



# PRESS RELEASE

March 22, 2016

For Immediate Release



ZAMBIA DAILY MAIL, Tuesday, March 22, 2016

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SOME of the Amos Youth Centre's staff and student teachers standing behind an artwork.

PHOTO: ARTSPROUTS/MILA SHELEHOFF

## CampZAMBIA: Unleashing creativity of youths

# Camp "Zambia"

Kafue, Zambia

In February 2015, reflecting a commitment to inclusive and transformative education, Art Sprouts, Inc. partnered with the African Education Program (AEP), an NGO dedicated to youth education and leadership. The primary goal was to enhance the educational offerings at the Amos Youth Centre by integrating a robust arts program into the Centre's after-school activities. This initiative, dubbed Camp Zambia, was not just another educational program; it was a beacon of hope and growth for many of the students in the community, including those from remote villages as well as HIV-positive children.

Art Sprouts, Inc. played a crucial role by facilitating comprehensive teacher training for AEP staff and volunteers. This training was tailored to ensure educators were skilled in arts education and sensitive and adaptable to their student's diverse needs and backgrounds. The impact of Camp Zambia was profound. It provided a unique platform where children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, health conditions, or cultural backgrounds, could engage in artistic and creative processes. This engagement was more than just an educational experience; it was a journey of self-discovery, healing, and empowerment for these young minds.

The success of Camp Zambia is a testament to the power of collaborative efforts in addressing educational inequalities and fostering inclusive growth. Through this initiative, Art Sprouts, Inc. and the AEP demonstrated that when children are given opportunities to express themselves creatively, they can overcome barriers and realize their full potential, shaping a more equitable and understanding future for all.

## It's empowering youths to create change in local communities

KELVIN KACHINGWE  
Lusaka

**I**n January 2008, Amos Youth Centre, an educational not-for-profit organisation was launched to support vulnerable youths in the greater Kafue community of Shikoswe, Kalundu View, Zambia Compound Estates and Shikwambani.

The vision of the centre is to be the leading non-profit organisation that brings hope into the lives of the youth that are in despair and adversity by supporting and guiding them to become a generation of empowered, educated and responsible citizens inspired to create the change in their local communities.

In this regard, it runs a number of programmes including a sponsorship fund. It has been a great success. While in 2008, it was only able to support 50 pupils, by the end of last year, the centre had 193 pupils from grade eight to 12 enrolled in various schools within Kafue district, paying for their tuition fees, examination fees and other requirements such as uniforms and books.

About 38 students, who were on the centre's sponsorship programme, are now attending college and university at various institutions including the University of Zambia (UNZA), Copperbelt University, Mufulira Teachers Training College, Lusaka Nursing Institute and Evelyn Hone College.

Other than the sponsorship programme, the centre runs other programmes such as the Learning Youth Community Centre, Rural Outreach Programme for Empowerment, HIV/AIDS Counselling and Awareness Programme and the Feeding Programme.

The Learning Youth Community Centre is the backbone of the centre's programmes. Located in the Shikoswe area, it is a house that was retrofitted to support the needs of the programmes. It has a library and a few computers, which members can use to supplement their education. This library consists of books for all reading levels - children can read their first words using the available picture books with students having access to textbooks and other academic support materials while adults get to enjoy some novels.

Youths of all ages are encouraged to become members at no cost whatsoever to utilise the facility as well as the three study rooms in the centre.

Last month, it launched a different kind of programme in anticipation of the Youth Day that was commemorated on March 12. This was an art programme, one meant to provide orphans and vulnerable youths a unique opportunity to stand up to poverty and life's challenges through arts education.

The programme was in partnership with the United States-based organisation artSPROUTS. This is a group of volunteers - architects and artists - who through years of working in emerging

markets, have witnessed some of the world's most pressing social concerns such as poverty, gender inequality and lack of access to education.

Organised exclusively for charitable and educational purposes in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code of the United States, it achieves its vision by facilitating self-sustaining programmes that make arts education available through strategies that ensure a holistic long-term approach.

In launching the programme, they have dubbed CampZAMBIA, they envisioned it to be able to unleash the creative potential of the country's youth; nurturing the development of essential life skills such as critical thinking, leadership and self-esteem building.

It is a programme the Kafue district cultural office under the Ministry of Tourism and Arts has welcomed.

"We need to start using art to unleash the creativity of our youth. This programme brings fresh perspective to how we approach art and help our students flourish," says Edward Kampeishi, the district cultural officer.

CampZAMBIA is built upon the Art Smart Teaching Strategy that develops students' appreciation for the arts through self-expression. During a two-week, hands-on teacher training facilitated by artSPROUTS,

Amos Youth Centre's staff, student teachers, and representatives of the district social welfare office and Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs learn how to nurture students' artistic abilities and help them appreciate art in the broader world.

"We are proud to host this unique programme at the centre, and are eager to see the progress of our students as they advance through the programme," Frederick Kamanya, the executive director of Amos Youth Centre, said at the launch of the programme.

ArtSPROUTS were equally enthusiastic about the programme. "The more we can open the world for our children, the more beautiful a place it will be for them," said Mila Shelehoff, founder and executive director of artSPROUTS.

"Through campZAMBIA, we seek to work together with Amos Youth Centre to remove the barriers to learning, foster appreciation of the arts, and provide tools for creative self-expression.

"Community engagement is the cornerstone of our programme, demonstrating the power to come together and act on their own behalf."

And why do they call themselves artSPROUTS? It is a question Shelehoff says is often asked.

"It is because we are like a seed that was planted, watered, germinated, and nurtured. We bring the seed of knowledge to you, for you to plant, to grow and to love. For yourself, first and foremost. And when the plant is strong, for your family, and for your friends. For your neighbours and for your nation, to show you are proud and educated Zambians. For now, for tomorrow, for the future," she says.

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