanding these disabilities is the first crucial step towards effective intervention.

1. Mental Health Conditions:

Depression: A pervasive mood disorder that casts a shadow over a learner's life, characterized by persistent sadness, a profound loss of interest in activities, overwhelming fatigue, significant changes in sleep patterns and appetite, and a debilitating difficulty in concentrating. In a classroom, a child struggling with depression might appear withdrawn, disengaged, or perpetually tired. Their academic performance can plummet due to a lack of motivation, inability to focus on lessons, and a diminished capacity for critical thinking. Teachers, unaware of the underlying condition, might attribute this to laziness or defiance, further alienating the student.

Anxiety Disorders: These conditions are marked by excessive worry, fear, and nervousness that often manifest with physical symptoms.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD): Constant, often irrational worry about everyday things, leading to restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, and sleep problems.

Panic Disorder: Sudden, intense episodes of fear that trigger severe physical reactions when there is no

real danger. These "panic attacks" can involve a pounding heart, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, chest pain, and a feeling of impending doom.

Social Anxiety Disorder: Intense fear of social situations, leading to avoidance of class participation, group work, or presenting in front of peers.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Characterized by intrusive, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions) that the individual feels driven to perform. A learner with OCD might be consumed by rituals that interfere with their ability to complete assignments or participate in class.

In the classroom, anxiety can paralyze a learner, making it difficult to participate, answer questions, or even attend school regularly. Test anxiety, a common manifestation, can undermine a student's true knowledge and abilities.

Bipolar Disorder: A complex mood disorder marked by dramatic and unpredictable shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out daily tasks. These swings encompass emotional highs (mania or hypomania), characterized by elevated mood, increased energy, racing thoughts, and impulsivity, and emotional lows (depression), which mirror the symptoms of major depressive disorder. A learner with bipolar disorder might experience periods of intense creativity and heightened energy, followed by weeks of profound sadness and lethargy, making consistent academic engagement incredibly challenging.

Schizophrenia: A severe and chronic mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Individuals with schizophrenia may seem to have lost touch with reality, experiencing hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there), delusions (false beliefs), and disorganized thinking or speech. These symptoms can severely impair a student's ability to focus, comprehend information, and interact appropriately in a classroom setting, often leading to social isolation and profound academic difficulties.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A condition that can develop in individuals who have experienced or witnessed a terrifying event. Symptoms can include flashbacks to the trauma, nightmares, severe anxiety, uncontrollable thoughts about the event, and avoidance of situations that trigger memories. A learner with PTSD might exhibit heightened vigilance, easily startle, struggle with concentration, or experience emotional outbursts, all of which disrupt their learning environment and academic progress.

2. Learning Disabilities:

Dyslexia: A specific learning disability that primarily affects a person's ability to read. It's not a problem with intelligence, but rather with the brain's ability to process language, leading to difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. In a Namibian classroom, a learner with dyslexia might struggle to read textbooks, follow written instructions, or complete assignments that heavily rely on reading and writing, despite being verbally intelligent.

Dyscalculia: A specific learning disability that impacts a person's ability to understand and process numerical information. Learners with dyscalculia may struggle with basic arithmetic, understanding concepts of quantity, telling time, or managing money. This can significantly hinder their performance in mathematics and science subjects.

Dysgraphia: A learning disability that affects a person's ability to write. This can manifest as illegible handwriting, difficulty organizing thoughts on paper, poor spelling, or challenges with grammatical structures. For a Namibian learner, dysgraphia can make taking notes, completing written assignments, and expressing their knowledge through writing an arduous task.

3. Neurological Conditions:

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with daily functioning and development. In a classroom, learners with ADHD might struggle to stay seated, blurt out answers, interrupt others, lose focus during lessons, or have difficulty completing tasks. This can lead to frequent reprimands, academic underachievement, and social difficulties.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): A neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person perceives and socializes with others, leading to challenges in social interaction, communication (both verbal and non-verbal), and restricted or repetitive behaviors. The spectrum nature of ASD means that its presentation and severity vary widely. A learner with ASD might struggle with social cues, direct eye contact, understanding figurative language, or adapting to changes in routine. While some may excel in specific academic areas, their social and communication differences can make navigating the traditional classroom challenging.

Epilepsy: A chronic neurological disorder characterized by recurrent, unprovoked seizures, which are sudden, uncontrolled disturbances in brain activity. Seizures can manifest



in various ways, from brief staring spells (absence seizures) to full-body convulsions (tonic-clonic seizures). A learner with epilepsy might experience memory problems, fatigue, or confusion after a seizure, impacting their ability to learn. The unpredictable nature of seizures can also create anxiety for the student and disrupt classroom flow.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): Damage to the brain caused by an external force, such as a fall, accident, or assault. TBIs can result in a wide range of physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impairments, depending on the severity and location of the injury. A learner who has sustained a TBI might experience memory loss, difficulty concentrating, processing information slowly, emotional lability, or challenges with impulse control, all of which can significantly impact their academic functioning.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS): A chronic, progressive autoimmune disease that affects the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. MS can lead to a wide range of neurological symptoms, including chronic fatigue, numbness or weakness in limbs, vision problems (blurred vision, double vision), dizziness, problems with balance and coordination, and cognitive difficulties (memory, concentration). The fluctuating nature of MS symptoms means a learner's abilities can vary significantly from day to day, making consistent academic engagement challenging.

Fibromyalgia: A chronic disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain, accompanied by fatigue, sleep disturbances, memory issues ("fibro fog"), and mood problems. For a learner, chronic pain and fatigue can make it difficult to sit for long periods, concentrate on lessons, or participate in physical activities, leading to school absenteeism and academic decline.

4. Chronic Illnesses:

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) / Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME): A complex and severe condition characterized by extreme fatigue that isn't improved by rest and is often worsened by physical or mental ex-

ertion. It often presents with other symptoms like cognitive difficulties ("brain fog"), sleep problems, muscle pain, joint pain, and headaches. A learner with CFS/ME might struggle with consistent attendance, concentration, and completing assignments due to persistent exhaustion.

Chronic Pain: Persistent pain that lasts for an extended period, typically more than three to six months. It can stem from various underlying conditions or injuries and can be debilitating. A learner experiencing chronic pain might struggle to sit comfortably, focus on tasks, or participate in school activities, leading to frequent absences and a diminished quality of life.

Diabetes: A metabolic disease that results in high blood sugar levels. While manageable with proper treatment, uncontrolled diabetes can lead to fatigue, difficulty concentrating, frequent urination, and vision problems. For a learner, managing blood sugar levels throughout the school day, dealing with potential highs or lows, and the need for regular monitoring can disrupt their learning and require specific accommodations.

Lupus: A chronic autoimmune disease that can affect various body parts, including joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs, and brain. Its symptoms can be wide-ranging and often fluctuate, including fatigue, joint pain, skin rashes, fever, and cognitive issues. The unpredictable nature of lupus flare-ups can significantly impact a learner's attendance and ability to maintain consistent academic performance.

Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis (Inflammatory Bowel Diseases - IBD): Chronic inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms include abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, weight loss, and fatigue. Learners with IBD often require frequent bathroom breaks, may experience severe pain, and can miss significant school time during flare-ups, impacting their learning and social integration.

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Endometriosis: A chronic condition in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, causing severe pain, heavy bleeding, and often fatigue. While primarily affecting girls and women, its impact on a learner's ability to attend school consistently and concentrate due to chronic pain can be profound.

Rheumatoid Arthritis: A chronic inflammatory disorder primarily affecting the joints, leading to pain, swelling, stiffness, and potentially joint damage. A learner with rheumatoid arthritis might experience physical limitations, pain, and fatigue, making it difficult to participate in activities requiring fine motor skills or prolonged sitting/standing.

Celiac Disease: An autoimmune disorder where consuming gluten leads to damage in the small intestine, causing digestive problems, nutrient deficiencies, fatigue, and sometimes neurological symptoms. A learner with celiac disease requires strict dietary adherence, and accidental gluten exposure can lead to debilitating symptoms, impacting school attendance and concentration.

Asthma: A chronic respiratory condition characterized by inflammation and narrowing of the airways, leading to difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing, and chest tightness. While often visible during an attack, chronic asthma can lead to fatigue and reduced participation in physical activities, and the anxiety of potential attacks can impact a learner's focus.

Sleep Disorders (e.g., Narcolepsy, Sleep Apnea): Conditions that disrupt normal sleep patterns. Narcolepsy causes overwhelming daytime sleepiness and sudden attacks of sleep. Sleep apnea involves pauses in breathing during sleep. Both can lead to chronic fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and impaired cognitive function, severely impacting a learner's academic performance and overall well-being.

Cardiac Conditions: Certain heart conditions, even if not outwardly visible, can significantly limit a learner's physical activity, energy levels, and stamina. This can restrict their participation in sports, lead to fatigue in class, and necessitate careful monitoring, impacting their overall school experience.

Renal Failure: A condition where the kidneys no longer function adequately, often requiring dialysis or

a kidney transplant. Learners undergoing dialysis face significant time commitments for treatment, chronic fatigue, and potential dietary restrictions, all of which disrupt their schooling.

Severe Allergies: While sometimes obvious, chronic or severe allergies (e.g., life-threatening food allergies, severe environmental allergies) can cause debilitating symptoms, require constant vigilance, and necessitate accommodations, impacting a learner's safety, participation in activities, and focus.

5. Sensory Disabilities (when not outwardly apparent):

Hearing Impairment: Partial or complete inability to hear. This can be invisible if a learner does not use visible hearing aids, or if their hearing loss is mild but still significantly impacts their ability to follow classroom discussions, understand verbal instructions, or participate in group activities.

Visual Impairment: Partial or complete inability to see. Similar to hearing impairment, this can be invisible if a learner wears contact lenses, or if their vision loss is not immediately recognizable to an untrained eye. This can lead to difficulties reading the board, seeing textbooks, or navigating the school environment safely.

The pervasive nature of these conditions, coupled with their inherent invisibility, presents a unique challenge to Namibia's education system.

The Systemic Fault Lines: Why Namibia is Falling Short

Namibia's commitment to inclusive education, as articulated in its policies, is commendable on paper. However, the practical implementation, especially concerning invisible disabilities, is fraught with significant challenges.

Lack of Teacher Training and Awareness: This is perhaps the most critical bottleneck. Teachers are the primary point of contact for learners, yet they receive minimal, if any, specialized training in identifying invisible disabilities. They are not equipped with the pedagogical skills or psychological understanding to differentiate between a child who is "lazy" or "naughty" and one who is genuinely struggling with an undiagnosed condition. This lack of awareness leads to:

Misdiagnosis and Misinterpretation: Behaviors stemming from an invisible disability are often misinterpreted as disciplinary issues, defiance, or a lack of effort. This leads to punitive measures rather than supportive interventions. **Emotional and Psychological Harm:** Learners are labeled, disciplined, and often feel isolated,



misunderstood, and inadequate. This can exacerbate their underlying conditions, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and a complete disengagement from learning.

Inability to Differentiate Instruction: Without understanding the specific needs of a learner with an invisible disability, teachers cannot tailor their teaching methods, materials, or assessments. The "one-size-fits-all" approach, particularly problematic for learners with learning disabilities or ADHD, ensures their continued struggle.

Insufficient Early Identification and Intervention Mechanisms: Many invisible disabilities manifest early in a child's life. However, Namibia's education system lacks robust mechanisms for early screening, diagnosis, and intervention. Without early identification, valuable time is lost, and the disability can become more entrenched, making intervention more challenging later on. This also places a significant burden on parents who may not have the resources or knowledge to seek private diagnoses.

Limited Access to Professional Support Services: Even if a teacher suspects an invisible disability, the pathway to professional diagnosis and ongoing support is often convoluted and inaccessible, particularly in rural areas. Namibia has a shortage of educational psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and other specialists crucial for assessment and intervention. This means that even when a condition is suspected, formal diagnosis and subsequent specialized support are often out of reach for many families.

Inflexible Curriculum and Assessment Systems: The current curriculum and assessment methods are largely standardized, failing to accommodate the diverse learning styles and needs of students with invisible disabilities. High-stakes examinations, often time-bound and heavily reliant on rote memorization or specific forms of written expression, disproportionately disadvantage learners with conditions

like dyslexia, dysgraphia, or anxiety disorders. The system measures performance based on a narrow set of criteria, rather than assessing a learner's true potential and understanding.

Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure: Inclusive education requires more than just policy; it demands resources. Namibian schools often lack:

Appropriate Learning Materials: Textbooks and resources are rarely adapted for learners with visual processing difficulties, dyslexia (e.g., larger fonts, specific paper colors), or those requiring multi-sensory approaches.

Assistive Technology: While assistive devices hold immense potential for learners with certain invisible disabilities (e.g., text-to-speech software for dyslexia, noise-canceling headphones for ADHD), their availability and integration into classrooms are severely limited due to cost and lack of expertise.

Support Staff: The absence of dedicated learning support teachers, teaching assistants, or counselors within mainstream schools means the burden of supporting these learners falls entirely on already overstretched classroom teachers.

Societal Stigma and Misunderstanding: Despite efforts towards inclusivity, a lingering stigma surrounds disabilities, especially invisible ones. This can lead to parents hiding their child's condition, children being bullied or ostracized by peers, and a general lack of understanding within communities. This societal perception can permeate the school environment, hindering open discussion and support.

Parental Engagement Gaps: While parents are crucial partners in a child's education, those with children facing invisible disabilities often lack information, support networks, or the means to advocate effectively for their children's needs within the school system.

A Blueprint for Change: Transforming Education for Invisible Disabilities in Namibia

Addressing this crisis requires a multi-pronged, systemic approach that moves beyond mere policy statements to tangible, impactful interventions. Namibia has the opportunity to become a leader in truly inclusive education by implementing the following strategies:

1. Comprehensive Teacher Training and Professional Development:

Mandatory Pre-Service Training: Integrate robust modules on invisible disabilities into all teacher training programs. This should cover:

Identification and Screening: Practical tools and strategies for recognizing the early signs of various invisible disabilities (e.g., observing behavioral patterns, academic struggles not explained by other factors).

Understanding the Impact: In-depth knowledge of how each invisible disability affects learning, social interaction, and emotional well-being.

Differentiated Instruction and Pedagogical Strategies: Equipping teachers with a repertoire of teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and assessment adaptations tailored to specific invisible disabilities (e.g., multi-sensory teaching for dyslexia, structured routines for ADHD, visual schedules for ASD, flexible deadlines for chronic fatigue).

Positive Behavior Support: Shifting from punitive disciplinary measures to understanding the root causes of challenging behaviors and implementing supportive interventions.

Basic Counseling and Emotional Support Skills: Training teachers to provide initial emotional support and know when to refer students to

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China

How China Is Reshaping Global Finance Through New Development Banks

By: Onyango K'Onyango
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Worth Noting:

• China's ascendance in this space stems from a deliberate and sustained strategy. The AIIB, founded in 2016 and headquartered in Beijing, now counts more than 100 member countries. The NDB, originally established by the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has steadily expanded its lending portfolio and membership. These institutions prioritise large-scale investments in infrastructure, renewable energy, climate resilience, and digital connectivity—precisely the areas where developing nations most urgently need support.

• What distinguishes these banks is not just their financial muscle, but also their operating philosophy. Unlike the IMF or World Bank, which frequently attach structural reforms or fiscal conditionalities to their loans, China-led institutions often offer financing with fewer strings attached. For nations facing political transitions, economic turbulence, or urgent development needs, this no-strings approach is often more appealing—and pragmatic.

The traditional architecture of global finance—long dominated by Western-led institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—is undergoing a subtle yet profound transformation. At the centre of this shift is China, whose leadership in institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) is helping to redefine how development financing is conceived, accessed, and delivered across the Global South.

This is not merely the addition of new players into the financial landscape. Rather, it reflects a broader rebalancing of influence in the international order. At stake is a critical question: who gets to set the terms of development? Whose priorities shape lending conditions? And whose vision determines the trajectory of infrastructure, energy, and digital expansion across emerging economies?

China's ascendance in this space stems from a deliberate and sustained strategy. The AIIB, founded in 2016 and headquartered in Beijing, now counts more than 100 member countries. The NDB, originally established by the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has steadily expanded its lending portfolio and membership. These institutions prioritise large-scale investments in infrastructure, renewable energy, climate resilience, and digital connectivity—precisely the areas where developing nations most urgently need support.

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Take, for instance, the case of renewable energy financing in Southeast Asia. While traditional multilateral lenders have pledged support for



Exterior of the New Development Bank headquarters in Shanghai, China. Image via the New Development Bank.

green transitions, procedural delays and extensive policy requirements can slow project implementation. In contrast, the AIIB has positioned itself as a nimble co-financing partner—capable of aligning with national development plans and respecting local governance models.

For many in the Global South, this represents more than just financial convenience. It signals a new kind of development engagement—one rooted in partnership, not paternalism. Through this model, China presents itself not just as a lender, but as a long-term ally in strategic planning and economic transformation.

Critics argue that the lack of conditionality risks enabling mismanagement or opacity. But supporters counter that the traditional model has long produced its own failures—most notably in the form of unpopular austerity programmes, growing inequality, and political backlash. Moreover, as developing nations become more assertive, they increasingly

demand financing models tailored to their unique challenges—not one-size-fits-all prescriptions.

China's influence is also expanding in the arenas of digital and climate finance. As global economies become more interconnected and digitalised, the need for digital infrastructure—from fibre-optic networks to cloud data centres—is growing rapidly. Here, China-backed banks are stepping into a void left by slower-moving Western institutions. By integrating physical and digital infrastructure in their financing models, they are helping countries build resilience in the digital age.

Climate financing is another area where the AIIB and NDB are gaining traction. As the climate crisis disproportionately affects the developing world, timely access to funds for mitigation and adaptation has become critical. Both banks are now channelling significant resources into green projects—solar energy, sustainable transport, disaster preparedness—making these investments more than just

financial transactions; they are lifelines for long-term survival.

The larger implication of this shift is that it is redefining multilateralism itself. Where the term once referred almost exclusively to institutions dominated by the West, it now includes a growing ecosystem of alternatives, each with its own philosophy and model. China's leadership does not signal a replacement of the IMF or World Bank—but it offers an alternative. And in a multipolar world, alternatives matter.

Importantly, this competition need not be adversarial. The emergence of China-led institutions has already spurred legacy organisations to re-examine their frameworks. The World Bank is reforming its climate financing strategy. The IMF is taking steps toward greater inclusivity and responsiveness. In that sense, this is a race to relevance—not dominance.

Still, the symbolism of the shift matters deeply. The Global South is no longer content to be a passive recip-

ient of prescriptions crafted in faraway capitals. Through engagement with new financial institutions, developing nations are asserting agency, redefining influence, and reshaping global finance on their own terms.

China's role in this transformation is central—but not absolute. What it reflects is a deeper, collective aspiration across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and beyond: the pursuit of equity, dignity, and ownership in a global financial system that has too often excluded or constrained them.

As institutions like the AIIB and NDB continue to grow in scale and sophistication, they are not just funding roads, bridges, or fibre networks. They are laying the foundation for a new era in global cooperation—one in which the voices of the many, not just the few, shape the path forward.

The writer is a journalist and communication consultant.

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 specialized services.

Ongoing In-Service Professional Development: Regular workshops, seminars, and online courses for existing teachers. These should be practical, hands-on, and offer opportunities for peer learning and mentorship. Consider developing a cadre of "Special Educational Needs (SEN) Champions" within each school or cluster of schools to provide in-house support and guidance.

Collaboration with Medical and Psychological Professionals: Integrate experts from the health sector (psychologists, pediatricians, occupational therapists) into teacher training programs to provide realistic insights and practical advice.

2. Robust Early Identification and Assessment System:

Universal Screening: Implement standardized, age-appropriate screening tools across all primary schools to identify potential developmental delays or indicators of invisible disabilities. This should be a routine part of school entry and progression.

Multi-Disciplinary Assessment Teams: Establish regional or district-level multi-disciplinary teams comprising educational psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, and medical professionals. These teams would be responsible for comprehensive assessments and diagnoses once a potential disability is identified through screening.

Clear Referral Pathways: Develop clear, accessible, and well-publicized referral pathways for teachers and parents to access assessment services. This should involve simplified paperwork and reduced bureaucracy.

Parent Education on Early Signs: Launch public awareness campaigns and school-based workshops to educate parents about the early signs of invisible disabilities and the importance of seeking support.

3. Enhanced Professional Support Services within the Education System:

Recruitment and Training of Specialists: Invest in training and recruiting more educational psychologists, learning support teachers, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and counselors. These professionals should be strategically deployed across regions to ensure

wider accessibility.

School-Based Support Teams: Mandate the establishment of school-based support teams in every school. These teams, comprising the principal, relevant teachers (including a designated learning support teacher), and potentially a school counselor, would meet regularly to discuss struggling learners, implement interventions, and coordinate with external specialists.

Resource Centers: Establish regional resource centers equipped with specialized learning materials, assistive technology, and expertise to support schools and learners with diverse needs. These centers could also serve as hubs for teacher training and parent workshops.

4. Flexible Curriculum and Differentiated Instruction:

Curriculum Adaptation Framework: Develop a national curriculum framework that provides clear guidelines for adapting and differentiating instruction for learners with various invisible disabilities. This should encourage:

Multi-Sensory Learning: Incorporating visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile approaches into lessons to cater to diverse learning styles.

Flexible Grouping: Allowing students to work individually, in small groups, or with peers based on their learning needs.

Chunking Information: Breaking down complex tasks and information into smaller, manageable chunks.

Visual Supports: Using visual schedules, graphic organizers, and visual aids to enhance comprehension and memory.

Inclusive Assessment Practices: Move beyond traditional pen-and-paper exams to include:

Formative Assessment: Continuous assessment that informs teaching and learning, allowing for ongoing adjustments.

Alternative Assessment Methods: Oral presentations, projects, portfolios, and practical demonstrations to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge in diverse ways.

Accommodations: Providing necessary accommodations during examinations, such as extended time, quiet testing environments, readers, or scribes, based on diagnosed needs.

Focus on Progress, Not Just Performance: Shifting the emphasis from solely academic grades to recognizing and celebrating individual progress and effort.



5. Investment in Resources and Infrastructure:

Budget Allocation: Significantly increase budget allocation for special education needs, particularly for resources related to invisible disabilities. This includes funding for teacher training, specialist salaries, assistive technology, and adapted learning materials.

Assistive Technology Integration: Conduct a comprehensive audit of assistive technology needs and develop a strategy for procurement, deployment, and teacher training in its use. Explore partnerships with technology companies and NGOs to make these tools more accessible.

Accessible Learning Materials: Ensure that all new textbooks and learning materials are developed with accessibility features in mind (e.g., digital formats compatible with screen readers, adjustable font sizes).

Conducive Learning Environments: Promote the creation of calm, organized, and predictable classroom environments that minimize distractions, particularly beneficial for learners with ADHD or ASD.

6. Fostering a Culture of Acceptance and Understanding:

Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch national campaigns to raise awareness about invisible disabilities, debunk myths, and reduce stigma. These campaigns should target parents, students, educators, and the wider community.

Peer Education Programs: Implement peer education programs in schools to foster empathy and understanding among students, encouraging them to support and include their peers with invisible disabilities.

Parent Support Groups: Facilitate

the creation and funding of parent support groups, providing a platform for parents to share experiences, access information, and advocate for their children.

Role of NGOs and Community Organizations: Strengthen partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations that specialize in supporting individuals with disabilities. Leverage their expertise, resources, and outreach capabilities.

7. Data Collection and Research:

Comprehensive Data System: Establish a robust national data collection system to track the prevalence of invisible disabilities in schools, the types of support provided, and the academic outcomes of these learners. This data is crucial for evidence-based policy making and resource allocation.

Localized Research: Encourage and fund research into the specific challenges and successes of inclusive education for invisible disabilities within the Namibian context. This will provide valuable insights for tailored interventions.

The Role of Government, Communities, and Families

The responsibility for this transformation lies not solely with the Ministry of Education but with a collective effort involving all stakeholders:

Government: The Namibian government must demonstrate unwavering political will by allocating sufficient resources, revising outdated policies, and ensuring accountability in the implementation of inclusive education strategies. This includes strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration between education, health, and social welfare.

Communities: Communities must shift from a mindset of stigma and exclusion to one of acceptance and

support. Local leaders, traditional authorities, and religious institutions can play a vital role in raising awareness and fostering inclusive attitudes.

Families: Parents and caregivers are primary advocates for their children. Empowering them with information, resources, and support networks will enable them to partner effectively with schools in ensuring their children's needs are met. Establishing formal parent-school partnerships and clear communication channels is essential.

Conclusion: A Vision for a Truly Inclusive Namibia

The current situation in Namibian schools, where learners with invisible disabilities silently struggle, represents not only a failure of the education system but a disservice to the nation's most vulnerable citizens. Teachers, despite their dedication, are unfairly blamed for outcomes rooted in systemic deficiencies. The notion of "inclusiveness" becomes a hollow promise if it does not genuinely cater to the diverse and often hidden needs of all learners.

Namibia has the opportunity to lead by example, transforming its education system into a beacon of true inclusivity. By prioritizing comprehensive teacher training, establishing robust identification and support mechanisms, fostering flexible learning environments, investing in vital resources, and cultivating a culture of empathy and understanding, the nation can unmask the unseen struggles of its learners. This commitment will not only unlock the full potential of every child, regardless of their hidden challenges, but also build a more compassionate, equitable, and prosperous future for all Namibians. It is time to listen to the silent cries in the classroom, to equip our educators, and to build a system where every learner truly matters and every disability, visible or invisible, is seen, understood, and supported.

Diaspora

Empowering Communities through Healthcare: Zimbabwe's Green Light International Trust Celebrates 12th Nurse Aide Graduation



By: Chimeno Azriel
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Zimbabwe

In a significant milestone for healthcare in Zimbabwe, Green Light International Trust, a renowned non-profit organisation based in Zimbabwe proudly celebrated the graduation of its 12th cohort of nurse aides. This achievement is evident to the organisation's tireless efforts in empowering communities through healthcare, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide quality care.

By investing in the development of nurse aides, Green Light International Trust is making a lasting impact on the lives of countless individuals, families, and communities, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more resilient society.

The event marked a significant milestone in the organisation's mission to empower individuals with essential healthcare skills, enabling them to make a meaningful impact in their communities.

With a focus on bridging the healthcare gap in underserved areas, the nurse aide program has been instrumental in providing quality care to patients and promoting holistic well-being. The graduation ceremony reflects the organization's commitment to fostering a culture of care and compassion, and its dedication to improving lives through education, training and service delivery.

The graduates undergone rigorous training in the Nurse Aide and Care course, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality care to patients. This training has prepared them to work in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, clinics, and community care facilities. As they embark on their journey to make a difference in the healthcare sector, the graduates are poised to bring hope and healing to those in need. The ceremony will be a celebration of their hard work, dedication, and commitment to serving humanity.

The main purpose in training these individuals is to enable them to identify community needs and refer patients to professionals for assistance, especially children with severe disabilities and they held their 12th Graduation Ceremony,

where students celebrated growth and positive capacity development.

Out of the 84 graduates, 15 students received certificates in Care, while 69 students received certificates in Nurse Aid. These graduates have undergone rigorous training, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality care to patients in various healthcare settings.

Chief Executive Officer of Green Light International Trust, Mr. Tawanda Makwiramiti, congratulated the graduates, urging them to remain committed to their calling and to continue learning and growing in their profession. With their newfound skills and knowledge, the graduates are ready to embark on their journey, serving humanity with compassion, empathy, and kindness.

"As Nurse Aides and Care givers, you will play a vital role in bridging the healthcare gap in our communities. Your training has equipped you with the necessary skills to provide quality care to patients, and I have no doubt that you will make a meaningful impact," said Makwiramiti.

"I urge you to remain committed to your calling, to be compassionate, empathetic, and kind. Remember that every patient you care for is someone's loved one, and your kindness can bring hope and healing to those in need," he said

Guest of Honour Sinikiwe Kademauka spoke and emphasized the need for the graduates to be bold and daring in their approach to healthcare. She encouraged them not to be lukewarm, but rather to be passionate and committed to their work, making a meaningful impact in their communities.

"As you embark on this journey, remember that the world needs people who are bold, daring, and passionate about making a difference. Don't be lukewarm; instead, be the driving force that brings change and hope to those in need. Your role as nurse aides is not just about providing care, but about touching lives and transforming communities," she

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Green Light International Trust Director and Founder Tawanda Makwiramiti



Guest of Honour Sinikiwe Kademauka (L) and Director Tawanda Makwiramiti (R)



Some of the graduates

Worth Noting:

• With a focus on bridging the healthcare gap in underserved areas, the nurse aide program has been instrumental in providing quality care to patients and promoting holistic well-being. The graduation ceremony reflects the organization's commitment to fostering a culture of care and compassion, and its dedication to improving lives through education, training and service delivery.

• The graduates undergone rigorous training in the Nurse Aide and Care course, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality care to patients. This training has prepared them to work in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, clinics, and community care facilities. As they embark on their journey to make a difference in the healthcare sector, the graduates are poised to bring hope and healing to those in need. The ceremony will be a celebration of their hard work, dedication, and commitment to serving humanity.

Empowering Communities through Healthcare: Zimbabwe's Green Light International Trust Celebrates 12th Nurse Aide Graduation

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Worth Noting:

• “As you embark on this journey, remember that the world needs people who are bold, daring, and passionate about making a difference. Don't be lukewarm; instead, be the driving force that brings change and hope to those in need. Your role as nurse aides is not just about providing care, but about touching lives and transforming communities,” she said.

• “As you step into this new world, remember to be confident and know what you want. Believe in yourself and your abilities, and never be afraid to take the lead. You have the power to make a difference in the lives of your patients, and with confidence and determination, you can achieve great things. Don't just follow the crowd; be the driving force that brings change and hope to those in need. Your passion and commitment will take you far, and with hard work and dedication, you will excel in your careers,” she concluded.

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The training program marked a significant milestone in empowering communities through healthcare, particularly for persons with disabilities who require specialised care and attention. The training imparted to these graduates equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality care to individuals with various disabilities, addressing their unique needs and promoting inclusivity.

By focusing on the care of persons with disabilities, this initiative acknowledged the importance of accessible healthcare and the role that trained caregivers play in enhancing the well-being and dignity of individuals with disabilities. The graduates are now better equipped to provide personalized care, support, and advocacy, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and compassionate healthcare system.

This effort underscored the importance of healthcare as a fundamental human right, especially for vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities. By investing in the training of nurse aides, Green Light International Trust is helping to bridge the gap in healthcare services and ensure that persons with disabilities receive the care and support they deserve.

During the graduation, Tawanda Makwiramiti said “We believe that healthcare is a fundamental human right, and our nurse aide training program is designed to empower caregivers with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality care to individuals with disabilities. By invest-

ing in the development of our graduates, we are not only enhancing the lives of persons with disabilities but also contributing to a more inclusive and compassionate healthcare system.”

Speaking to some of the graduates, they were proud and delighted to have completed the course.

“I'm thrilled to have completed this training program. It has equipped me with the skills and confidence to make a meaningful difference in my community. I'm excited to start my career as a nurse aide and touch the lives of those in need,” said Mudzimukunze Shingirirai (22)

“This journey has been incredible. I've gained so much knowledge and experience that will enable me to provide quality care to my patients. I'm grateful for the support and guidance from the trainers and look forward to serving my community,” said Joana Nzero (40)

“This training has been an incredible opportunity for me. I've gained valuable skills and knowledge that will enable me to make a difference in my community. I'm grateful for the support and guidance from the trainers and look forward to serving others,” said Pardon Moto (17) who was the youngest graduate.

The graduates' enthusiasm and commitment to providing quality care and support to patients are a promising indication of the positive impact they will have in the healthcare sector. Green Light International Trust's efforts to address the healthcare needs of communities through education and training are commendable, and the organization's dedication to nurturing a culture of care and compassion is inspiring.

Green Light International Trust is a non-profit capacity development organization founded in 2005 by Tawanda Makwiramiti with the aim of helping underprivileged members of society. The organization is known for its efforts in changing people's lives, especially those with disabilities. It has existed for the past 20 years, and on Saturday, it will showcase its efforts in assisting the underprivileged by empowering them with certificates after equipping them with



Some of the graduates



Some of the graduates

skills for community health promotion and sustainable social care support. The Organisation has sever-

al other branches in Africa making it one of the vibrant Non Governmental Organizations.

Diaspora

Navigating the Corrosive Landscape – Managing Toxic Individuals in the School Environment



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande
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The Pervasive Nature of Toxicity

The tapestry of human interaction, rich and complex as it is, inevitably contains threads that, when woven into the fabric of a community, can become frayed, tangled, and even corrosive. Toxic individuals, those who consistently sow negativity, conflict, and undermine progress, are not confined to the pages of self-help books or the narratives of dramatic television shows; they are a pervasive reality in every sphere of life. From the intimate confines of homes and families to the sprawling networks of churches, businesses, and indeed, educational institutions, their presence can subtly or overtly erode morale, productivity, and the very foundation of positive relationships.

Within the unique ecosystem of a school, the impact of such individuals is particularly acute. A school is not merely a place of academic instruction; it is a crucible where young minds are shaped, values are instilled, and futures are forged. It is a community built on collaboration, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to student well-being and success. When toxicity infiltrates this environment, it poses a direct threat to the delicate balance required for effective teaching, optimal learning, and the cultivation of a supportive atmosphere. The ripple effect extends from faculty meetings and staff rooms to classrooms and ultimately, to the students themselves.

In this challenging landscape, the school principal stands as the linchpin, the primary guardian of the school's culture and the well-being of its inhabitants. Their role extends far beyond administrative tasks; it encompasses fostering a harmonious and productive learning and working environment, a task made infinitely more complex by the presence of toxic personalities. A principal's ability to identify, understand, and effectively manage these individuals is not merely a matter of good leadership; it is a critical determinant of the school's overall success and its capacity to fulfill its educational mission.

This article will delve deeply into the common behaviors of toxic individuals within a school setting, analyzing their multifaceted and often insidious detrimental impact on staff, students, and the broader school community. Crucially, it will then provide a comprehensive and ac-

tionable set of strategies for school principals to effectively identify, manage, and mitigate the influence of these corrosive forces, ultimately aiming to cultivate a resilient, positive, and thriving educational environment.

Defining Toxicity in the School Context: More Than Just "Difficult"

Before embarking on the strategies for managing toxic individuals, it is essential to clearly define what constitutes "toxic" behavior within a school context, distinguishing it from merely "difficult" personalities or occasional interpersonal friction. Everyone has challenging days, moments of frustration, or unique quirks that might rub others the wrong way. These are normal aspects of human interaction and can often be resolved through open communication and understanding. Toxicity, however, transcends these transient or minor inconveniences. Toxic behavior is characterized by a consistent pattern of actions, attitudes, and communication styles that demonstrably undermine, demoralize, disrespect, or disrupt the healthy functioning of an organization and the well-being of its members. It is not about a single incident but a pervasive and often deliberate approach that chips away at trust, collaboration, and morale. The intent behind the behavior might vary – sometimes it's conscious malice, other times it's rooted in insecurity, unresolved personal issues, or a profound lack of self-awareness – but the impact is consistently negative and destructive.

In a school, where the stakes are particularly high due to the impact on young, developing minds, toxic individuals can manifest in various archetypes. Understanding these categories can help a principal recognize the patterns at play:

The Chronic Complainer/Victim: This individual finds fault in every-

thing and everyone, perpetually seeing themselves as wronged or unfairly treated. They resist solutions and revel in negativity, draining the energy of those around them. Their complaints are rarely constructive; they are often designed to elicit sympathy or deflect responsibility.

The Saboteur: This person actively (or passively-aggressively) works against initiatives, colleagues, or leadership. They might spread rumors, withhold crucial information, or intentionally perform poorly to undermine a project or person. Their motivation often stems from a desire for control, resentment, or a distorted sense of power.

The Gossipmonger/Divider: These individuals thrive on spreading rumors, speculating about others' personal lives, and creating wedges between colleagues. Their aim is often to feel important by possessing "inside information" or to create drama that distracts from their own shortcomings. They erode trust and foster an environment of suspicion.

The Credit-Taker/Blamer: This person is quick to claim success as their own but equally quick to deflect blame onto others when things go wrong. They lack accountability and often throw colleagues under the bus to protect their own image. This behavior undermines teamwork and fosters resentment.

The Passive-Aggressive Procrastinator: Rather than openly refusing a task or expressing dissent, this individual will agree but then subtly sabotage by delaying, missing deadlines, or performing tasks incorrectly. Their resistance is indirect and often difficult to pinpoint, leading to frustration and delays for others.

The Bully/Intimidator: This is perhaps the most overt form of toxicity. These individuals use aggression, threats, sarcasm, or condescension

to assert dominance, control others, or belittle those they perceive as weaker. Their behavior creates a fearful and unsafe environment.

The Divisive Figure: This person actively seeks to create factions within the staff, turning colleagues against each other. They might play favorites, pit departments against each other, or subtly encourage conflict to maintain their own perceived influence.

Recognizing these patterns is the first crucial step for a principal. It shifts the focus from isolated incidents to understanding the underlying behavioral tendencies that, left unaddressed, can metastasize into a pervasive problem, poisoning the entire school environment.

The Modus Operandi of Toxic Individuals in a School

Understanding the archetypes is one thing; observing their specific behavioral manifestations within the dynamic environment of a school is another. Toxic individuals employ a range of tactics that, while varied in their delivery, consistently aim to undermine, disrupt, and demoralize. Here, we delve into the common "plays" of toxic individuals, illustrating how their behaviors specifically impact a school's operations and its people.

Undermining Authority and Leadership:

A principal's leadership is the bedrock of a stable school. Toxic individuals frequently target this foundation.

Public Questioning of Decisions: While healthy debate is constructive, toxic individuals will often challenge decisions in open forums (staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences) in a way that is designed to embarrass, discredit, or simply create dissent, rather than to genuinely

understand or improve. They might ask rhetorical questions loaded with criticism or make sarcastic remarks.

Circulating Rumors or Misinformation about Leadership: This is a classic tactic for eroding trust. Toxic individuals might spread unsubstantiated rumors about a principal's motives, competence, or personal life, often behind their back, to undermine their credibility within the staff and parent community.

Encouraging Insubordination among Staff or Students: They might subtly (or not-so-subtly) encourage colleagues to ignore directives, bypass established procedures, or resist new initiatives. In extreme cases, they might even incite student unrest or disobedience by feeding them biased information about school policies.

Ignoring Established Procedures and Policies: This demonstrates a lack of respect for authority and order. They might consistently fail to submit required paperwork on time, disregard safety protocols, or operate outside of curriculum guidelines, forcing others to pick up their slack or deal with the consequences of their non-compliance.

Playing "Devil's Advocate" to Derail Progress: While critical thinking is valuable, the toxic "devil's advocate" uses this guise to inject negativity, skepticism, and obstacles into every discussion. Their aim isn't to improve a plan but to stall it, raise unnecessary doubts, or simply assert their intellectual superiority by finding flaws in everything.

Exaggerating Problems or Creating Crises: They have a knack for blowing minor issues out of proportion or even fabricating problems to

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draw attention to themselves, deflect from their own responsibilities, or create a sense of panic that justifies their own perceived importance or negativity.

Disrupting Collaboration and Teamwork:

Schools thrive on collaboration – between teachers, departments, and support staff. Toxic individuals are skilled at fracturing this essential element.

Refusing to Share Information or Resources: They hoard information that could benefit colleagues or intentionally fail to communicate crucial updates, leading to inefficiencies, missed deadlines, and a sense of isolation among others. This often stems from a desire for control or to make themselves indispensable.

Creating Cliques and Fostering Exclusion: They might form exclusive groups, actively excluding certain colleagues, and encouraging others to do the same. This creates an “us vs. them” mentality, leading to a fragmented and distrustful staff environment.

Passive-Aggressive Resistance to Group Tasks: When assigned to a team project, they might agree verbally but then fail to contribute, offer minimal effort, or intentionally misinterpret instructions, forcing others to compensate for their lack of participation.

Blaming Others for Failures While Taking Credit for Successes: This behavior is profoundly demoralizing. They will swiftly point fingers when something goes wrong but are first in line to claim sole responsibility for any positive outcome, eroding trust and discouraging shared effort.

Withholding Effort in Group Projects: They might contribute the bare minimum, leaving the heavy lifting to others, yet still expect to share equally in any credit or reward. This breeds resentment and a sense of unfairness.

Monopolizing Discussions or Shutting Down Others’ Ideas: In meetings, they might dominate the conversation, interrupt others, or dismiss contributions with condescending remarks or eye-rolls, effectively stifling creativity and open dialogue.

Eroding Morale and Trust:

Perhaps the most insidious impact of toxic individuals is the slow, steady erosion of the positive emotional climate within a school.

Constant Complaining and Negativity: This is a hallmark. Every situation, every new initiative, every person is a target for their endless criticism and pessimism. They act as emotional vampires, draining the energy and optimism from those around them.

Spreading Gossip and Rumors about Colleagues, Students, or Parents: This is a potent weapon for destroying trust and sowing discord. They revel in sharing unverified information, often with a malicious intent, damaging reputations and creating an environment of suspicion and fear.

Criticizing Others Behind Their Back: They rarely confront issues directly but prefer to engage in backbiting and disparaging remarks when the target is not present, contributing to a climate of distrust and fear of judgment.

Playing the Victim to Gain Sympathy or Avoid Responsibility: Every setback or challenge is presented as an unfair imposition on them. They constantly highlight their “suffering” to manipulate others into doing their work or excusing their poor performance.

Gaslighting – Making Others Doubt Their Perceptions: This is a particularly damaging form of manipulation where the toxic person denies events, distorts facts, or dismisses another’s feelings, making the target question their own memory, sanity, or judgment.

Emotional Manipulation and Guilt-Tripping: They might use tears, feigned hurt, or appeals to loyalty to get others to comply with their wishes, even if it means compromising ethical standards or personal boundaries.

Impacting Student Learning and Well-being:

Crucially, toxicity among staff doesn’t remain isolated; it inevitably trickles down to affect the very students a school is designed to serve.

Creating a Negative Classroom Atmosphere: A teacher’s negativity can permeate the classroom, leading to a tense, uninspiring, or even hostile learning environment where students feel less safe to ask questions, make mistakes, or engage freely.

Favoritism or Unfair Treatment of Students: Toxic individuals might show clear bias towards certain students while overtly or subtly disadvantaging others, leading to feelings of injustice, resentment, and impacting student self-esteem and academic performance.

Demeaning or Belittling Students or Their Efforts: Publicly criticizing



students, making sarcastic remarks, or constantly highlighting their deficiencies without acknowledging effort can crush a student’s spirit and disengage them from learning.

Focusing Solely on Deficiencies Rather Than Strengths: Instead of adopting a growth mindset, they might only see what students cannot do, failing to celebrate progress or identify individual talents, which can be particularly damaging to students’ self-efficacy.

Undermining Parental Trust in the School: Through negative comments about the school, other teachers, or administration, they can erode the trust parents place in the institution, making constructive partnerships much harder to achieve.

Failing to Address Student Needs Adequately Due to Personal Issues: When a staff member is consumed by their own negativity or personal grievances, their focus can shift away from the primary responsibility of meeting student academic, emotional, and social needs.

Resisting Change and Progress:

Schools, like all organizations, must adapt and evolve. Toxic individuals are often formidable obstacles to necessary change.

“We’ve Always Done It This Way” Mentality: This phrase becomes their mantra. They resist any deviation from established routines, regardless of the potential benefits, often out of fear of the unknown, a lack of flexibility, or simply a desire to exert control by opposing new ideas.

Actively Sabotaging New Initiatives: They might refuse to participate, spread negative propaganda about the new program, intentionally misapply new procedures, or encourage

others to resist, ensuring the initiative’s failure.

Spreading Fear or Doubt About Proposed Changes: They will exaggerate potential risks, invent negative consequences, or focus exclusively on the challenges of implementation, aiming to create anxiety and prevent buy-in from colleagues.

Refusing to Adapt to New Technologies or Methodologies: Even when professional development and resources are provided, they might stubbornly cling to outdated methods, citing various excuses, thereby slowing down progress and creating inconsistencies within the school’s educational approach.

The collective weight of these behaviors creates a palpable drag on the school’s energy and effectiveness. For a principal, recognizing these patterns, not just as isolated incidents but as systemic manifestations of toxicity, is paramount to developing effective counter-strategies. The next section will delve into the profound impact these behaviors have on the entire school ecosystem.

The Profound Impact of Toxicity on the School Ecosystem

The presence of toxic individuals is never benign. Like a slow-acting poison, their behaviors insidiously seep into the very fabric of the school, leaving a trail of dysfunction, demoralization, and diminished performance. The ripple effect extends far beyond the immediate target of their actions, contaminating every aspect of the educational environment. Understanding this pervasive impact is crucial for a principal to grasp the urgency and necessity of addressing toxicity head-on.

On Staff Morale and Well-being:

This is often the most immediate

and visible casualty of toxicity.

Increased Stress, Anxiety, and Burnout: Constantly walking on eggshells, dealing with negativity, or being the target of criticism takes a significant psychological toll. Staff members experience heightened stress levels, leading to anxiety, difficulty sleeping, and a pervasive sense of dread about coming to work. This directly contributes to burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion.

Reduced Job Satisfaction and Engagement: When the workplace becomes a source of tension rather than fulfillment, job satisfaction plummets. Staff become disengaged, losing their passion for teaching and their commitment to the school’s mission. They might perform the bare minimum, avoid extra responsibilities, or simply withdraw.

Higher Absenteeism and Staff Turnover: Stress and low morale directly correlate with increased sick days and ultimately, a higher rate of staff leaving the school. Talented and committed educators, unable to endure the toxic environment, will seek opportunities elsewhere, leading to a brain drain and the costly need for constant recruitment and training.

Deterioration of Collegial Relationships: Trust is shattered. Colleagues become wary of each other, afraid to share ideas, or offer help, for fear of being criticized, undermined, or gossiped about. The once supportive bonds among staff fray, leading to isolation and a fragmented community.

Creation of a Fearful or Resentful Atmosphere: When toxic individ-

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uals are allowed to operate unchecked, a climate of fear can develop. Staff may be afraid to speak up, express concerns, or challenge problematic behaviors, lest they become the next target. This also breeds resentment towards the toxic individual and, often, towards leadership for not addressing the issue.

On School Culture and Climate:

The overall character and atmosphere of the school are profoundly shaped by the presence of toxicity.

Breakdown of Trust and Open Communication: Gossip, backbiting, and blame-shifting demolish trust. Staff become hesitant to share ideas, offer feedback, or engage in honest dialogue, fearing that their words will be twisted or used against them. Communication becomes guarded, indirect, and inefficient.

Shift from a Positive, Collaborative Culture to One of Blame and Suspicion: A healthy school culture is characterized by shared goals, mutual support, and a collective sense of responsibility. Toxicity replaces this with finger-pointing, individualistic silos, and an atmosphere where self-preservation takes precedence over collaboration.

Diminished Sense of Community and Shared Purpose: The unifying vision of educating students takes a backseat to internal conflicts and interpersonal drama. Staff lose sight of their collective purpose, and the sense of belonging that is crucial for a thriving community erodes.

Negative Public Perception of the School: The internal turmoil inevitably spills over. Parents and the wider community pick up on the negative energy, the high turnover, and the lack of cohesion, leading to a damaged reputation and difficulty attracting new students and quality staff.

On Student Learning Outcomes:

Ultimately, the most tragic consequence of unchecked toxicity is its impact on the very students the school is meant to serve.

Distraction from Core Educational Goals: When principals and staff are consumed by managing conflict and navigating interpersonal drama, their focus is diverted from curriculum development, instructional improvement, and student support. The primary mission becomes secondary to damage control.

Impact on Student Psychological Safety and Emotional Well-being: Students are highly attuned to the atmosphere around them. A tense, negative, or conflict-ridden school environment can create anxiety, insecurity, and fear among students,

making it harder for them to focus on learning. They might witness staff conflict, experience unfairness, or feel the weight of unresolved tension.

Reduced Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning: Demoralized teachers are less effective teachers. Their energy, creativity, and enthusiasm are sapped, directly impacting the quality of their instruction. Student engagement decreases, and academic performance can suffer as a result.

Potential for Students to Model Negative Behaviors: Children learn by example. When they observe toxic behaviors like gossiping, blaming, or disrespect among adults, they may internalize these as acceptable ways to interact, perpetuating a cycle of negativity within their own peer groups.

On Principal's Effectiveness and Leadership:

The principal, while the agent of change, is also deeply affected by the presence of toxic individuals.

Significant Time and Energy Diverted to Managing Conflict: A disproportionate amount of a principal's time is spent mediating disputes, addressing complaints, documenting incidents, and dealing with disciplinary issues. This takes away from strategic planning, instructional leadership, and positive community engagement.

Erosion of Principal's Own Morale and Energy: Constantly battling negativity and resistance is emotionally exhausting. Principals can experience their own forms of burnout, leading to cynicism, frustration, and a diminished sense of professional satisfaction.

Challenges in Implementing Strategic Goals: Toxic individuals act as roadblocks to progress. Their resistance to change, insubordination, and undermining tactics can effectively derail new initiatives, making it incredibly difficult for a principal to implement their vision for the school.

Risk of Becoming Isolated or Overwhelmed: Dealing with toxicity can be a lonely battle. Principals might feel isolated from their staff, unable to fully confide in them, and burdened by the weight of the negative dynamics. This can lead to feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.

In essence, toxicity metastasizes throughout the entire school organism. What might seem like isolated incidents or "personality clashes" are, in reality, systemic threats to the school's health, its mission, and its ability to provide a nurturing and effective educational experience. The principal, therefore, has a moral and professional imperative to address these issues decisively and strategically. The following section will outline a comprehensive playbook for doing just that.

A Principal's Playbook: Strategies



for Dealing with Toxic Individuals

Addressing toxicity requires a multi-faceted approach, combining proactive measures to build a resilient culture with reactive strategies for intervening when problematic behaviors emerge. A principal must be both a visionary leader and a skilled conflict manager, willing to make difficult decisions for the greater good of the school community. This playbook outlines a progressive series of actions, from prevention to decisive intervention.

Proactive Measures: Building a Resilient School Culture

The most effective way to combat toxicity is to create an environment where it struggles to take root and flourish. This requires intentional cultivation of a strong, positive, and accountable school culture.

Clear Expectations and Values: The school's mission, vision, and core values (e.g., respect, integrity, collaboration, accountability, student-centeredness) must be explicitly articulated, regularly reinforced, and woven into every aspect of school life. These values serve as the behavioral baseline, making it clear what is expected and what is unacceptable. Display them prominently, refer to them in meetings, and integrate them into staff evaluations.

Robust Hiring Practices: Prevention starts at the hiring stage. Beyond assessing qualifications and experience, incorporate behavioral interviewing techniques to probe for red flags related to teamwork, conflict resolution, accountability, and adaptability. Ask for examples of how candidates handled disagreements, dealt with challenging colleagues, or responded to criticism. Contact references thoroughly, specifically asking about interpersonal skills and contributions to team dynamics.

Strong Onboarding and Mentorship: Integrate new staff into the positive culture from day one. Provide comprehensive onboarding

that not only covers procedures but also introduces them to the school's values and expectations for professional conduct. Pair new hires with positive, experienced mentors who can model desired behaviors and provide support.

Promoting Open Communication and Feedback Channels: Create a culture where staff feel safe to express concerns, provide feedback, and raise issues without fear of retaliation. Implement regular one-on-one meetings, anonymous suggestion boxes (if appropriate for certain types of feedback), and structured forums for discussion. This allows for early detection of issues before they fester.

Investing in Professional Development: Offer professional development opportunities focused on crucial "soft skills" that mitigate toxicity. This includes training in effective communication, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, constructive feedback delivery, and building positive team dynamics. These skills empower staff to navigate challenges and prevent minor issues from escalating.

Celebrating Successes and Positive Behaviors: Actively acknowledge and celebrate instances of positive collaboration, problem-solving, and adherence to school values. Publicly recognizing staff who embody the desired culture reinforces those behaviors and provides positive role models, counteracting the negativity of toxic individuals.

Leading by Example: A principal's own behavior is the most powerful tool for shaping culture. Model the desired values: maintain a positive and professional attitude, demonstrate empathy, handle conflict constructively, take accountability, and show respect for all staff members, even those who are challenging. Consistency is key.

Early Intervention: Addressing Emerging Toxicity

Despite proactive measures, toxic

behaviors may still emerge. Early, swift, and direct intervention is critical to prevent these behaviors from becoming entrenched or spreading.

Observation and Thorough Documentation: Begin by meticulously observing and documenting concerning behaviors. Note specific incidents, including dates, times, what was said or done, who was involved, and the observed impact on others or the school environment. Stick to factual descriptions rather than interpretations or assumptions. This objective record is crucial if formal action becomes necessary.

Private, Direct Communication (The Crucial Conversation): As soon as a pattern is observed, schedule a private meeting with the individual. This conversation should be direct, focusing on the behavior and its impact, rather than labeling the person as "toxic."

Use "I" statements: "I've observed X behavior..." or "I'm concerned about the impact of Y action..."

Be specific: Refer to documented incidents, avoiding vague accusations.

Focus on the impact: Explain how their behavior affects colleagues, students, morale, or school operations. "When you make sarcastic comments during staff meetings, it creates a hesitant atmosphere where others are less willing to share ideas."

State expectations clearly: Reiterate the school's values and behavioral expectations.

Listen actively: Allow them to respond. They might have a legitimate grievance or be unaware of the impact of their actions. Be prepared to hear their side, but don't allow them to deflect or blame others.

Outline consequences: Clearly state what will happen if the behavior continues (e.g., further disciplinary

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action, formal performance plan).

Setting Clear Boundaries: During these conversations, establish firm boundaries for acceptable behavior. Make it unequivocally clear what will no longer be tolerated and what the immediate consequences of crossing those boundaries will be. For example, “Gossiping about colleagues will not be tolerated in this school, and any further instances will result in disciplinary action.”

Offering Support and Resources: Sometimes, toxic behavior stems from underlying personal stress, burnout, or a lack of coping mechanisms. Inquire if there are personal challenges (without prying) and, if appropriate, suggest resources like employee assistance programs (EAPs), counseling, or professional development that could help them manage stress or develop better interpersonal skills. This shows you are supportive while still holding them accountable.

Mediation (if appropriate and agreed upon): For interpersonal conflicts between two staff members, and if both parties are willing, mediation can be a valuable tool. A neutral third party (which could be the principal if they can remain impartial, or an external mediator) facilitates a constructive dialogue to find common ground and resolution. This is less effective for genuinely toxic individuals who thrive on conflict.

Escalated Interventions: When Early Steps Are Insufficient

If initial interventions do not result in sustained behavioral change, or if the severity of the behavior warrants it, more formal and escalated measures become necessary. This requires adherence to school district policies and, often, legal guidance.

Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs): For staff whose toxic behavior impacts their professional duties or creates a hostile work environment, a formal Performance Improvement Plan may be required. This document outlines specific, measurable behavioral changes required, a timeline for improvement, the support the school will provide, and the consequences if the plan is not met. It provides a structured framework for accountability.

Involving HR/Legal Counsel: This is a crucial step when behavior moves beyond “difficult” into areas like harassment, discrimination, insubordination, or gross misconduct. HR (Human Resources) or legal counsel can advise on proper procedures, legal implications, and ensure that all actions taken are compliant with labor laws and district policies. They are essential partners in navigating

complex disciplinary processes.

Progressive Discipline: Most school districts have a progressive discipline policy. This typically involves a series of escalating steps: verbal warnings (documented), written warnings, suspension (with or without pay), and, as a last resort, termination. It is critical to follow these steps meticulously, with thorough documentation at each stage, to ensure fairness and legal defensibility.

Reassignment (if feasible and appropriate): In some cases, if a toxic individual’s impact is localized to a specific team or department, and if a suitable alternative role exists, reassignment might be a viable option to mitigate their negative influence while retaining their contributions in another area. This must be handled carefully to avoid simply shifting the problem elsewhere.

Protecting Others: While dealing with the toxic individual, it is imperative to protect the rest of the staff and students. This might involve:

- Adjusting team assignments or reporting structures to minimize contact.
- Providing additional support or training to staff members who are targets of the toxicity.
- Creating safe spaces for staff to debrief and process their experiences.
- Clearly communicating to the wider staff that the issues are being addressed, without violating confidentiality.

Self-Preservation for the Principal:

Managing toxic individuals is emotionally draining and can take a significant toll on a principal’s well-being. Self-care is not a luxury; it is a necessity for sustained effectiveness.

Building a Support Network: Connect with other principals, district mentors, or professional organizations. Share experiences, seek advice, and gain perspective. Having a confidential sounding board is invaluable for processing challenging situations.

Practicing Self-Care Rigorously: Prioritize activities that replenish your energy: regular exercise, sufficient sleep, healthy eating, mindfulness or meditation, and engaging in hobbies outside of work. Recognize the signs of your own burnout and proactively address them.

Maintaining Objectivity and Detachment: It’s easy to take toxic behavior personally, but it rarely is. Remind yourself that the behavior often stems from the individual’s own issues. Cultivate a degree of emotional detachment to avoid becoming embroiled in their negativity. Focus on the behavior, not the person.

Focusing on the Mission: When overwhelmed, re-center on the core purpose of the school: student learning and well-being. This broader perspective can provide motivation



and help you prioritize actions that serve the greater good, even when difficult.

Seeking Professional Guidance: If the emotional toll becomes too great, do not hesitate to seek support from a therapist, counselor, or executive coach. They can provide strategies for managing stress, building resilience, and navigating complex interpersonal dynamics.

Case Studies/Scenarios (Brief Examples to Illustrate Points)

To solidify these strategies, consider brief hypothetical scenarios:

Scenario 1: The “Gossip Guru” Teacher. Ms. X, a long-serving teacher, frequently spreads rumors about colleagues and administrative decisions in the staff room, creating an atmosphere of mistrust.

Principal’s Action: The principal maintains a log of specific instances (e.g., date, topic of gossip, who heard it). In a private meeting, the principal addresses Ms. X, stating, “Ms. X, I’ve observed a pattern of comments being made about colleagues that are speculative and seem to be creating tension. For example, on [date], you mentioned [specific gossip]. This type of communication undermines the trust we need in our school. Our policy is to address concerns directly and professionally. I expect you to refrain from discussing colleagues in this manner. Continued behavior of this nature will lead to formal disciplinary action.” The principal also ensures positive staff members are visibly praised for direct communication.

Scenario 2: The “Chronic Complainer” in Faculty Meetings. Mr. Y consistently derails faculty meetings with negative comments, complaints about new initiatives, and general pessimism, stifling constructive discussion.

Principal’s Action: Before the

next meeting, the principal sets clear meeting norms emphasizing constructive feedback and solutions-oriented discussion. During the meeting, if Mr. Y begins a negative monologue, the principal intervenes politely but firmly: “Mr. Y, I understand your concern, but for the sake of time and productivity, let’s focus on solutions. Do you have a suggestion for how we can address this, or should we table this for a private discussion?” If he persists, “Mr. Y, we need to move on. If you wish to discuss this further, my door is open after the meeting.” The principal documents these interactions.

Scenario 3: The “Undermining Teacher” in the Staff Room. Ms. Z publicly questions the principal’s decisions to other teachers, expresses cynicism about new policies, and encourages subtle resistance.

Principal’s Action: The principal schedules a direct meeting with Ms. Z. “Ms. Z, I’ve received feedback that you’ve been expressing significant concerns about school policies and my decisions to your colleagues in the staff room. For instance, on [date], you told [colleague] that [specific negative comment about policy]. While I welcome constructive feedback, undermining leadership and policies in public settings is unacceptable. If you have concerns, I expect you to bring them to me directly, following our established communication channels. This behavior impacts staff cohesion and my ability to lead effectively.” The principal reiterates the professional expectation of support for school initiatives once decisions are made, even if disagreements existed during the deliberation phase. If the behavior continues, it moves to formal written warnings and a PIP, potentially involving HR.

Cultivating a Thriving Educational Environment

The presence of toxic individuals in any organization is a formida-

ble challenge, but in the context of a school, their corrosive influence poses a direct threat to the very purpose of education. For a school principal, confronting and managing these individuals is not merely a managerial task; it is a profound act of stewardship – a commitment to safeguarding the emotional well-being of staff and students, preserving the integrity of the school’s mission, and cultivating a climate where learning and growth can truly flourish.

The strategies outlined in this playbook, from proactive culture-building to decisive intervention, underscore that there is no single magic bullet for dealing with toxicity. Instead, it demands vigilance, courage, consistency, and a deep understanding of human behavior. It requires a principal to be an astute observer, a compassionate communicator, and, when necessary, a firm disciplinarian, always operating with fairness, transparency, and a steadfast commitment to the school’s values.

While the journey of addressing toxicity can be emotionally draining and professionally challenging, the long-term benefits are immeasurable. A school free from pervasive negativity is one where staff feel valued, supported, and energized; where collaboration replaces conflict; where trust forms the bedrock of relationships; and most importantly, where students thrive in a psychologically safe and academically stimulating environment.

Ultimately, the principal’s role in navigating this corrosive landscape is about more than just managing difficult people; it is about cultivating a thriving educational environment – a beacon of learning and positivity that stands resilient against the shadows of negativity, ensuring that every member of the school community can reach their fullest potential. This requires unwavering dedication, strategic foresight, and the courage to make the difficult decisions that, in the end, serve the highest good of the school and its future.

Social media revamp by 92-year-old president struggles to woo young Cameroonians

By: BBC
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Worth Noting:

- By the time 92-year-old Paul Biya officially confirmed he would seek re-election as Cameroon's president last week, he had already been ramping up his online presence for several months.
- Daily posts on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) mark a striking departure from his previous, occasional presence.
- But Biya's attempts to win over young people ahead of October's election may be falling flat, analysts tell the BBC.
- "Cameroon has over 5.4 million social media users, but 95% of young people rely on WhatsApp – a platform where presidential communication is nearly non-existent," says Rostant Tane, the director of Media Intelligence Sarl and author of the Cameroon 2024 Multimedia Audience Study.
- "There's no regional segmentation, no interactivity, and very little effort to speak the digital language of young people," he adds.



Even before the world's oldest president confirmed that he would run for an eighth term in power, his social media accounts left experts in no doubt.

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"There's no regional segmentation, no interactivity, and very little effort to speak the digital language of young people," he adds.

Another stumbling block is

authenticity.

"Many know that it is not Paul Biya himself who is writing – which creates distance and limits trust," says Hervé Tiwa, a lecturer in communication sciences.

"Their communication remains very top-down without any real interaction – comments ignored or deleted, a lack of personalised responses... This gives the impression of a strategy that is more cosmetic than participatory."

Why does this matter?

Cameroon's population is overwhelmingly young. Over 60% of the population is under 25, with more than half the electorate being under the age of 30, meaning they could potentially decide the outcome of the election.

"Political communication must serve democracy and transparency, and not just be used as a marketing tool," says 27-year-old communications specialist Ulrich Donfack.

Young people want to see concrete action on issues that affect them, agrees Falone Ngu, who is also 27.

"Cameroon's youth are not just looking for flashy graph-

ics or slogans on the media! They want opportunities, change and hope," says the social enterprise founder, who did reserve some praise for the president's social media team for realising that "leadership and digitalisation go hand in hand".

Unemployment is high in Cameroon, with even the most qualified young people in possession of multiple university degrees struggling to find work. Corruption and security are also key concerns.

But instead of focusing on those issues, many posts on Biya's social media accounts emphasise his track record during 43 years in power – a time before much of the population was even born.

According to communication strategist Aristide Mabatto, Biya's team is now publishing excerpts in French and English from more than 300 speeches the president has delivered over the decades.

One recent, pointed example drew on a speech from 2000, chiding people who lecture others but fail to preach by example. That was posted just two days after one of Biya's longest-standing allies criticised his rule

and abandoned him.

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This somewhat staid approach does not appear to have ignited much enthusiasm, but is still an improvement on what went before.

"His communication used to be limited to official decrees and state addresses. The shift to frequent digital messaging shows a deliberate effort to reclaim the narrative and appear more present," argues Tiwa.

Biya's absence from the public for more than six weeks last year had led to speculation about his wellbeing and unfounded rumours that he had died.

Supporters have praised these latest efforts, with state media like Cameroon Tribune highlighting Biya's digital outreach as a sign of vitality and leadership.

But scepticism and sarcasm are in greater evidence online. Comments below recent posts on Paul Biya's X and Facebook accounts in-

clude:

"It looks like he's discovering the internet in 2025, but it's primarily an electoral market test," says a user called Cynthia.

"Finally he's talking to young people!", comments Jean-Pierre.

"Cameroonians want roads, not hashtags," writes a user called Mireille.

"Personally, I'm not at all convinced," 32-year-old entrepreneur Che Arnold tells the BBC of the Biya camp's strategy to appeal to young voters.

"It needs to go beyond tweets, Facebook messages and a simple online presence to promote political reforms but also solve real social problems."

Biya will have to wait until the election in October to see if these efforts will translate into more young people voting for him.