

CIVICUS SOLIDARITY FUND INTERVIEWS:

WORD SMASH POETRY MOVEMENT, ZAMBIA



Tell us a little bit about your group and the support you requested from the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund (CSF)

Word Smash Poetry is a creative free expression Southern African youth Artists Social-Pan-African Movement. Its main thrust is to provide a platform for young creative activists and artists to speak truth to power through spoken word. The Word Smash Poetry was established in August 2017. The movement was legally listed in June 2020 only for administrative purposes but remains fluid and a Social Movement. We amplify the stage works on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/WordSmashPoetry/> where we command over 12,000 followers of which 60% are Zambian. The platform prides itself with a regular pool of over 50 brave poets (24 females) across Zambia, around 60 (30 females) affiliate poets from the SADC region and an average of 120 persons per show with over 10,000 views and reach for each poetic post. The catchment area for poets and audiences are universities, youths from compounds, rural youths and the message targets mostly decision-makers and power holders. The core team is 5 with 10 provincial volunteer curators.

We requested support under the Solidarity Fund to aid us to realise the many goals we aim to achieve as a social movement. The Fund is supporting us to have physical activities, reach out to more people and produce quality content online to raise the voices of youths to participate in elections in a peaceful way as well as value human rights.

How was your group's experience mobilising resources?

As a social movement, it is difficult to fundraise. Most established organisations want to fund well established and big organisations with offices and cars. The requirements for many grants are too much for social movements. We have to rely on partnerships and collaborations as opposed to direct funding.

What was the most important change that you have observed as a result of being awarded the CSF?

We are able to reach out to two extra provinces now. We have reliable internet and as well as more organised meetings as we can cover venues.

Other than the financial support, has being part of the CSF been helpful in any other ways? If so, how?

Yes, the conversations during our check-in times with CIVICUS have been great and guiding. We also have one of our Team members as part of the Diversity & Inclusion Group for Networking and Action (DIGNA)*. These opportunities were only possible because we are part of the CSF. It is building our network with other organisations.

*DIGNA is an online platform that brings together change-makers and thought leaders passionate about strengthening an inclusive and diverse civil society – including CIVICUS members, civil society organisations, groups, and activists, and their allies. This working group seeks to understand, conceptualise and identify innovative practices on what diversity and inclusion (D&I) can look like within different thematic areas and operating models.

What could have made the experience better?

Physical visits would have been great, both by the CSF team and also the team of Word Smash Poetry visiting other CSF members, but due to COVID-19 this was not possible.

Any advice for future applicants?

It is best to stay true to your course and stick to the activities planned. Social Movements must be strong and not driven too much by money.



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