

SPEECH BY SAMANTHA LUSENO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT 254 YOUTH POLICY CAFÉ, DURING LAUNCH OF PROJECTS FOR ART FOR CHILDREN FOUNDATION, ON SATURDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Guest of Honor – Mr. Yemi Babington-Ashaye

Directors of Children Homes

Members of the Art Foundation Advisory Board

Founder and CEO of the Art Foundation

Attending guests

All protocols observed

Good morning

I was given a heavy task today to speak to how Art can influence policy; and truthfully this has been wrecking my brain the entire week because it's a concept we seldom discuss but where possibilities are limitless.

"The aim of art is not to represent the outward appearance of things but their inward significance"- this is a famous quote by Aristotle and the principle against which I believe contributions of art to policy should be based.

That said, I have identified a number of areas I believe art can be used to influence policy:

1. The age-old problem in public policy is information Asymmetry. It is the reason corruption thrives; development stalls and nations fall. I asked myself a vital question earlier this week, about how we can possibly position the art generated by the foundation to support in building a bridge between especially young people and policy makers:
 - a. **The first way**, is simply communicating to citizens their rights. When citizens understand their rights within the law they are more likely to demand it and this will improve systems and structures
 - b. **The second**, is to see how you can be a bridge from the grassroots to the politicians or even to national bodies like 254. A lot of the people who participate in the policy making process are truthfully unaware of developments on the ground.

- c. **The third**, is to drive social change. In the last year there has been a change from interaction in in person spaces to engaging in a virtual space. We have some certain artists, albeit in different focus areas take up the mantle of enlightening the community on state actors not performing as they should.
 - i. Njugush in his famous clip Kiongozi Shupavu where he illustrates the use of politics & leadership by politicians to enrich themselves.
 - ii. Nyashinski and Sauti Sol in his song “Tujiangalie” where they outwardly speak about the state of corruption in the country
 - iii. These are just a few examples. Its time for you to start thinking about how you can use your unique form of art to influence policy.
- 2. But now to the Art for Children Foundation team, you have a very critical role to play in the development of policies and programmes in Kenya for the youth. It is your responsibility to document the experience:
 - a. Document the Wins- What I mean by this is you need to capture both the intended and unintended impact of the programmes.
 - b. Clearly Document the Challenges - & I mean do this at every stage on every day as you implement the programmes that you are rolling out today
 - c. Document the Learnings- How did you trouble shoot the challenges at each stage.
 - d. And participate!!!
 - e. Mentor not just individuals but organizations
- 3. That said, I really appreciate this initiative and the extent to which you are already impacting the community.