



Credits: Congregação dos Padres Sacramentinos

Youth Empowerment, Social Media and Social Justice Nexus

Speaking on the death of George Floyd in the hands of police officers in Minnesota, Tim Waltz, the state governor, praised the role of young people and their use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to address social injustices, saying "... And thank God a young person had a camera to video it, because there's not a person here or listening today that wonders how many times that camera is not there."¹

Inspired by the act of the young person who vi-

deotaped George Floyd's death, Youth Hubs in Niassa have been reflecting on the role of young people in the application of information and communication technologies to promote social justice in the country. "We, young people, have information and communication technologies at our disposal and this is the positive thing about globalization. We can use these technologies for our good bringing to the limelight good and bad events that take place in our communities. We should report

¹ Minnesota Governor, Tim Waltz. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52863506>

the bad cases and praise the good ones”, a young man in Mandimba stated.

The discussion was somewhat hijacked when a female participant shared a story of the death of a pregnant woman in Bairro da Matola in Lichinga because of being beaten by police officers because she had not worn her facemask appropriately. The story raised much ire among young people who decided to send one of them to approach the family of the deceased woman to get all the facts to see how best they can help the family address this injustice. Reporting to the group, the group’s envoy said, “We will be able to talk to the woman’s husband after the ceremonies of the third day.”

Continuing with the idea of exposing bad things, a girl shared with the group about the death of a twenty-year-old boy in Cuamba. “He was a twelfth grader. He and his friend were talking on the street at about 6 pm when suddenly they saw some police officers approaching. They ran away and the police shot him, the bullet hit him on the neck, and he died. The police officer was arrested, but the family of the deceased boy forgave the officer and removed the lawsuit against him.” The group said the lawsuit can not be withdrawn because homicide is a public crime. After a follow up by one of the group’s member, the group learnt that the police officer remains in custody and that the public prosecutor’s office will press charges against the officer. Also, the state will pay for the boy’s funeral expenses. However, the group agreed that they should stay informed on the development of the case.

“It is very sad. I believe police officers in our province are being extremely zealous on the implementation of the presidential decree concerning the State of Emergency. The use of force against those who do disobey the State of Emergency must be the last resort and it must never lead to loss of life. So far, I have heard of one death in Lichinga, one in Cuamba, and three here in Mandimba. Overly zealous police officers, who apply disproportionate

force against anyone who does not adhere to prevention measures, killed these people. This cannot go on like this. Something must be done to change this scenario”, a young man in Mandimba said. Some young people in Mandimba will get detailed information on each case and share with the group for follow up.

Young men in Niassa are collecting and sharing evidence of police brutality against civilians. While selling his airtime pins at the Central Market in Lichinga, a young man videotaped an incident where three police officers beat a young man with a baton for not wearing a facemask. On the video, police officers can be seen throwing the young man down to the ground. Then they step on him and kick him. A passerby can be heard saying “mask, mask. You must wear a mask. Mask.” Then, with the young man still lying helplessly on the ground, a police officer beats him with a baton while people stand by and watch. To see the video, please follow the link <https://bit.ly/308Jlvv>.

Reacting to the video, a participant in the discussion said, “One of the greatest challenges with the presidential decree is that it does not seem to take into account peculiar aspects of our socio-economic reality. For example, how can a person whose liquor-selling business has been closed make a living? The State has closed people’s livelihoods and has brought them nothing for their living. However, I have heard that MPs of the last legislature will get 4 million meticaís each for their reintegration subsidy. I wonder how many families the State could have helped with this money. I believe they could have bought enough masks for poor people and the police would not have to be beating people for not having masks.”

With the current five death cases to follow, the challenge to expose bad practices and praise good ones in their communities, young people in Niassa are taking practical steps to use ICT to promote a community dialogue on State of Emergency and family livelihoods.

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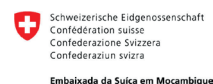
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