

“It was looked at as if I was trying to debate, again, the President, which is not in my interest at all,” Pope Leo told reporters

Church & Politics

In a lengthy post that reverberated around the world, the President declared he was “not a big fan” of the Pope, branding him “WEAK on crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy.” :



Pope Leo and Trump: How a Speech Written a Fortnight Early Ignited a Transatlantic Firestorm

By: Diaspora Times Team
International Desk

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT TO ANGOLA — Pope Leo had barely settled into his seat on the flight to Luanda when the questions came, as they always do at 35,000 feet, with a directness that ground-level protocol rarely permits. Had he been taking aim at Donald Trump? Was the speech in Cameroon a deliberate broadside against the most powerful man on earth? The Pope’s answer, delivered with the measured calm of a man who had clearly thought carefully about how



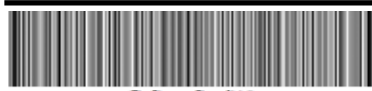
President Donald Trump and Pope Leo XIV

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Fixing a broken education system: Ten reforms we cannot afford to delay



The Diaspora Times Global

AMDA Unveils Its 13th Annual Caravan to Nyabwina Parish, Deepening a Legacy of Faith-Driven Transformation in Sheema District

Kampala, Uganda: More than a decade ago, a group of Catholics from the Mbarara Archdiocese living and working in Uganda’s capital had a simple but powerful idea: go back home, and give back meaningfully. That idea became the AMDA Caravan — and thirteen years later, it has

grown into one of Western Uganda’s most remarkable stories of faith meeting action. The Archdiocese of Mbarara Development Association (AMDA) has officially launched its 13th Annual Caravan at Hotel Africana in Kampala, with this year’s edition set for

Nyabwina Parish in Sheema District. What began in 2013 as a homecoming of professionals, compassion, and shared purpose has since evolved into a transformative, multi-day programme that brings skilled volunteers back to their ecclesial roots to deliver real, lasting change.

Who Is AMDA?

AMDA is a Ugandan membership

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Using Mosquitoes to Kill Mosquitoes Health



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SCAN TO REGISTER



“ALL BUSINESSES ONE PLATFORM”

Rongo University Students Are Redefining Entrepreneurship in Kenya's Heartland

By: Vivian Asenath
xxxxxxxxxxxx

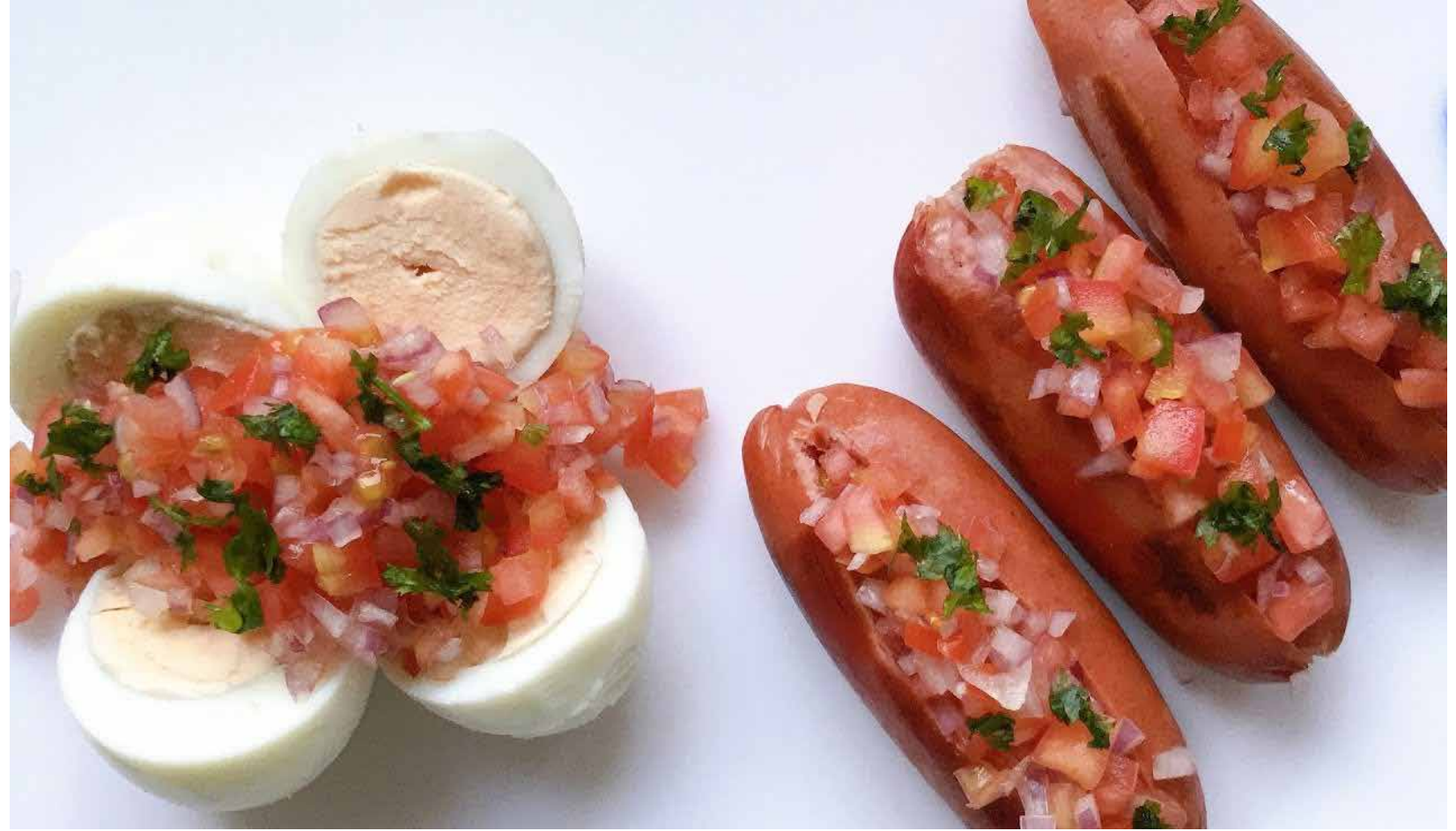
Rongo University sprawls amid the lush farmlands bordering Lake Victoria. On any given afternoon, the air hums not just with the chatter of students rushing between lectures, but with the sizzle of chapati on makeshift grills and the aroma of roasting smokies drifting across the campus grounds. It is here, in the shadow of lecture halls, that third-year student Jabez has turned necessity into a thriving campus hustle. Armed with a modest Higher Education Loans Board advance and borrowed funds from friends, Jabez began selling fast food — smokies, boiled eggs, chapati, and lollipops — to fellow students navigating tight budgets and long class days. What started as a survival tactic during a lecturers' strike has grown into a reliable small business that keeps him financially afloat while he pursues his degree. Nearby, fellow student Dinah sells eggs, frying them into crispy golden snacks and packaging them for quick sales between tutorials.

These are not mere side gigs. They are the frontline of a quiet revolution unfolding at Rongo University, where young Kenyans are proving that entrepreneurship does not wait for graduation caps or formal job offers.

An Unlikely Incubator

Rongo University — a public institution with roots in technical training that is steadily expanding its footprint across South-Western Kenya — has become an unexpected home for this entrepreneurial shift. Through its Regional Sustainability, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, the university brings together students, researchers, and local communities to tackle real-world problems, from climate-smart agriculture to waste-to-wealth ventures. The Hub links actor networks across sectors, offering practical pathways for turning academic ideas into marketable solutions.

Complementing this is the Ajira Digital Club, which equips students with hands-on training in freelancing, digital marketing, web development, and content creation —



Smokies and boiled eggs

empowering them to earn income online without ever leaving campus. The university's active participation in national innovation events has further deepened its connections with investors and industry leaders, underscoring its commitment to research-driven entrepreneurship. Upcoming initiatives such as the Career and Innovation Fair and Expo 2026 will invite students to pitch original ideas, with winners gaining recognition and tangible support to scale their ventures.

In a region where agriculture and fisheries dominate the local economy, these programmes are anything but abstract. They are deliberately tailored to the lived realities of students who often come from farming families contending with erratic rains and unpredictable markets.

More Than a Hustle

The rise of student entrepreneurship at Rongo carries profound significance — both for the individuals involved and for Kenya as a whole. On a personal level, it forges essential life skills that no lecture alone can impart: resilience in the face of failure, financial literacy born from

managing slim profit margins, creative problem-solving when suppliers run late, and leadership when coordinating peer networks or running marketing campaigns via WhatsApp groups.

For Dinah and Jabez, the daily hustle is a masterclass in time management — balancing midday sales with evening revision sessions — while steadily building their confidence and sense of agency in a job market that can often feel hopelessly out of reach.

Nationally, the stakes are even higher. Kenya's youth, aged 15 to 34, make up roughly 35 percent of the population, yet unemployment rates in this demographic can exceed 60 percent in some areas, with over a million young people entering the workforce each year. In rural counties like Migori, formal employment opportunities are scarce and the informal sector reigns supreme.

Student-led ventures like those at Rongo create immediate employment — not just for their founders, but for suppliers, packers, and fellow hustlers — while injecting fresh capital back into local economies. They drive innovation in critical sectors:

sustainable packaging from agricultural waste, digital services through the Ajira Club, and value-added fish products from Lake Victoria's abundant waters. In doing so, these young entrepreneurs contribute meaningfully to broader national goals around food security, environmental sustainability, and poverty reduction.

The Road Ahead

The path, however, is far from easy. Students must juggle demanding academic schedules alongside business pressures, often sacrificing sleep and social time in equal measure. Access to startup capital remains a significant hurdle — many, like Jabez, bootstrap with loans or family support while also navigating intellectual property considerations, competition from established traders, and the emotional toll of the inevitable setback.

The university's incubators and clubs help bridge some of these gaps, but scaling beyond campus requires broader policy support, robust mentorship networks, and more accessible microfinance options. And yet, the payoff is transformative. Grad-

uates emerge not as job seekers, but as job creators — armed with real-world experience that makes them genuinely compelling to employers and investors alike.

In an era defined by digital disruption and climate uncertainty, Rongo's model offers a compelling vision of what higher education can become: not a degree factory, but a launchpad for self-reliance.

In a revealing conversation, Dinah speaks candidly about her journey. "Life didn't give me much choice," she says quietly. "I had to learn to depend on myself." Hers is a story shared by many students on campus — young people who have discovered, through necessity, that entrepreneurship is not just a career path but a lifeline.

As their numbers grow, one thing becomes increasingly clear: the next generation of Kenyan entrepreneurs may not be found in Nairobi's gleaming business parks. They may be right here — flipping chapati between lectures on the shores of Lake Victoria.

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Culture

The heartbeat of the Kalenjin community

By: Dickson Cheruiyot Kirui
xxxxxxxxxxxxWorth
Noting:

• The Rift Valley's fertile soils have earned it a well-deserved title: the "bread basket of Kenya." Kalenjin farmers rise before dawn to tend fields of maize, wheat, and the world-famous Kenyan tea. In that early morning silhouette — a farmer at work as the sun climbs — you are witnessing a tradition of diligence stretching back hundreds of years.

• No Kalenjin person walks alone. Every individual belongs to a clan known as an Oret, each distinguished by its own animal symbol — a lion, an elephant, a buffalo. The clan functions as a living safety net. When a family faces hardship — a medical bill, a fire, an unexpected loss — the clan mobilises without hesitation. A beloved Kalenjin proverb captures it perfectly: "One finger cannot kill a louse." Together, they are stronger.



Travel to the green, rolling hills of Kenya's Great Rift Valley and you will meet the Kalenjin people. Most know them as the world's fastest runners, but there is far more to their story than gold medals. Their way of life rests on three enduring pillars: family, hard work, and a profound respect for the land beneath their feet.

For the Kalenjin, land is not just geography — it is identity. Generations ago, they moved with their cattle across vast plains. Today, most have settled to farm, but their love for livestock endures. In a Kalenjin home, a cow is not merely an animal; it is a measure of wealth and a source of life.

The Rift Valley's fertile soils have earned it a well-deserved title: the "bread basket of Kenya." Kalenjin farmers rise before dawn to tend fields of maize, wheat, and the world-famous Kenyan tea. In that early morning silhouette — a farmer at work as the sun climbs —

you are witnessing a tradition of diligence stretching back hundreds of years.

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the kind of hard-won perspective that only age brings.

The most defining moment in a young Kalenjin's life is the passage from childhood to adulthood — a period of deep learning and cultural immersion. Young men and women are guided through the values that will anchor them for life: courage, honesty, and responsibility toward family and community. Those who undergo this rite of passage together become age-mates, a bond that rivals brotherhood. Decades later, across different cities and careers, age-mates still show up for one another without question.

No visit to a Kalenjin home is complete without a cup of tea or a gourd of Mursik — the community's iconic sour milk. Made in a tall, handcrafted gourd lined with charcoal from a burning stick, Mursik has a distinctive smoky depth and a freshness that lingers. When a champion runner returns home after winning a race in

Paris or Boston, it is Mursik — not champagne — that greets them at the airport. It is the community's way of saying: we see you, we are proud, and you are home.

The world has long marvelled at why Kalenjin runners dominate distance running. Scientists point to altitude, physiology, and diet. But ask the Kalenjin themselves and they will point to something harder to measure: heart. From childhood, these young people walk kilometres to school, carry heavy loads on the farm, and absorb the lesson that difficulty is not a reason to stop. When a Kalenjin runner hits the final mile on tired legs, they hear their elders: "Do not give up. Finish what you started."

Marriage, too, is a community affair. When two people wish to wed, their families gather for a ceremony called a Koito — a warm, unhurried occasion filled with tea, food, storytelling, and laughter that stretches into

the night. A Kalenjin wedding is never just about two people falling in love. It is about two families choosing to become one.

Today, Kalenjin men and women fill boardrooms, hospitals, cockpits, and classrooms across Kenya and beyond. They wear suits, carry laptops, and navigate the demands of modern life with ease. But when the holidays arrive, the roads home fill with familiar faces heading back to the valley — back to their parents, their smoky milk, and the mountain air that smells like belonging.

The Kalenjin story is ultimately a simple one: go far, achieve greatly, but never forget where you began. It is a life of quiet strength, generous spirit, and a heart that never stops running — not just toward the finish line, but toward home.

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The impact of digital technologies on modern education systems



By: Shohista Eshboltayeva
xxxxxxxxxxxxx

In the 21st century, education systems are undergoing fundamental changes under the influence of technological innovations. The development of online learning platforms, artificial intelligence and cloud technologies is renewing traditional education models. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, digital education has become not an option, but a necessity. This article examines the impact of digital technologies on educational outcomes and analyzes existing problems.

One of the most important advantages of digital technologies is the expansion of access to education. Students can use educational resources regardless of their geographical location. Online courses, virtual classrooms and electronic li-

braries provide flexible learning opportunities.

In addition, technologies increase student engagement. Interactive programs, multimedia tools and teaching methods based on game elements make lessons more interesting. And teachers can monitor student development through data analysis and apply an individual approach.

A number of problems also arise along with the digital transformation. One of the most important challenges is the digital divide, where not all students have equal access to the internet and technology. Data security and privacy are also important issues. With the digitalization of education, the need to protect personal data is increasing.

In addition, a lack of digital literacy among students and teachers can hinder the effective use of technology. To fully benefit from digital education, governments and educational institutions need to develop comprehensive strategies. Investing in infrastructure, training teachers and implementing inclusive policies is essential. Public-private partnerships can also help accelerate the adoption of technology.

The digital transformation has the potential to make education sys-



tems more open, flexible and efficient. However, its negative aspects need to be addressed to create equal opportunities for all students. The focus in the future should be on reducing the digital divide and developing digital skills.

In recent years, digital technologies have transformed the education system, as well as many other sectors. Online platforms and virtual environments have revolutionized the way we learn.

One of the main advantages of digital technologies is the expansion of opportunities. Students in remote

areas have also gained access to quality educational resources.

In addition, technology makes lessons interesting and interactive. Teachers can monitor student progress.

But there are also problems. Not everyone has equal access to the Internet and devices. Also, excessive dependence on technology can negatively affect social skills.

Balance is needed to use technology effectively. Governments and educational institutions must focus on creating equal opportunities.

Digital technologies have signifi-

cantly changed education. But problems need to be addressed so that their benefits are equal for everyone.

Shohista Eshboltayeva was born on 18th May in 2008. Currently she lives in Oltinsoy district, Surkhandarya region of the Republic Uzbekistan and studies at 13-school. She is interested in English. Her articles were published in school's magazines and newspapers. She is getting ready to be a student at the moment.

Education

Causes of pedagogical conflicts in primary education and modern methods of their resolution



By: Noraliyeva Charos
xxxxxxxxxxxxx

Abstract

This article examines the causes of pedagogical conflicts among primary school students, which have become a pressing issue in modern education. It analyzes the factors leading to such conflicts, their consequences, and effective strategies for resolution. The study also describes step-by-step constructive approaches to managing problematic situations in the classroom. Special attention is given to the impact of pedagogical conflicts on the quality of education.

Keywords

pedagogical conflict, primary education, constructive approach, learning environment, problematic situation

Introduction

In the modern education system, it is not enough to provide knowledge alone; it is also essential to ed-

ucate and develop students within a healthy psychological and pedagogical environment. This process should begin from the early years of schooling. Schools are environments where interactions between teachers and students play a crucial role, and pedagogical conflicts have become a significant social issue in the educational system.

A pedagogical conflict can be defined as a clash of goals, interests, or attitudes among participants in the educational process (teachers, students, and parents). In primary education, such conflicts have unique characteristics, as children at this age have not yet fully developed emotional regulation skills. Conflicts often arise during the transition from an egocentric "I" perspective to a collective "we" mindset.

Main Causes of Pedagogical Conflicts in Primary Classes

Research indicates several primary causes of conflicts among young learners:

Firstly, conflicts arise from violations of game rules or disputes over personal belongings (toys, pens, erasers).

Secondly, approximately 30% of students initiate conflicts to attract the teacher's attention.

Thirdly, inappropriate disciplinary approaches by teachers may nega-

tively affect students' academic performance and emotional well-being. In addition, there exists a "conflict triangle" in primary education: teacher - student - parent. In many cases, more than 80% of parents tend to react defensively during conflicts, often placing blame on the teacher without fully understanding the situation.

The well-known educator Jan Amos Comenius emphasized that parents are "external supporters" of the school. If parents criticize teachers at home, it may create a "moral conflict" within the child.

Another major cause of pedagogical conflict is the teacher's inability to understand students properly. Two ineffective teaching styles contribute to this problem:

Authoritarian style - where the teacher imposes strict control and demands unquestioned obedience.

Liberal style - where excessive freedom leads to disorder and lack of discipline.

Modern Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Effective management of conflicts in primary education requires high pedagogical competence. Teachers must establish strong, positive relationships with students. Key qualities include:

Acceptance - recognizing students



as they are, with their strengths and weaknesses.

Empathy - understanding students' emotions and perspectives.

Fairness - ensuring equal treatment and objective evaluation for all students.

It is also important to strengthen the "teacher-student" relationship as a continuous and supportive process. As Comenius metaphorically stated, a teacher should treat a child's mistake like a gardener treats a young plant—gently guiding it rather than breaking it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between teacher and student is a dynamic and living interaction. The more it is based on mutual respect

and sincerity, the more successful the student's academic performance and personal development will be. Pedagogical conflicts, if managed constructively, can become opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. The ideas of Comenius and Eastern scholars converge on one key principle: only when teachers and parents work together can a child develop in a healthy and supportive environment.

Noraliyeva Charos was born in 2007 in Bozortepa village, Dehqonobod district, Qashqadaryo region, Uzbekistan. She is currently a first-year student at the Faculty of Pedagogy, majoring in Primary Education at Qarshi State University.

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Governance

Between promise and reality: Reclaiming Kenya's future through accountable governance and shared prosperity



BY Fredrick Chelimo

@themkenyatimes

There is a characteristic quiet, deepening unease across Kenya, an unease born out of impatience, but of experience. For decades the country has been nourished on a steady diet of political promises, economic transformation, and universal access to services and dignity for all. For many citizens, the daily lived reality continues to tell a different story, one of strained healthcare systems, costly education, rising taxes, and opportunities that seem reserved for the well-connected. The distance between promise and reality has grown too wide to ignore.

Kenya's development challenge is not rooted in lack of potential, it is anchored in a governance paradox; a democratic framework that, in principle guarantees accountability and inclusion, but in practice has often been co-opted by political elitism, patronage networks, and short-term thinking. Democracy, when weakened by impunity and reduced to periodic elections, become vulnerable to manipulation. It creates space for what may be described as "performative governance" – where rhetoric thrives, but results falter.

In contrast, global best practices offer a different pathway, one where governance is treated as a disciplined, result oriented enterprise. Countries that have achieved sustained prosperity, including China, as well as high performance economies such as Singapore and South Korea, demonstrate a consistent pattern; long term planning policy continuity, merit-based systems, and a relentless focus on execution. The data underscores this contrast. Over the past decades, China has lifted over 700 million people out of extreme poverty, while maintaining an average GDP growth rate of 6-10% annually for much of the period. South Korea transitioned from low-income economy in the 1960's to high income industrial powerhouse, with GDP per capita rising from under \$200 to over \$30,000 today. These transformations were anchored in deliberate policy discipline and institutional coherence.

Kenya's own economic indicators reveal a more uneven trajectory. The country's GDP growth has averaged between 4% and 6% over the past decade, respectable yet insufficient to absorb the rapidly growing labor force. Public debt has risen significantly crossing the more than 10 trillion shillings, with debt servicing consuming a huge jank of the annual revenues in most fiscal cycles. This leaves limited fiscal space for development expenditure, even as the demand for public services con-



tinue to rise.

Yet, Kenya experience also confirms that progress is possible when sound principles are applied. Innovations such as M-Pesa which currently transacts over 40% of the nation's GDP in value annually stands as a powerful example. It emerged not from political patronage, but from innovation, regulatory support, and market responsiveness. It solved real problems for real people, and in doing so, transformed financial access across the country. However, such success exists alongside systemic weaknesses that continue to undermine national progress.

At the centre of these weaknesses is the enduring challenge of corruption, often concealed within the very structure meant to prevent it. According to estimates by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Kenya loses approximately one third of its national budget annually to corruption and inefficiencies. Public procurement accounting for nearly 30% of GDP – is particularly vulnerable, with inflated contracts, ghost projects, and politically influenced allocations distorting value for money. Equally concerning is the cost of governance relative to its outcomes. Kenya invests significantly in its political leadership, through salaries, hefty allowances, medical schemes, international travels and endless expensive local travels, mortgages for residents and vehicles, and extensive support systems. The Salaries and Remuneration Commission has previously indicated a wage bill that exceeds more than half of government revenue, exceeding recommended threshold. A substantial portion of this is tied to the administrative and political structures rather than front line service delivery.

Parliamentary scrutiny on state-house allocations and air travel locally by hired helicopters which are neither service to citizens or investment have raised more questions than answers. This creates a

contradiction for a population that contributes more through taxes, yet receives less in terms of quality service delivery. Tax-to-GDP ratios remained around 15-18%, with increasing reliance on indirect taxes such as VAT and fuel levies, burdens that disproportionately affect low and middle-income households.

Meanwhile, the reality on the ground tells its own story. Public hospitals frequently experience shortage of essential medicines and machines, forcing patients into out-of-pocket expenditure that accounts for nearly 25% of total health spending. In education cost-sharing mechanisms persist despite constitutional guarantees of basic education, with parents shouldering increasing financial responsibility for infrastructure materials, and supplementary services.

Globally, the most effective governance operates on a different principle, public value for public investment. In OECD (Organization of Economic Corporation and Development) countries, for instance, higher taxation is often matched by universal free healthcare, subsidized education, and robust social protection systems especially for the vulnerable groups including persons living with disabilities. Citizens may pay more, but they also receive more, consistently and predictively. Kenya's increasing reliance on external borrowing further complicates this picture. Engagements with institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have become necessary to bridge fiscal deficits. While such financing can support development, it also introduces conditionalities and repayment obligations that constrains domestic policy choices. Without corresponding productivity gains, borrowing risks deepening dependency rather than enabling growth. The impact of these dynamics is felt by those on the margins. Persons with disabilities, for instance, ex-

periences the compounded effects of systemic inefficiencies. Employment rates among PWDs remain significantly below national average, despite legal and policy provisions for inclusion. Accessibility gaps in infrastructure, limited targeted funding, and weak enforcement of disability rights frameworks further entrenches exclusion. In a system already skewed by patronage, inclusion often becomes afterthought with serious notoriety at national and county government levels.

Kenya must therefore review and renew its roadmap and align Kenya with best global practices by undertaking a deliberate shift, one that positions governance as a tool for measurable, inclusive, and sustained development. First, institutional independence must be safeguarded. Oversight bodies such as the public service commission and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Authority must operate free from political interference, with the authority and resources to enforce accountability. Countries that have succeeded in curbing corruption, such as Singapore, do so by empowering institution with both autonomy and enforcement capability.

Secondly, policy must be anchored in data and professional expertise. Decision-making should be guided by research, evidence, and long-term projection rather than political expediency. National frameworks, such as vision 20230 should be treated as binding commitments, insulated from political transitions and implemented with consistency.

Thirdly, the cost of governance must be rationalized and linked to performance. Public investment in leadership must be justified by measurable outcomes. Transparent reporting, performance benchmarks, and independent evaluation can help align expenditure with results. Countries with leaner governments have demonstrated higher efficiency, because resources are directed

towards service delivery rather than exorbitant administrative overhead costs.

Fourthly, corruption must be addressed as a systemic risk, not as a periodic scandal. This requires not only enforcement, but prevention through transparent procurement systems, digital financial management, and real time public oversight of government spending. Open contracting data standards to reduce procurement frauds.

Finally, service delivery must be re-centered on citizen. Healthcare, education, and social protection should not be treated as a privilege subject to cost sharing without accountability. They are fundamental public goods. Taxation must translate into tangible benefits, restoring social contract between the state and its people. Inclusion must be non-negotiable. Development that excludes is inherently unstable. Policies must deliberately integrate marginalized groups, ensuring that opportunity is accessible regardless of physical ability, geographic location, or social background.

Kenya's challenge is not unique, but its opportunity is profound. The country possesses the human capital, strategic position, and entrepreneur energy required for transformation. What remains is the alignment of governance with purpose. The conversation is no longer about democracy works; it is about making it work. It is about confronting the distortions that have allowed corruption and elitism to thrive within it, and about reclaiming original promise; a system where power serves the people, and where progress is shared.

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Church and Politics News

Pope Leo and Trump: How a Speech Written a Fortnight Early Ignited a Transatlantic Firestorm

When the first American Pope took the pulpit in Cameroon and condemned the “masters of war,” few could have predicted it would detonate one of the most extraordinary public clashes between the Vatican and the White House in modern history — and that the man at the centre of the storm would insist he never meant to start it.

By: Diaspora Times Team
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President Donald Trump

Worth Noting:

It began, as so many modern controversies do, with a post from Donald Trump. Last week, the US President voiced alarm — or what his critics characterised as a threat — warning that “a whole civilisation will die” if Iran did not accede to American demands to end the war and open the Strait of Hormuz. The statement, blunt and apocalyptic in its framing, drew widespread international reaction. Among those who responded was Pope Leo, who expressed concern about the language and the implications of what the President had said.

Trump’s response was swift, personal, and characteristically unsparing. In a lengthy post that reverberated around the world, the President declared he was “not a big fan” of the Pope, branding him “WEAK on crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy.” It was a striking attack on the leader of the world’s 1.4 billion Catholics, and it drew immediate condemnation from church leaders, diplomats, and commentators on both sides of the Atlantic.

to say what he needed to say, was unambiguous: no.

“It was looked at as if I was trying to debate, again, the President, which is not in my interest at all,” Pope Leo told reporters aboard the flight on Saturday, in remarks that were simultaneously a clarification, a defence, and a window into the remarkable geopolitical tightrope the first American Pope is walking just months into his papacy.

The story of how a speech drafted a full fortnight before it was delivered became the flashpoint for one of the most extraordinary public clashes between the Vatican and the White House in modern memory is, in many ways, a story about the age we live in — one in which words travel faster than context, and where the line between pastoral duty and political provocation has never been harder to hold.

To understand how we arrived here, it is necessary to go back to the beginning.

It began, as so many modern controversies do, with a post from Donald Trump. Last week, the US President voiced alarm — or what his critics characterised as

a threat — warning that “a whole civilisation will die” if Iran did not accede to American demands to end the war and open the Strait of Hormuz. The statement, blunt and apocalyptic in its framing, drew widespread international reaction. Among those who responded was Pope Leo, who expressed concern about the language and the implications of what the President had said.

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had been widely shared and roundly condemned.

Into this already charged atmosphere stepped the Pope’s speech in Yaoundé, Cameroon, delivered on Thursday as part of his 11-city, four-country tour of Africa. Speaking with evident passion about the suffering he had witnessed across a continent battered by conflict and neglect, Pope Leo did not hold back.

“The masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet often a lifetime is not enough to rebuild,” he said, his voice carrying the weight of what he had seen on the ground across a region where the cost of conflict is measured not in economic data but in shattered lives.

He went further, condemning leaders who “turn a blind eye to the fact that billions of dollars are spent on killing and devastation, yet the resources needed for healing, education and restoration are nowhere to be found.” He also addressed the specific situation in parts of Cameroon gripped by nearly a decade of insurgency, describing an “endless cycle of destabilisation

and death” in what he called a “bloodstained” region.

The words were powerful, poetic, and — in the context of the preceding week’s events — almost impossible for many observers not to read as a direct response to Trump. Within hours, the interpretation had hardened into received wisdom across global media: the Pope had fired back.

Trump, for his part, seemed unfazed. “The Pope can say what he wants, and I want him to say what he wants, but I can disagree,” he told reporters with a shrug that managed to convey both magnanimity and dismissal in equal measure — a political skill the President has refined to an art form over decades in public life.

But aboard the flight to Angola on Saturday, Pope Leo pushed back on the entire framing. The speech, he explained, had been written approximately two weeks before it was delivered — “well before the president ever commented on myself.” The timing, he suggested, was coincidence. The interpretation, he implied with characteristic diplomatic precision, was something

else entirely.

“A certain narrative that has not been accurate has developed,” the Pope said, pointing to what he described as “the political situation created” by Trump’s earlier comments as the lens through which his own, independently prepared remarks had been filtered and misread.

It is a defence that is both credible and, to some, beside the point. The question of whether Pope Leo intended to debate Donald Trump is, in one sense, less significant than the fact that his words — wherever they were aimed — articulate a moral position that stands in direct and uncomfortable tension with the foreign and military policies of the current US administration. The Pope is a vocal critic of the US-Israeli military operation in Iran. He speaks of healing and restoration in regions where American weapons and American money are, by any accounting, part of the story. Whether he names the President or not, the gap

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Pope Leo XIV

between their worldviews is vast and consequential.

That gap is made all the more significant by who Pope Leo is. He is the first American ever to lead the Catholic Church — a fact that carries enormous symbolic weight in the United States and abroad. His election to the papacy last year was celebrated across the Catholic world as a historic milestone, a recognition of the growing importance of the Americas to global Catholicism. And yet here he is, months into his pontificate, finding himself in open, public tension with the President of the country of his birth.

The Africa tour on which he finds himself is itself a statement of priorities. More than a fifth of the world’s Catholics — some 288 million people, according to 2024 figures — live in Africa, a proportion that continues to grow as the faith declines in parts of Europe and sta-

bilises in the Americas. This is Pope Leo’s second major foreign visit since his election, and the choice of Africa as its destination is not incidental. It signals clearly where the Church believes the future of global Catholicism lies, and it places the Pope in direct conversation with communities for whom the consequences of distant wars and diverted resources are not abstract policy debates but daily realities.

When he speaks of billions spent on killing while resources for healing and education go unfound, he is speaking to and for those communities. He is giving voice to a moral calculus that the vast majority of the world’s poorest people would recognise immediately, even if it makes comfortable listening for almost no one in the corridors of power in Washington or Tel Aviv.

This is the context in which the apparent clash with

Trump must be understood. It is not, at its core, a personal feud — whatever the social media posts and pointed press conference remarks might suggest. It is a collision between two fundamentally different visions of global order, human dignity, and the responsibilities of power. One vision is nationalist, transactional, and unapologetically forceful. The other is universal, pastoral, and rooted in a tradition that measures civilisations not by their military might but by how they treat their most vulnerable members. Trump, it should be noted, is not without his own Catholic constituency. A significant proportion of American Catholics voted for him in the last election, and some within the Church have been sympathetic to elements of his political programme. The notion that Pope Leo speaks for all Catholics on matters of foreign policy would be contested by many

of the faithful. The Church is not monolithic, and neither is its politics.

And yet the Pope’s moral authority on questions of war, peace, and human suffering is not derived from electoral mandates or polling numbers. It draws from something older, deeper, and — to those who hold the faith — more enduring. When he invokes John 10:10, as he has done throughout this tour, he is pointing to a vision of life in its fullness that he believes is being denied to millions by the choices of the powerful. Whether or not Donald Trump was the intended audience for that message in Cameroon last Thursday, it is a message that will outlast any single news cycle.

For now, the two men occupy opposite ends of an argument that the world is watching with unusual attention. The President of the United States, posting AI images of himself as a mes-

siah figure, dismissing the head of the world’s largest Christian denomination as weak and terrible. The first American Pope, flying over Africa, insisting he was not trying to pick a fight — but refusing, with quiet determination, to walk back a single word he said.

There is, in that image, something that feels genuinely historic. The Silicon Savannah may be finding its new address in affordable housing. But the Vatican’s new address — moral, geopolitical, and unmistakably global — is being written, one speech at a time, across the cities and communities of a continent that the world has too long underestimated.

As the papal aircraft descended toward Luanda, the Pope had said what he needed to say. The question now is whether anyone with the power to act on it is truly listening.

Health

Scientists Are Using Mosquitoes to Kill Mosquitoes

Across sub-Saharan Africa, this cycle repeats daily. According to the World Health Organization, about 95 percent of global malaria deaths occur in the African region. In 2024, an estimated 610,000 people died from the disease, most of them children under five.

By: Afia Agyapomaa Ofose
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Worth Noting:

- Far less attention is given to the male mosquito, yet new research is beginning to look at him as part of the solution. Specifically, the work of Target Malaria, in partnership with Imperial College London and University of Oxford, explores gene drive technology that alters mosquito reproduction.
- Dr Federica Bernardini, Research Associate in the Department of Life Sciences at Imperial College London sheds light on this approach.
- “We know malaria is caused by a parasite called Plasmodium and that infection happens through the bite of an infected female mosquito. It is treatable and preventable, yet hundreds of thousands still die each year, mostly in Africa,” she says.
- Her team studies the genes that influence how mosquitoes reproduce, feed, survive, and support parasite development.
- “These features are genetically determined. If we disrupt certain genes, we can affect how mosquitoes multiply,” she explains.



Dr Federica Bernardini presents on gene drive malaria research

“Bzzzzz, bzzzzz, bzzzzz.” This sound circles the ear before the bite is felt. A female Anopheles mosquito rises from an open gutter at Olebu Zamzam in the Ga Central Municipality of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. She is barely visible in the dusk, yet she carries the malaria parasite from one person to another. Earlier in her life, she mated once in mid-air and stored enough sperm in a tiny organ called the spermatheca to fertilise eggs for the rest of her life. Soon after, she searched for blood to help her eggs mature. She found a small pool of water trapped in waste, laid hundreds of eggs, and within days new mosquitoes emerged from the same polluted spot.

Pollution as a Breeding Ground
Across sub-Saharan Africa, this cycle repeats daily. According to the World Health Organization, about 95 percent of global malaria deaths occur in the African region. In 2024, an estimated 610,000 people died from

the disease, most of them children under five. Discarded plastics, cans, tyres, and blocked drains create ideal breeding sites for mosquitoes. Aedes aegypti thrives in such containers and transmits dengue and yellow fever, while polluted stagnant water supports Anopheles gambiae, the primary malaria vector in Africa.

Because only females bite and transmit disease, most control measures focus on stopping them through insecticide treated bed nets, indoor residual spraying, larval source management, and improved housing. Looking Beyond the Female

Far less attention is given to the male mosquito, yet new research is beginning to look at him as part of the solution. Specifically, the work of Target Malaria, in partnership with Imperial College London and University of Oxford, explores gene drive technology that alters mosquito reproduction.

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How Gene Drive Changes Inheritance

Under normal inheritance, a genetic change passes to only half of the offspring. “This is Mendelian inheritance. A modification is passed to about 50 percent of the progeny, which is not enough to make a real difference in the wild unless very large numbers are released,”



Female Anopheles mosquito at a typical breeding site (AI generated image)

she says. Gene drive technology alters this pattern.

“We ensure the modification is copied onto the matching gene inside the reproductive cells. Instead of 50 percent inheritance, it becomes close to 100 percent. All the offspring inherit the modification,” Dr Bernardini explains.

In laboratory cages, the effect is clear.

“As generations pass, the frequency of the modification increases while the number of eggs laid by females drops until they cannot produce eggs at all. The population collapses in the cage,” she says.

Targeted Science and Community Dialogue

The approach is precise. Only specific malaria vectors are targeted, including Anopheles gambiae, Anopheles coluzzii, Anopheles arabiensis, and Anopheles fu-

nestus.

“The strategy involves releasing genetically modified males in future field trials (subject to regulatory approval). When they mate with wild females, the females lose the ability to produce eggs. Over time, the mosquito population drops because they cannot support the next generation,” she says.

Environmental studies have examined the role of these mosquitoes in the ecosystem.

“Studies suggest they are not a keystone species in the food chain, and other mosquito species may occupy the same ecological niche without transmitting malaria,” she notes.

As the world marks World Malaria Day on April 25, she emphasises that science must move with public engagement.

“Our goal is to explain the science clearly and engage communities and decision makers before any field use is considered,” she says.

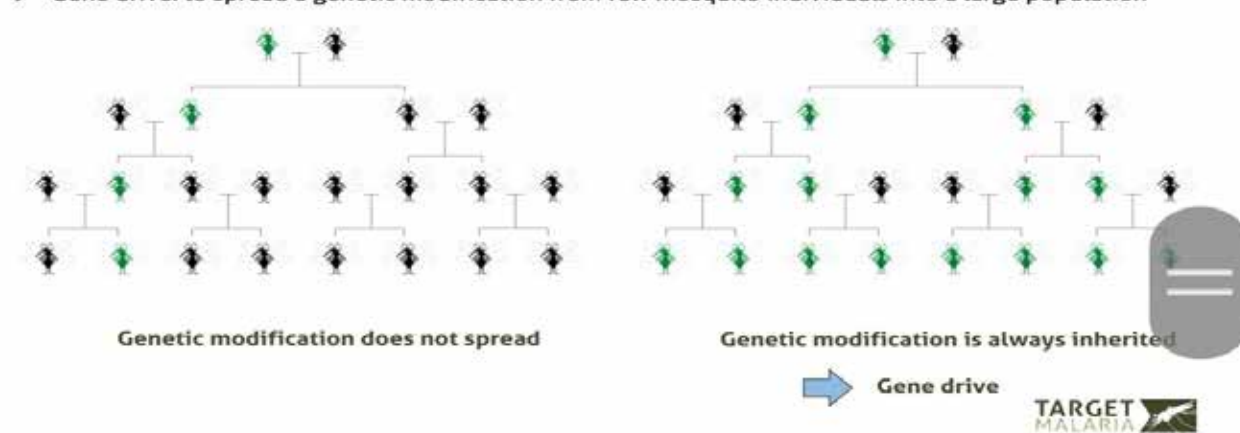
Beyond vector control, researchers at Imperial College London have also developed portable Lab-on-the-chip diagnostic tools such as Dragonfly and Lacewing, designed to provide rapid and accurate detection of infections, including malaria, from a small blood sample.

This report is part of the UK-Ghana ST&I Media Training Programme. The writer is a science journalist.

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Genetic control: gene drive

> Gene drive: to spread a genetic modification from few mosquito individuals into a large population



Gene drive ensures near-100% inheritance of the modification

NEWS PAPER



IN BUSINESS

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UGANDA

AMDA Unveils Its 13th Annual Caravan to Nyabwina Parish, Deepening a Legacy of Faith-Driven Transformation in Sheema District



By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
mukphix@gmail.com

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organisation made up of Catholics who hail from the Mbarara Archdiocese but now live and work in Kampala, Entebbe, Mukono, Wakiso, and Jinja. At its heart, the association exists to bridge the distance between its members and their home communities — fostering unity while driving development from the ground up. The association is guided by seven pillars: Unity, Spiritual Development, Leadership Development, Economic Empowerment, Education, Health and Wellness, and Environmental Sustainability. These are not abstract values. They are the blueprint for everything AMDA does.

A Caravan Built on Consistency

The AMDA Caravan was born in 2013 with a maiden visit to Rugazi Parish. Since then, it has become a cherished annual tradition — typically spanning three days — during which AMDA members descend on a chosen parish to deliver an intensive package of services covering healthcare, legal aid, financial literacy, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment.

The caravan's recent footprint tells its own story:

- 2023 — Ibanda Deanery (9th Caravan)
- 2024 — St. Peter Bwizibwera and Rushooka Parish, Ntungamo
- 2025 — Nyamitanga Cathedral Parish and St. John Baptist Kibona Parish
- 2026 — Nyabwina Parish, Sheema District (13th Caravan)

Chairman Chris Gumisiriza confirmed the shift to Nyabwina following the successful 11th Caravan across Kibona and Nyamitanga parishes in 2025. "We are building not just infrastructure, but stronger, healthier, and more hopeful communities," he said. "That is what AMDA stands for, and it is a mission we can only advance together."

Healthcare at the Heart of It All

Medical services have always been the centrepiece of the caravan, and the scale is extraordinary. Each edition mobilises more than 500 specialist practitioners — surgeons, paediatricians,



Donation of UGX 20M to AMDA Caravan, Fueling Faith Driven Transformation in Sheema District

cardiologists, dentists, ophthalmologists, oncologists, and public health officers — to attend to upwards of 10,000 patients over three days.

Ophthalmology consistently records the highest caseload. Previous caravans documented 1,248 eye-related cases, including 65 cataract surgeries that restored sight to patients who had lived with preventable blindness for years. The scope of services extends further still — to cancer screening, fistula repair, cleft lip reconstruction, and comprehensive dental and laboratory care — delivered in partnership with the Uganda People's Defence Forces, Uganda Police, Mulago National Referral Hospital, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, National Medical Stores, and Joint Medical Stores.

The numbers reflect the commitment. The 2024 medical camp alone spent UGX 206 million on treatment and free medicines. The 2025 caravan operated on a UGX 500 million budget, preceded by an inaugural AMDA Run that drew over 700 participants and raised UGX 20 million toward its UGX 256 million fundraising target.

More Than a Medical Camp

What sets the AMDA Caravan apart is its holistic approach to community development. Beyond medical services, the caravan provides financial literacy training, legal aid, and environmental stewardship projects. These initiatives empower communities to sustainably improve their lives.



Nyabwina Parish Welcomes AMDA's Caravan of Hope

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UGANDA

AMDA Unveils Its 13th Annual Caravan to Nyabwina Parish, Deepening a Legacy of Faith-Driven Transformation in Sheema District

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Worth Noting:

- What sets the AMDA Caravan apart is its insistence on leaving something permanent behind. AMDA's guiding doctrine — "faith with works" — demands that every host parish walk away with durable infrastructure and the capacity to sustain it.
- In recent editions, this has meant converting disused parish halls into fully functional clinics, complete with partitioned wards, consultation rooms, hospital beds, mattresses, and starter stocks of essential medicines. Schools have received eight-unit sanitation blocks, rehabilitated latrines, and 5,000-litre water tanks to address chronic water shortages. Libraries have been stocked with 100 new-curriculum textbooks to bring rural classrooms in line with national standards.
- Environmental action is equally serious. Past caravans have distributed 10,000 coffee seedlings, 6,000 fruit seedlings, 19,000 eucalyptus seedlings, and 11,520 indigenous trees — diversifying household incomes while supporting reforestation and climate resilience. Each seedling comes with training in sustainable land management, delivered in partnership with the National Forestry Authority.

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Faith and Development, Inseparable

The theological conviction behind all of this is clear and unapologetic. AMDA Chaplain Rev. Fr. Dr. Darius Magunda describes the caravan as "an opportunity to share the gift of faith, especially with the most needy," drawing inspiration from John 10:10 — "that we may have life and have it in full." He is careful to frame the medical camps as complementing, not replacing, government health systems — filling



Nyabwina Parish flags off AMDA's Caravan of Hope

gaps in preventive care, particularly for non-communicable diseases. That approach has earned recognition from senior government officials. Internal Affairs Minister Gen. Kahinda Otafiire has praised AMDA's "holistic approach," noting: "You're not just focused on spiritual growth, but also on economic empowerment. I'm particularly pleased to see that your caravan prioritises education." The people powering all of this are volunteers. In the

most recent caravan, 259 AMDA members gave their time and expertise, supported by 614 health workers from public and private institutions across the country. Chairman Gumisiriza's appeal to potential supporters is consistent and heartfelt: "Whether it's financial support, medical supplies, or professional services, every contribution counts."

Looking Ahead to Nyabwina

As Nyabwina Parish prepares to welcome the 13th Caravan, AMDA is extending an open invitation — to members, corporate partners, and philanthropists — to invest in a model that has now touched 27 parishes since 2013, leaving behind a living legacy of clinics, forests, educated youth, and strengthened families. The association's conviction has never wavered: develop-

ment without faith is merely mechanical, and faith without development is incomplete. By weaving the two together, AMDA works to ensure that the next generation in Sheema inherits not just a parish, but a genuine prospect for a better life. The caravan does not arrive as charity. It arrives as a covenant — to serve, to empower, and to leave Nyabwina demonstrably stronger than it was found.



Group Photo as Nyabwina Parish Welcomes AMDA's Caravan of Hope

Zimbabwe

Up Close With Mp Corban Madzivanyika: A Voice For Mbizo

By: Norman Mwale
[The PenPusher]
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Worth Noting:

- **Background:** Born in Torwood (1985); family moved to Bikita after father's retirement from ZISCO in 1996.
- **Union Roots:** Experience with ZIMRATU trade union sparked political passion after frustrations with government controlled wage negotiations.
- **Personal Life:** Married, father of three; balances family, business, and politics seamlessly.
- **Political Drive:** Advocates for freedom, equality, transparency, and accountability; determined to end corruption, human rights abuses, and economic mismanagement.
- **Constituency Challenges:** Poor sanitation, water shortages, unemployment, violence, gender based abuse, substance misuse, and dilapidated roads.
- **Response:** Seeks development funds, better healthcare, job creation, improved infrastructure, and community safety measures.
- **Opposition Rights:** Critic of police restrictions under MOPA; vows to defend constitutional freedoms.
- **Legislative Stance:** Strongly opposes Constitutional Amendment Bill #3, warning it undermines democracy and economic growth.

Honourable Corban Madzivanyika, the fire-brand MP for Kwekwe, Mbizo Constituency, has a story that speaks to the heart of Zimbabwe's struggle for equality and justice. Born in Torwood in 1985, Madzivanyika's early life was marked by his father's retirement from ZISCO in 1996, after which the family relocated to their rural home in Bikita. It was his experience as a unionist with ZIMRATU (Zimbabwe Revenue and Allied Workers Trade Union) that ignited his passion for politics. "As a unionist representing employees on collective bargaining, we would frequently get the response from the employer that they could not adjust our salaries and conditions of service because the central government, through the Ministry of Finance, did not release funding. That pissed me off a lot," Madzivanyika recalls. This experience sparked a desire to get closer to the source of the problem and fight inequality at its core. But who exactly is this cutting-edge lawmaker? The Mt Kenya Times, speaks to Madzivanyika.

Q: Honourable Madzivanyika, could you tell us about yourself?

A: I am a 40-year-old married man with three children, two girls and one boy. I am blessed to have a supportive wife who stands by me through thick and thin. I have a few businesses that keep me engaged and allow me to serve my community.

Q: How do you balance your time between family life, business, and politics?

A: Balancing life and politics is not a challenge for me. I breathe politics, and I believe it is an integral part of our daily lives. Politics is everywhere, at home, in churches, and in our communities. I have learned to harmonise these aspects of my life.

Q: What drives your passion for politics, and what do you strive to achieve?

A: I want an opportunity to fight for absolute freedom, equality at law, opportunities for all, and good governance. Zimbabweans are oppressed, and I feel an inner conscience to take an active role in the fight for our rights. In parliament,



Hon. Corban Madzivanyika

I strive to hold the government accountable, as that is the major role of a legislator. I also aim to ensure that laws are made in the best interests of the people of Mbizo Constituency and the nation at large. Specifically, I want to see an end to corruption, human rights abuses, and economic mismanagement. I believe every Zimbabwean deserves access to quality healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. I will fight for policies that promote transparency, accountability, and good governance.

Q: What are some of the communal challenges facing Mbizo Constituency, and how do you plan to address them?

A: Mbizo faces numerous challenges, including poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water, and high unemployment rates. We also have a disturbing trend of violence, including machete and knife attacks, resulting in loss of life. Gender-based violence is a scourge that needs urgent attention. Substance abuse among school leavers and youth is a concern that requires intervention. The state of our roads is appalling, with gullies

posing a threat to motorists and pedestrians alike. There is a need for tower lights in some areas for improved security. A proper drainage system and consistent supply of reticulated water are essential services that we need. To ensure community safety, especially for artisanal miners, I advocate for the erection of humps on local roads. As an MP, I plan to work with stakeholders to source funds for development projects, advocate for better healthcare services, and push for job creation initiatives.

Q: There have been reports of police blocking opposition meetings in Mbizo. How have you responded to this?

A: It's been a significant challenge. I have written several applications seeking authority to hold meetings with the community, but they have been denied. I want the people of Mbizo to know it's not because I didn't want to meet them, but I've been denied the opportunity. I will continue to push for my rights as an MP and the rights of my constituents. In fact, I previously raised concerns in parliament about the abuse of the

Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MOPA), which has been used to stifle opposition voices. I've argued that it's unacceptable for opposition members to be disallowed from holding meetings even in private places like their homes, churches, and community halls. This is a clear infringement on our constitutional rights, and I will continue to challenge it.

Q: What are your thoughts on the current Constitutional Amendment Bill (CAB) #3, and how do you plan to address it?

A: I strongly oppose CAB #3, as it poses a significant threat to our democracy and the rights of Zimbabweans. The bill's provisions, such as extending presidential terms and consolidating executive power, are a recipe for disaster. It's a thinly veiled attempt to entrench the ruling party's grip on power and undermine the constitution. If passed, it will erode trust in our institutions, exacerbate divisions, and deny Zimbabweans their fundamental rights. I will vigorously oppose this bill in parliament and mobilise my constituents to do the same. The economic situation is already dire, and CAB #3 will

only worsen it, deterring investors and hindering economic growth. I believe the government needs to take drastic measures to address the economic challenges, including implementing policies that promote economic growth, reducing corruption, and improving governance.

Q: How do you plan to engage with your constituents, given the challenges you've faced?

A: I will continue to use alternative means to engage with my constituents, including social media, community meetings, and door-to-door visits. I believe it's essential to keep the lines of communication open and ensure that the voices of Mbizo are heard.

Honourable Corban Madzivanyika is a committed MP who is determined to make a difference in Mbizo Constituency. His passion and dedication to serving his community are evident, and it's clear that he will continue to be a voice for the marginalised.

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Analysis of OptIndia's Article on Mhatre Murder Case and Rahul Gandhi's Meeting with Jeremy Corbyn



By: Rana Ali Zohaib
xxxxxxxxxxxx



(Left) Abdul Quayyum Raja, Rahul Gandhi with Jeremy Corbyn in centre, Indian diplomat Ravindra Mhatre (Right)

The article published by OptIndia on January 7, 2026, raises questions regarding Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's meeting with former British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, particularly focusing on Corbyn's support for the release of two Kashmiri men, Abdul Quayyum Raja and Muhammad Riaz. These individuals were sentenced in the notorious Mhatre Murder Case, which has deep legal and political ramifications. The case involves the 1984 kidnapping and murder of Indian diplomat Ravindra Mhatre in Birmingham, an event linked to the Kashmir Liberation (KLA) movement, and it continues to resonate within the complex political landscape of the Jammu Kashmir conflict.

However, the criticisms in the article seem to miss crucial historical and legal perspectives surrounding the case. Let's break this down into key points for a thorough analysis.

Political and Legal Context of the Mhatre Murder Case:

The Mhatre case is deeply entrenched in political controversy, with the conviction of Abdul Quayyum Raja and Muhammad Riaz being viewed by many as a result of political scapegoating. As you pointed out, there was clear evidence presented in court that the actual perpetrators of the crime escaped justice, while Raja and Riaz were wrongfully convicted under intense political pressure. Their case, involving the abduction and murder of an Indian diplomat in the UK, is complicated by the broader geopolitical context of Kashmir and the contentious history of India's treatment of Kashmiris.

Raja and Riaz's trial was not free from irregularities. The fact that their sentence was secretly extended by the then British Interior Minister, despite their trial being conducted in an open court, is a significant legal and ethical issue. This raises questions about the fairness of the judicial process and the influence of political pressures on legal decisions. The secret decision of the trial judge was disclosed by the London High Court ten years later as a result of the petition of both prisoners and the political sentences imposed by the interior ministers were overturned by the European Court

of Human Rights.

Given these circumstances, it is understandable why a number of British parliamentarians, including Jeremy Corbyn, would campaign for the release of Raja and Riaz. The Early Day Motion (EDM) signed by 33 British MPs speaks to the broader concerns about fairness, human rights, and the political nature of their convictions. The support of Corbyn and other MPs aligns with these principles, suggesting that their actions were rooted in concerns for justice and human rights, not simply political motivations.

The Timing of OptIndia's Criticism:

One of the more curious aspects of the article is the timing of the criticism. Rahul Gandhi's meeting with Jeremy Corbyn took place in 2022, but OptIndia chose to raise the issue four years later. This delayed criticism raises a few pertinent questions:

Political Targeting of Rahul Gandhi:

It seems that the article may be part of a broader attempt to malign Rahul Gandhi's image. As a prominent opposition leader, Gandhi poses a significant challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, which is why any opportunity to discredit him is often seized. By focusing on a historical event involving a British politician, the narrative is being framed in a way that attempts to diminish Gandhi's credibility and align him with controversial political figures. This seems to be a calculated move to distract from

more pressing issues and reinforce negative perceptions of opposition leadership.

Co-incidence with Raja's Visit to Europe:

The timing of the article could also coincide with Raja's visit to Europe, a noteworthy event in the context of his advocacy for the Kashmir cause. The fact that Raja is regarded as a "model prisoner" and has worked tirelessly for both Kashmir's independence and social justice in Azad Kashmir further complicates the narrative. It is possible that the article is attempting to preemptively discredit Raja's efforts in Europe by linking them to political figures like Gandhi and Corbyn, thereby painting the struggle for Kashmir's rights as controversial and inherently politically charged.

India's Treatment of Other Convicts

The Indian government's criticism of Quayyum Raja, despite his reputation as a "model prisoner," is a reflection of its discomfort with his continued activism for the Kashmir cause. Unlike other convicts who remain silent or obedient to the status quo, Raja has consistently advocated for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir issue. His efforts to maintain a stance that is both principled and peaceful have made him a target for criticism. His criticism of the status quo, rather than a focus on violent resistance, makes him a unique figure whose peaceful activism threatens the mainstream political narrative promoted by the Indian government.

It is also important to note that India has typically refrained from criticizing other prisoners who do not voice their dissent publicly or challenge the official narrative regarding Kashmir. Raja's vocal advocacy for a peaceful solution, therefore, positions him as an outlier, which is why the Indian government may seek to discredit him at every opportunity.

Broader Geopolitical Context:

The Mhatre Murder Case cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader geopolitical context of Kashmir. The region has been a point of conflict between India and Pakistan for decades, and it is also a focal point for Kashmiris seeking self-determination. The politics of Kashmir are deeply entangled with national identities, international diplomacy, and the rights of local populations. When figures like Rahul Gandhi engage with British politicians like Jeremy Corbyn, they are also engaging with a larger international discourse on human rights and justice, which transcends national boundaries. Criticizing the meeting between Gandhi and Corbyn, without addressing the root causes of the Kashmir issue, oversimplifies a complex situation. Both Gandhi and Corbyn represent international solidarity in the pursuit of justice, and by attacking them, the article misses the opportunity to engage with the deeper political and human rights questions surrounding the Kashmir conflict.

The OptIndia article's criticism of Rahul Gandhi's meeting with Jeremy Corbyn appears to be based on a limited understanding of the political and legal intricacies of the Mha-

tre Murder Case. The campaign for the release of Abdul Quayyum Raja and Muhammad Riaz was rooted in concerns about fairness and justice, and it is understandable why British parliamentarians, including Corbyn, would advocate for their release. The timing of the article's publication, coinciding with Raja's visit to Europe and ongoing activism, suggests that it is part of a larger political agenda to discredit figures who challenge the Indian government's stance on Kashmir.

Ultimately, the article misses the larger point that political prisoners like Raja, who advocate for peaceful solutions to complex issues like Kashmir, are often the most scrutinized by governments that are uncomfortable with their message. Rather than focusing on individual meetings or political figures, it would be more productive to address the core human rights and justice issues that persist in Kashmir.

About the Author

Rana Ali Zohaib is an Investigative Journalist from Pakistan. Migration Media Awards Pakistan 2022 Winner. Journalist of The Year 2023 Award Winner Dubai. Career Achievements Award 2023 Winner Dubai. He is Former President of Pakistan Federal Union of Columnists & Creators (PFUC). Currently he is serving as President Human Rights Council of Pakistan (Lahore Division)

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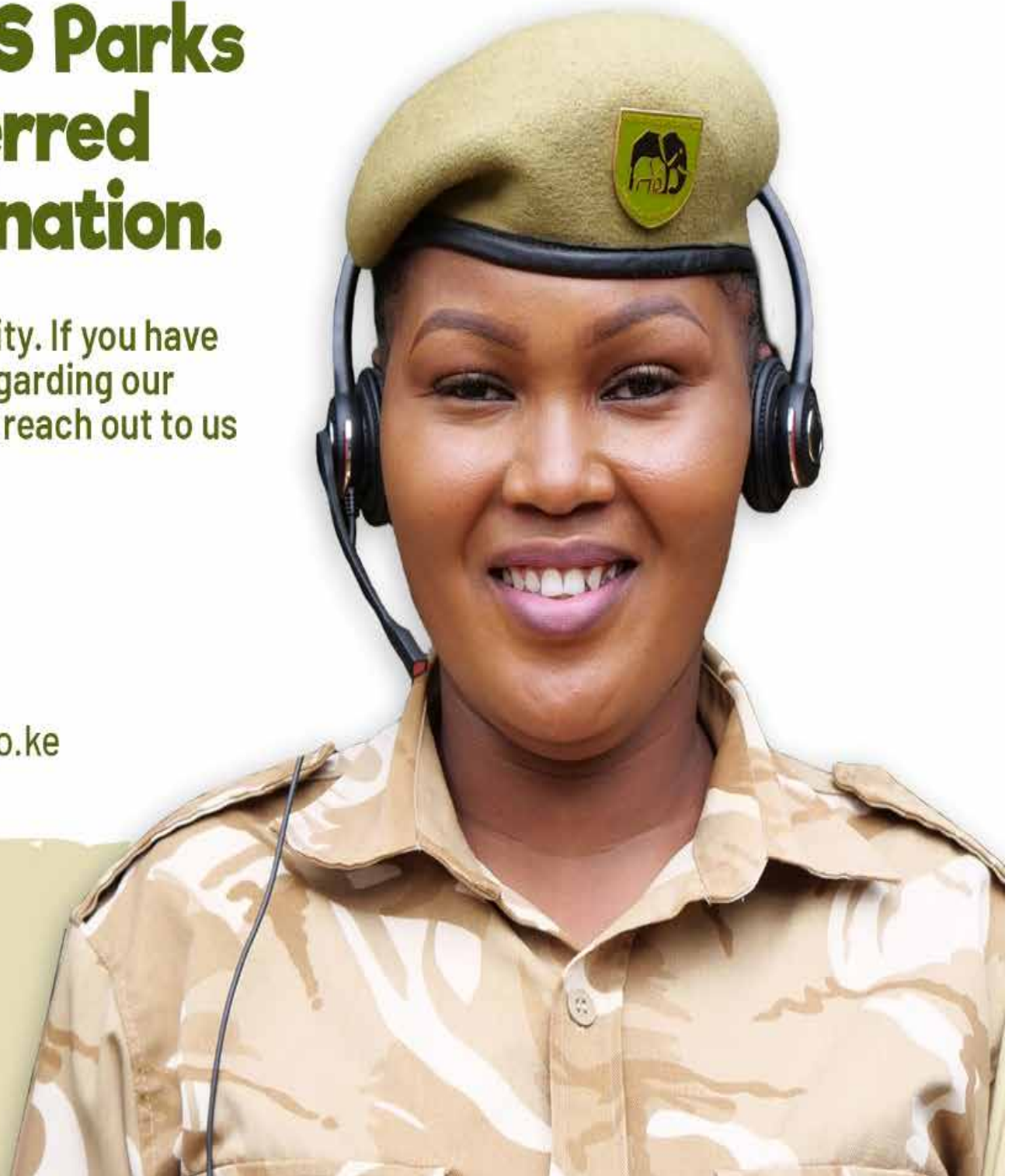
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Professional Guidelines for Tour Guides: The Practical State of Legal, Regulatory, And Methodological Support



By: **Durdona Jamolova**
xxxxxxxxxxxxx

Abstract. This article highlights the historical and touristic significance of the monuments in Bukhara, a city that holds an important place in the field of guiding and tourism and attracts numerous visitors with its unique features. As a recommendation for guide services, the article provides methodological advice for trainee tour guides preparing to work in architectural monuments built in the second half of the 16th century under the leadership and funding of Abdullakhan II, who ruled the Bukhara Khanate during that period. These suggestions aim to support the organization of quality tourist services at such sites.

Key words: national image, guide service, trainee guides, preparation phase, internet sources, historical books, storytelling and dialogue method.

Introduction.

The professional activity of tour guiding plays a key role in the development of a country's tourism sector. In particular, professional tour guides are crucial in strengthening the national image and promoting cultural heritage. From this perspective, thorough preparation is essential for the successful implementation of guiding as a profession. This article presents the necessary stages of preparation and key recommendations for organizing effective tour guide services.

As the main aspects of guide training, the article offers recommendations in four key areas that future professionals should follow during their preparation phase in order to provide effective services in their respective fields.

Methodology.

For example, as a recommendation for guide services, a tour guide in training who is preparing to work in architectural monuments built in the second half of the 16th century in Bukhara initiated and funded by Abdullakhan II, who ruled the Bukhara Khanate during that time may set the following tasks as professional goals.

First Stage of Preparation – "Orientation". This methodological phase, referred to as "Orientation", involves the trainee guide studying the socio-political changes and factors of economic development that occurred in the Bukhara Khanate during the second half of the 16th



Historical and touristic significance of the monuments in Bukhara

century, along with the internal and external policies of the state. The guide must be able to analyze the reforms implemented by Abdullakhan II and the achievements gained as a result—especially the stability that led to the construction of solid and magnificent architectural monuments in Bukhara. Furthermore, the guide should understand the original purposes of these structures and their current architectural, historical, and touristic significance.

Second Stage – "Collecting New Information". This phase is titled "Collecting New Information". Here, the tour guide trainee prepares scientific facts and core concepts in advance related to the architectural structures built in Bukhara in the 16th century.

This stage consists of two parts:

In the first part, the trainee is advised to gain knowledge of the territorial extent of the Bukhara Khanate during the reign of Abdullakhan II, the ruling dynasty of that era, and Abdullakhan II's personal achievements. The guide should collect data from various sources, including internet sites, regarding the social and economic situation of the state at that time, its religious and administrative systems, cultural life, and diplomatic relations with other countries.

For instance, one internet source states:

"After years of internal conflict, the Bukhara Khanate became a stable and powerful state during the reign of Abdullakhan II. Under his rule, the khanate reached its peak of strength. Abdullakhan II not only put an end to internal strife, but also expanded the state's territory, seizing the cities of Mashhad,

Nishapur, and Sabzevar from the Safavids. He launched a campaign against the Khiva Khanate and annexed it into Bukhara. To the east, he included Kashgar in his domain. During Abdullakhan II's rule, Uzbek statehood reached its last and greatest territorial expansion. Even the Siberian Khanate became politically dependent on Abdullakhan. He established the second largest Uzbek state in the region of Turan after Amir Temur."

Third Stage of Preparation: At this stage, a tour guide specialist preparing to enter the field is expected to become familiar with a range of academic sources related to the architectural monuments of the specified period and plan to utilize historical books during their professional activity. These sources can be divided into two categories.

Firstly, it is recommended to study original historical texts written during the era itself. For example, future guides should become familiar with works such as "Abdullanoma" by Hafiz Tanish Bukhari and "Mehmonomai Bukhoro" by Ruzbehan. They should know the date of writing, the year of publication, the central idea, and be able to briefly summarize the content. Additionally, they should be capable of explaining the names of locations and terms used in the texts.

For instance, it is important for a guide to know the following details about the "Abdullanoma" (also known as "Sharafnomai Shohiy"):

It is a historical source dedicated to the history of Mawarannahr in the 16th century. Written in Persian by Hafiz Tanish Bukhari between 1584 and 1590, the work was dedicated to Abdullakhan II, the ruler of Bukha-

ra. Some shortened versions of the text are also known as "Zafarnomai Abdullakhan". The book was composed in rhymed prose and consists of a preface, two main chapters (maqolas), and conclusions. However, the final part of the book is known to have remained unfinished.

In the introduction, the author describes the political events that took place in Mawarannahr before Abdullakhan's reign—such as the Mongol invasion led by Genghis Khan, the establishment of the Abulkhayr Khanate in the Dasht-i Qipchaq (1428–1468), the campaigns of Shaybani Khan (1451–1510) into Khorasan, military conflicts between the Shaybanids and Zahiriddin Babur, and the genealogy of Abdullakhan himself.

Secondly, it is worth noting that in the years of Uzbekistan's independence, a large number of scholarly studies, monographs, treatises, and articles have been produced on this period. Particularly during and after the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of Bukhara in 1997, many academic works by historians, political scientists, source critics, and museum specialists were introduced into scholarly discourse, focusing on the architectural heritage of this era.

Results.

a specialist aiming to provide effective and successful guide services, it is essential to adopt modern methods to ensure productivity. As a recommendation, it should be noted that the storytelling and dialogue methods yield very positive results in this regard.

The storytelling method involves

presenting historical facts, events, and phenomena related to a monument either as a whole or in parts using descriptive tools, creating vivid imagery, or delivering concise and consistent narratives.

The dialogue method is a question-and-answer-based conversational approach, known since ancient times—even Socrates used it skillfully in his era. This method develops critical thinking, responsiveness, and communication culture. In contemporary studies, it is often referred to as the "exploratory conversation" method. Among its advantages is its ability to help participants collaboratively explore and internalize the subject matter.

Conclusion.

In the context of New Uzbekistan, guiding is one of the most important professions, playing a key role in promoting tourism and cultural heritage. Historically, the guiding profession has existed for centuries, and its significance continues to grow today.

This is because professional tour guides are crucial for advancing the tourism sector and enhancing the country's image. Therefore, successful implementation of professional guiding requires thorough preparation.

Improving and professionalizing the guiding industry, along with enhancing the training system for specialists, can create new opportunities in Uzbekistan's tourism market.

Durdona Jamolova, is a 3rd-year student of Bukhara State University

Diaspora

Food Waste Is the New Battery for Your Wristwatch

A 2024 study in Waste Management & Research by Daniel Mmereki and colleagues shows that while composting and biogas from food waste hold great promise, many African countries are not yet making full use of them. Policies, awareness, and investment remain limited.

By: Diaspora Times Team
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Worth Noting:

- Working alongside her, Dr Emma Antonio focuses on aluminium-based batteries. Using advanced coating techniques, she strengthens the surface of aluminium to make the batteries last longer.
- “Aluminium is cheaper and widely available,” she says. “By modifying the surface, we improve how long the battery can last.”
- Together, these scientists are building cleaner, smarter energy solutions from materials that are already part of everyday life in Africa.
- Science journalists from West Africa, including Ghana and Nigeria, who visited the lab saw this innovation come alive at DIGIBAT (the UK’s first self-driving laboratory for energy research). Here, artificial intelligence and robots work together to test new materials rapidly. What once took years can now be done in months.

In the quiet evenings in Ablekuma-Fanmilk, a suburb in Ghana’s Greater Accra region, thirteen-year-old Abdul Latif and his younger brother, Ali, walk from house to house carrying a small sack. They’re not begging. They’re collecting cassava peels, plantain skins, and yam remains to feed the goats and sheep at home. On rainy days, they spread the peels in the sun to dry first.

This simple act is familiar across many Ghanaian homes. Families feed cooked leftovers to animals and turn peels into compost. Yet Africa still wastes around 195 million tonnes of food every year. Much of this waste ends up in landfills, where it rots and releases harmful methane gas, contributing to climate change.

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Far from the streets of Accra, something exciting is happening at Imperial College London’s South Kensington Campus. In the sustainable energy solutions laboratory of the Department of Chemical Engineering, two scientists are looking at the same food waste in a completely new way.

Turning Peels into Battery Power

Dr Kamogelo Modisane, a chemist from South Africa, works with trays of dried organic material. To her, these are not mere kitchen leftovers.

“We use things you can find in your own home,” she says. “Anything with starch, lignin and cellulose (things people throw away every day) can become a source for our battery materials.” She and her colleague dry, grind, and heat the peels.

“We are basically cooking the material,” she says with a gentle laugh.

This process creates a special hard carbon for battery anodes.

“This anode is used in pouch cells. So, when you think about the battery in your power bank or some watches, it’s likely this type.”

Instead of relying on expen-

sive imported materials, the team uses sodium and locally available African minerals such as iron and vanadium (a metal used in some batteries). “We’re trying to move away from critical materials like lithium, cobalt, and graphite,” Dr Modisane explains. “With biomass and locally available minerals, we can make batteries without worrying about shortages.”

Two Scientists, One Shared Purpose

Working alongside her, Dr Emma Antonio focuses on aluminium-based batteries. Using advanced coating techniques, she strengthens the surface of aluminium to make the batteries last longer. “Aluminium is cheaper and widely available,” she says. “By modifying the surface, we improve how long the battery can last.”

Together, these scientists are building cleaner, smarter energy solutions from materials that are already part of everyday life in Africa.

Speeding Up Discovery

Science journalists from West Africa, including Ghana and Nigeria, who visited the lab saw this innovation come alive at DIGIBAT (the UK’s first self-driving laboratory for energy research). Here, artificial intelligence and robots work together to test new materials rapidly. What once took years can now be done in months.

The young boys in Ablekuma and the scientists in London are connected by the same thing: food waste. They use it to feed animals. The others transform it into energy storage. What was once thrown away may soon power small devices and, one day, support larger clean energy systems across Africa.

The next time you see yam peels or plantain skins, remember this journey. From a home in Accra to a world-class lab in London, humble scraps are becoming part of something much bigger. With creativity and care, yesterday’s waste can help build a brighter, more self-reliant tomorrow.

This report is part of the UK-Ghana ST&I Media Training Programme.

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Two boys with a food waste bag



Dr Kamogelo Modisane on food waste batteries



Dr Emma Antonio explains battery innovation

Social Media and Youth Psychology

By 2026, the number of TikTok users in Uzbekistan reached 5 million, while Instagram users exceeded 3 million.



By: Kubayeva Fotima Jamshid
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Worth Noting:

• Last week, I collected students' phones in class—90% were using Instagram and TikTok. "Teacher, we cannot live even one day without social media," they said. This situation raises an important question: are social media platforms an opportunity or a psychological risk for youth?

• By 2026, the number of TikTok users in Uzbekistan reached 5 million, while Instagram users exceeded 3 million. About 80% of young people spend more than 4 hours daily on social networks. Research from Oxford University shows that such usage increases low self-esteem by 35% and depression by 28%. Young people compare their lives with "ideal lifestyles" presented online, leading to social comparison syndrome.

• The purpose of this article is to analyze the dual impact of social media on youth psychology and develop a digital hygiene strategy for schools in Uzbekistan. The theoretical framework is based on Erikson's identity theory and Bandura's social learning theory.

Abstract

In the modern digital society, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram have become an integral part of young people's lives. This article analyzes the impact of these platforms on youth psychology—self-esteem, social comparison syndrome, virtual addiction, social isolation, and psychological stress—based on scientific research. According to statistical data, 80% of young people spend more than 4 hours per day on social media, which increases depression by 28% and suicidal ideation by 30%. The study examines both the positive (access to information, global communication, creativity) and negative (cyberbullying, FOMO, distraction) effects of social media. Furthermore, practical recommendations for digital hygiene, time management, and psychological prevention are developed specifically for the youth of Uzbekistan. The aim is to form a strategy to ensure psychological stability in the digital environment.

Keywords

social media, youth psychology, virtual addiction, social comparison, mental health, digital hygiene, cyberbullying, Uzbekistan youth

Introduction

Last week, I collected students' phones in class—90% were using Instagram and TikTok. "Teacher, we cannot live even one day without social media," they said. This situation raises an important question: are social media platforms an opportunity or a psychological risk for youth?

By 2026, the number of TikTok users in Uzbekistan reached 5 million, while Instagram users exceeded 3 million. About 80% of young people spend more than 4 hours daily on social networks. Research from Oxford University shows that such usage increases low self-esteem by 35% and depression by 28%. Young people compare their lives with "ideal lifestyles" presented online, leading to social comparison syndrome. The purpose of this article is to analyze the dual impact of social media on youth psychology and develop a digital hygiene strategy for schools in Uzbekistan. The theoretical framework is based on Erikson's identity theory and Bandura's social



Social Media and Youth Psychology

learning theory.

Theoretical Analysis

The impact of social media on youth psychology operates through several neurobiological and socio-psychological mechanisms. Firstly, likes and comments stimulate dopamine release in the brain, encouraging constant validation-seeking behavior and leading to virtual addiction. Studies indicate that after 21 minutes of scrolling Instagram, prefrontal cortex activity decreases by 35%, weakening decision-making abilities.

Social comparison syndrome is one of the most widespread psychological issues. Young people observe "perfect lives" online—highlighting only success and beauty—which leads them to undervalue their own lives. As a result, self-esteem decreases significantly, while exposure to short-form videos increases body dysmorphia by 27%. Common psychological outcomes include: anxiety levels increasing by 38% among Instagram users, depression rising by 28% with excessive TikTok use, FOMO reaching 45% on Snapchat, cyberbullying victimization increasing by 32% on Telegram, and sleep disorders rising by 42% across platforms.

However, positive effects should also be acknowledged. Social media increases global connectivity, enhances empathy by 22%, and supports creativity. During the pandemic, 65% of young people received psychological support through social

platforms.

The study applies Erik Erikson's identity theory, suggesting that social media influences identity formation by creating virtual personas. According to Bandura's social learning theory, youth imitate influencers, often adopting unrealistic standards. The displacement hypothesis indicates that time spent online reduces face-to-face interaction, decreasing it by up to 50%.

Discussion

In Uzbekistan, TikTok has 5.2 million users and remains the most active platform. Instagram has 3.1 million users, while Telegram leads with 8.4 million users. Youth spend an average of 3 hours and 42 minutes daily on social media.

Local studies show a 27% increase in cyberbullying, especially among girls. The "filter bubble" effect limits exposure to diverse viewpoints, leading to radicalization of opinions. Influencers portraying "perfect lives" contribute to body image issues among Uzbek youth. In classrooms, 65% of students check their phones during lessons, resulting in an 18% decline in academic performance. Parental control remains weak, with 78% of parents not using screen-time monitoring tools. Schools face a shortage of psychologists, with one specialist per 1,500 students. International experience shows effective measures: China limits TikTok use to 40 minutes per day for minors, reducing depres-

sion by 22%; Australia bans phones in schools, increasing attention by 30%; France enforces parental control for children under 15, improving sleep quality by 25%. In the United States, Meta (Facebook) has faced significant fines related to youth mental health issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media has a dual impact on youth psychology. Positively, it enhances global communication, creativity, and emotional support. Negatively, it increases social comparison by 40%, strengthens phone addiction, and raises cyberbullying rates by 27%. In Uzbekistan, high usage rates and declining academic performance highlight the urgency of intervention.

The following practical recommendations are proposed:

Introduce a mandatory "Digital Psychology" subject in schools starting from grade 7, focusing on screen time management, FOMO, and cyberbullying prevention.

Develop a parental control application ("OilaNazorat.uz") with real-time monitoring and psychological guidance.

Establish a Telegram-based cyberbullying hotline providing 24/7 anonymous psychological support.

Create ethical guidelines for Uzbek influencers and promote the "#MenHaqiqiyMan" campaign to encourage authenticity.

Implement "Focus Mode"

in classrooms to improve attention and academic performance.

In conclusion, social media is not a weapon but a tool. Developing digital literacy among youth is a national responsibility. By 2026, Uzbekistan urgently needs a national digital hygiene strategy.

Kubayeva Fotima Jamshid

Kubayeva Fotima was born on December 10, 2004, in Koson district of Qashqadaryo region, Uzbekistan. She is currently a second-year student at the Faculty of Pedagogy, majoring in Pedagogy at Shahrizabz State Pedagogical Institute.

At the same time, she is actively involved in the Youth Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Shahrizabz State Pedagogical Institute, where she works as a coordinator for the "Youth Notebook" and sponsorship projects. In addition, she is a member of the "Oltin Qanot Volunteers" and serves as the International Cooperation Manager for Qashqadaryo region within the "Young Reformers Movement."

Fotima is also actively engaged in scientific research. Many of her academic articles have been published in international, national, and local journals as well as conference proceedings. She is a winner of several competitions and is a talented student who continuously strives toward achieving her goals.

Affordable Housing

Silicon Savannah's New Address: Why the Digital Nomad is Moving into Affordable Housing

As Kenya's Affordable Housing Programme reshapes the urban landscape, a new generation of tech-savvy professionals is discovering that the future of remote work isn't in a fancy co-working space — it's in a smart, affordable home.

By: David Nyaga
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Affordable Housing Programme

Worth Noting:

Connectivity, the digital nomad's lifeline, is increasingly becoming a standard feature rather than an afterthought. Recent nationwide collaborations are ensuring that these units are built smart-ready. With dedicated, affordable high-speed fibre internet being rolled out specifically for housing residents, the barrier to entry for global freelancing is crumbling fast. When a reliable connection costs less than a week's worth of standard data bundles, a housing unit stops being merely a home and becomes, quite literally, a global headquarters.

Perhaps the most compelling dimension of this story is what might be called the Dignity Dividend. Lifestyle is ultimately defined by freedom, and financial freedom remains the greatest luxury of all. Under the Tenant Purchase Scheme, where monthly payments can be as low as Ksh 5,000, a young professional's single largest expense is suddenly, dramatically reduced. That freed-up capital becomes the fuel for innovation — the better camera for a YouTuber, the advanced coding course for a developer, or the seed funding for a fledgling startup.

For decades, the image of public housing in Kenya was one of drab, utilitarian blocks — places of necessity rather than choice. But as the cabro-paved walkways of new housing estates begin to take shape from the coast to the highlands, a fresh narrative is emerging. This is no longer just about providing roofs for the many. It is about building a launchpad for the Boma Yangu generation. A quiet revolution is reshaping the lifestyle of the Kenyan digital nomad, proving that the next great tech hub will not be a glass-walled office in Upper Hill, but a studio apartment in a government-backed estate. The modern Kenyan professional is no longer tethered to a physical desk. From virtual assistants and software developers to content creators building audiences on TikTok, the gig economy has become the new heartbeat of the nation's workforce. Yet for these digital nomads, the dream of remote work often runs straight into a wall of high urban rents and unreliable infrastructure. This is precisely where the Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) ceases to be a political project and be-

gins to function as a genuine lifestyle enabler. By design, these estates are creating the ideal ecosystems for a nomadic way of life that was once the exclusive preserve of the privileged.

At the core of this shift is the "15-minute city" philosophy being woven into developments across the country. Unlike traditional suburbs where residents face lengthy commutes just to access basic services, these new communities are fully integrated ecosystems. Picture a workday that begins in a sunlit studio, continues with a midday break in a manicured communal garden, and ends with a short stroll to on-site commercial stalls for groceries. Whether in the bustling heart of Nakuru or on the expanding outskirts of Nairobi, these are not simply buildings — they are self-contained neighbourhoods where the live-work-play model is baked into the very architecture. For a creative professional, the removal of daily logistical friction — unreliable water, patchy security, noisy surroundings — creates the kind of deep focus that is simply impossible in most informal settlements.

Connectivity, the digital nomad's lifeline, is increasingly becoming a standard feature rather than an afterthought. Recent nationwide collaborations are ensuring that these units are built smart-ready. With dedicated, affordable high-speed fibre internet being rolled out specifically for housing residents, the barrier to entry for global freelancing is crumbling fast. When a reliable connection costs less than a week's worth of standard data bundles, a housing unit stops being merely a home and becomes, quite literally, a global headquarters.

Perhaps the most compelling dimension of this story is what might be called the Dignity Dividend. Lifestyle is ultimately defined by freedom, and financial freedom remains the greatest luxury of all. Under the Tenant Purchase Scheme, where monthly payments can be as low as Ksh 5,000, a young professional's single largest expense is suddenly, dramatically reduced. That freed-up capital becomes the fuel for innovation — the better camera for a YouTuber, the advanced coding course for a developer, or the seed funding for a fledgling startup.

By merging subsidised homeownership with 21st-century infrastructure, Kenya is democratising the digital dream. What we are witnessing is the birth of a new middle class — one that does not measure success by the size of a mansion, but by the quality of its community and the speed of its Wi-Fi. The Silicon Savannah has found a new home, and it is more affordable, more inclusive, and more vibrant than anyone dared to imagine.

By David Nyaga Communications Officer, State Department for Housing and Urban Development



Fixing a broken education system: Ten reforms we cannot afford to delay

We are producing degree holders by the thousands, yet critical thinkers remain scarce. The system is not failing by accident — and the fixes are well within our reach.

By: Irfan Khan Tareen
xxxxxxxxxxxx

“Very few people know what education really means. Today, it has become little more than a vehicle for securing employment — and even that promise is breaking down.”

Education is, without question, the backbone of any functioning society. It fosters awareness, sharpens the distinction between right and wrong, broadens thinking, and builds both intellect and moral character. The true purpose of a nation's education system should be to produce people who are civilised, democratic-minded, and fully conscious of their rights and responsibilities. By that measure, ours has badly fallen short.

The number of degree holders is growing, yet there is a glaring shortage of creative thinkers and job creators. Instead of building enterprises and opportunities, graduates are desperately chasing employment — including, increasingly, work well beneath their qualifications. Watching a highly educated young person serve tables or work as a mechanic, not by choice but by necessity, is not just disheartening; it is a damning verdict on the system that produced them. The problems are not hard to identify. The medium of instruction — English, for many students a foreign language — consumes so much cognitive energy that core subjects suffer. Countries like Japan, China, and Finland have demonstrated conclusively that teaching in the mother tongue accelerates mastery of science and technology. Add to that an outdated curriculum, an examination system that rewards memory over understanding, inadequate facilities, high dropout rates, politicised faculty hiring, and chronically insufficient education budgets, and the picture that emerges is one of a system in serious distress.

There is also something quietly absurd about watching young children stagger to school under the weight of backpacks stuffed with materials they will rarely use — while the skills they gen-



Granduands

uinely need for adult life go largely untaught. Finland, Singapore, and Japan offer a telling contrast: students attend three to four classes a day, carry little to nothing home, and spend their time thinking, debating, questioning assumptions, and solving real problems. Their institutions are not profit-driven enterprises; they are places of genuine human development. Ours, too often, are not.

So what can we actually do? The following ten reforms are not radical — they are practical, proven, and long overdue.

1. REPLACE ROTE LEARNING WITH CONCEPT-BASED UNDERSTANDING

Students must be encouraged to question what they read, simplify complex ideas in their own words, and truly grasp meaning — not simply memorise answers to reproduce on a test sheet. Comprehension, not recall, should be the measure of learning.

2. TEACH COMMUNICATION AS A CORE SKILL

The ability to speak clearly, listen carefully, and express oneself with confidence is not a soft skill — it is foundational. Schools must treat verbal and non-verbal communication with the same

seriousness as mathematics or science.

3. INTRODUCE FINANCIAL LITERACY

Far too many graduates leave school unable to distinguish between an asset and a liability, or between investment and expenditure. Basic financial education — how money works, how to manage it, and how to grow it — should be part of every curriculum.

4. FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

Debate clubs, speech contests, brain puzzles, and sports all sharpen the mind in ways that textbooks cannot. These activities deserve genuine space in the school day, not a reluctant footnote in an already crowded timetable.

5. BUILD DIGITAL LITERACY AND AI AWARENESS

Students need to understand the digital world they inhabit — how to navigate it responsibly, how to avoid its distractions, and how to use artificial intelligence as a tool rather than a crutch. Equally important is teaching them what is lost when critical thinking is outsourced to a machine.

6. INVEST IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Children can recite pages of text and still have no idea how to manage stress, handle conflict, or recover from failure. Emotional education — how to regulate feelings, navigate relationships, and build resilience — is not a luxury. It is essential preparation for life.

7. PROFESSIONALISE TEACHER TRAINING

A good teacher understands their subject, knows how to communicate it clearly, and grasps the psychology of the students in front of them. Pre-service training, regular in-service development, and refresher programmes are not optional extras — they are the foundation of a functioning education system.

8. OVERHAUL THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

An assessment that measures only how much a student can memorise is not measuring intelligence — it is measuring memory. Examinations must be redesigned to reward creativity, reasoning, and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts.

9. ERADICATE THE CULTURE OF CHEATING

Widespread examination

fraud is not a minor inconvenience; it is a corrosive force that degrades merit, suppresses fairness, and makes it impossible to distinguish the capable from the dishonest. Strict, consistently enforced rules are a prerequisite for any credible reform.

10. REVIVE THE CULTURE OF ASKING QUESTIONS

In too many classrooms, a student who asks a challenging question is met with irritation rather than encouragement. That has to change. Curiosity is not a disruption — it is the entire point. Students who ask good questions become adults who solve real problems.

None of this is beyond us. What is required is the will to act — from teachers who take their calling seriously, from parents who engage rather than abdicate, and from a government prepared to allocate meaningful resources to education rather than treating it as a line item to be trimmed. The returns on that investment, in productivity, in innovation, in social cohesion, are incalculable.

The system is broken. But broken things can be fixed — if we are honest enough to admit the damage and brave enough to do something about it.

Worth Noting:

The number of degree holders is growing, yet there is a glaring shortage of creative thinkers and job creators. Instead of building enterprises and opportunities, graduates are desperately chasing employment — including, increasingly, work well beneath their qualifications. Watching a highly educated young person serve tables or work as a mechanic, not by choice but by necessity, is not just disheartening; it is a damning verdict on the system that produced them. The problems are not hard to identify. The medium of instruction — English, for many students a foreign language — consumes so much cognitive energy that core subjects suffer. Countries like Japan, China, and Finland have demonstrated conclusively that teaching in the mother tongue accelerates mastery of science and technology. Add to that an outdated curriculum, an examination system that rewards memory over understanding, inadequate facilities, high dropout rates, politicised faculty hiring, and chronically insufficient education budgets, and the picture that emerges is one of a system in serious distress.