

## **YET Addresses Portfolio Committee on Youth:**

### **Calls on Legislators to Strengthen Youth Participation in Policymaking**

The Youth Empowerment and Transformation (YET) Trust met with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women Affairs, Youth, Gender and Community Development at the invitation of the Committee. The committee sought an update on YET policy advocacy work which involves the National Youth Policy Review, the National Healing Process and promoting youth voices in the constitution with the view of taking on board youth views in these processes. YET made the following submissions

#### **1. The National Youth Policy**

The Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YET) expressed concern over the delay by the Government, particularly the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment to urgently review the national youth policy. Since YET's update to the full committee in August 2009, the parliamentarians were told, that YET had convened a National Validation Meeting. YET together with some of the youth who participated in the provincial consultations on policy review, handed over youth recommendations to the Minister

responsible for youth affairs on the process and content for a new policy.

It was noted that key issues for review should be around ensuring that a new policy comes with it strategies that are relevant to addressing the challenges that the youth face today around access to education, health and empowerment opportunities. These must be crafted together with other strategies for meaningful youth empowerment in all facets of youth development.

The committee was told that in reviewing the National Youth Policy, there was need to ensure that checks and balances were put in place around the National Youth Service programme so that the programme would not be hijacked for political motives.

#### **2. Youth and National Healing**

The lack of consideration for youth input in the creation of a policy framework for national healing was noted as a cause for concern. YET also shared its work in the training of community-based Peace Ambassadors across the country and noted that the purpose of Peace Ambassadors was to ensure that there are apolitical youth in communities who can actively organize and objectively

educate youth on transitional justice issues.

In order to address the gap of youth participation in the drafting of a national healing framework, the committee backed YET's plans to organize a consultative meeting for the youth with the Organ on National Healing. They also suggested and pledged to support the youth sector meetings with the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC).

YET emphasized that national healing should precede any political processes at grassroots as people were still seething with anger to avoid political violence erupting again. Hence YET noted that the constitution making process and elections were difficult to imagine under the current environment.

### **3. The Constitution**

That an ideal constitution making process should be preceded by constitutional literacy among the youth, most of whom have no idea what a constitution is. The update also addressed (at the Parliamentarians request) some of the issues that the youth want addressed in the new constitution.

The committee was also told that YET and the youth sector remained concerned at the

relapse in the service delivery system which had begun to show signs of recovery. The current strike by civil servants was cited as an example and viewed as having the potential to cripple education and health delivery among other services.

More importantly, the economy was yet to create jobs for the youth and there was limited support to livelihood projects, leaving many youth (who constitute the greater percentage of the unemployed) destitute.

### **Way Forward**

In the end, the committee pledged to work with YET to;

- ✓ Follow up the policy review process and strengthen youth participation in current national healing and constitution making processes;
- ✓ Monitor the National Youth Service and prepare a report of recommendations on the programme;
- ✓ Seek resources for building the capacity of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee responsible for youth.

The committee also shared its work plan for 2010 with YET