

## Submission in response to call for input by the OHCHR on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people – Human Rights Council Resolution 48/12

*14 February 2022*

### Submitting organisations

The Africa Albinism Network, Albinism Advocacy for Access South Africa, Divine Connexion World Wide, Associação Ze Manuel Pinto, Albinism Foundation of Zambia welcome the opportunity to jointly submit their contribution to the OHCHR study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the human rights of young people pursuant the Human Rights Council Resolution 48/12.

This submission will provide information on the situation in 5 African countries namely; South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Benin. The submission will focus on the experiences of youth with albinism whose voices are often underrepresented in such discussions. The individual country submissions are made by youth with albinism working in organisations of persons with albinism in these countries.

### Contributing Organisations Profiles

- **Africa Albinism Network**, established in February 2021 is a consortium of organisations working to promote – through human rights advocacy – the dignity, rights, and welfare of persons with albinism and their family members in Africa. The Alliance aims to ensure that the [African Union Plan of Action to End Attacks and other Human Rights Violations Targeting Persons with Albinism \(2021-2031\)](#) is implemented at the national level, including through national action plans with multi-year budgets; and that the positive effects of these measures concretely advance the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism in the Africa region.

- **Associação Ze Manuel Pinto (AZEMAP)**, legally constituted on August 25th, 2016, by order number 14. Is a civil society organisation, of a charismatic and philanthropic nature, created under articles one and 4 of law 8/91 of July 18th. Its mission is to advocate for the vulnerable, with emphasis on the person with albinism. Its vision is from charity, with charity for charity, on behalf of the neediest and its values are a charity, respect for diversity, integrity, dignity, and professionalism.
- **Albinism Foundation of Zambia** was established in 2008 as a non-governmental organisation that works to promote the welfare of persons with albinism in Zambia. It is the first albinism organisation in Zambia. The vision of the foundation is to see persons with albinism in Zambia enjoying and exercising their rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with the rest of society without any form of discrimination based on their condition.
- **Divine Connexion World Wide's** mission is to create a world where the fear of God, Peace, and Justice is inherent in the majority. Their mission is to promote a biblically inclusive society in Benin and throughout Africa by developing quality leadership among children and young people, providing the population with healthy theological resources protecting and empowering the vulnerable, and planting Christocentric churches formative of disciples.
- **Albinism Advocacy for Access South Africa's** focus is on learners with Albinism, as many drop out of school and attempt suicide. They push to build confidence; show they can achieve anything they desire; we assist in finding bursaries so they study further and push for independence.
- **The Sierra Leone Albinism Foundation** vision is extensive and includes the establishment of inclusive societies where people with albinism are part of the national development dialogue. Their mission is to promote and protect the human rights and welfare of persons with albinism in Sierra Leone.

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Compiled by Innocentia Mgijima Konopi, Human Rights and Capacity Building Consultant  
Africa Albinism Network



## **Response to call for input by the OHCHR on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people**

Country: **Sierra Leone**

Contributing Organisation: **Sierra Leone Albinism Foundation (SLAFo)**

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- 1. What are the main challenges that young people face in the country/region where you operate in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it? If any age-disaggregated data has been collected in this regard, please include it in your response**

A: Sierra Leone reported its first COVID-19 case on 31 March 2020. Sierra Leone was one of the last countries in the world to be affected by the pandemic but faced a series of institutional and operational challenges that have slowed down response efforts to COVID-19. Young people with albinism in Sierra Leone have faced many challenges in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The main challenges faced by young persons with albinism in Sierra Leone was that some young people lost their jobs because so many institutions were scaling down and retrenching. Schools and colleges were closed for some time, churches and mosques were also closed and all social gatherings were banned. The ban on social gatherings affected young persons with albinism who were mostly involved in sport and entertainment as a way of integrating into the community. There were no entertainment shows organised and there were no sporting activities during this period. Kelvin Musa, a DJ with albinism explained to me how he was struggling to cope during the pandemic because clubs were closed and he survived by playing music in clubs.

Because of restrictions on work and social activities, so many young people with albinism became isolated and stranded. The rate of suffering among young people who are persons with albinism increased during the pandemic because Covid-19 impacted the country economically.

Schools and other educational institutions across the country were closed from 31 March 2020, until after some months. This raised concerns about childcare and continuing education, especially as during the COVID-19 era, many young people's education (especially girls) was severely disrupted, leading to whole generations needing to 'play catch up'. For example, the West African Senior School Certificate Examination was postponed in 2020, which means students that were in their last year of school had to wait one year to take their school leaving exams. Young persons with albinism were part of these students also. Students who were in colleges that were able to attend classes online and struggled to cope.

**2. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to support young people and ensure the full implementation of their rights during and after the pandemic? Please provide examples of policies and programs adopted to this end, in particular regarding the:**

- **right to work and social security (including, for example, to address the job loss, reduction of working hours, wage cut, etc.);**

A: Apart from the general rules of social distancing, no shaking of hands, the frequent washing of hands to curtail the spread of the disease and the lock down which were measures to reduce the spread of the virus, Government as a way of reducing the stress on young and vulnerable people, gave livelihood support through the National Commission for Social Action (NACSA). Vulnerable groups including persons with albinism benefited from this scheme. The World Food Organisation (WFP) through the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) also gave livelihood support through the Emergency Cash Transfer (ECT) system. Young people with disabilities also benefited from that scheme.

- **right to education (including in the context of the closure of educational institutions and transition to online learning);**

A: To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, schools, universities, and other institutions of learning were all closed until early July 2020, when they were re-opened for pupils taking public exams. Schools, universities and other learning institutions were closed. Thus, an estimated 2.6 million children from pre primary to senior secondary were out of school including persons with albinism.

The Ministry of Education placed measures geared towards continuous learning when schools were closed. TV and radio learning were launched for third term schooling but this presented challenges especially for pupils in remote rural areas where media coverage is

either inaccessible or poor and poverty is high. The result is unequal access to these services. Universities also explored using e-learning platforms to deliver lessons but were unlikely to have a positive impact for reasons similar to those for radio teaching. In these circumstances, the closure of schools poses additional risks to vulnerable groups including young girls and persons with disabilities. Young girls who were at home were vulnerable to several vices including sexual violence and rape, and teenage pregnancy.

### **3. What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts in the country/region where you operate?**

A: So many young people were encouraged to be part of the recovery process. The National Covid-19 Emergency Response Center (NaCOVERC) used the football family and entertainers to help fast track the recovery process. Songs were done by young people to create awareness during the pandemic and also to convince people to take the vaccine. So many young people including persons with albinism got the vaccine when it was made as criteria to watch the country's national football league, thus increasing the number of people that took the virus. This influenced so many young people to take the COVID vaccine.

The Sierra Leone Albinism Foundation held a series of programs also where we spoke to young people about the dangers of the virus and what they should do to protect themselves from contracting it.



Response to call for input by the OHCHR on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people

Country: **Zambia**

Contributing Organisation: Albinism Foundation of Zambia  
(AFZ) [albinismzambia.com](http://albinismzambia.com)

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- 1. What are the main challenges that young people face in the country/region where you operate in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it? If any age-disaggregated data has been collected in this regard, please include it in your response.**

A: Young people with albinism in Zambia face a lot of challenges including rejection and discrimination by members of the society. The situation worsened during the pandemic. The discrimination which they used to face, now it has become double during this time. You know people have developed a new myth since the pandemic started linking persons with albinism to the spread of the Coronavirus. Whenever people see a person with albinism they will say , "You are the ones who brought Covid-19 here" because they perceive persons with albinism to be white and associate Covid-19 with white people/ Westerners. So, when they see a person with albinism, they have to mock him/ her saying things like, "You are not needed here in our country because you are the same people bringing Covid-19 here."

Then there is another myth that developed during this period of Covid-19 that is harmful to persons with albinism. As there have been no recorded cases of a person with albinism dying from the virus, people have concluded that persons with albinism are immune to Covid-19, that they cannot die from Covid-19. This belief builds onto the particular myth that has been in existence for some time that persons with albinism don't die, they just disappear. So, now some members of the society have started to say apart from disappearing there is nothing which can kill persons with albinism which fuels myths that the body parts of persons with albinism having magical or supernatural powers which in turn results in attacks and killings of persons with albinism and violation of their corpses. The body of a 14-year-old male juvenile with albinism Widson Mkandawire from Mundalanga Village (Eastern Province of Zambia) in Chama District who died and was buried on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2022 was exhumed by unknown people and his left hand chopped off.

Students with albinism at university whose studies were sponsored by certain donors or companies found themselves without sponsorship after the pandemic broke out. So, it became very difficult for many of them to find the resources to continue their studies or even to cope up with the situation because they had nowhere to get the money, resources, or help. Many universities started teaching online at the start of the pandemic and have continued to do so. Persons with albinism are short sighted, something many lecturers forget when teaching online. You find the font of the presentation is very small and you even find that students are even given some of their assessments on the same platform. There is no inclusion and lecturers don't care about students with albinism being comfortable with what is being presented. As you know persons with albinism in the entire world are a minority group, even in Zambia they are minority, so you find that even that consideration when it comes to inclusiveness is not there, as long as the majority are able to cope with the situation then they generalise it and say everyone is okay. It's really a challenge. So, students with albinism in the process they fall behind.

Another challenge has been that university students that are receiving government bursaries have not received the necessary support to enable them to learn online. You find that universities shifted from the traditional way of learning to online and online learning is very much expensive as you need data amongst other things. Government did not provide personal laptops or data or such things for those students who are on government sponsored bursaries. Students need some additional funds to enable them to cope with online learning.

So, you find that, getting employment was always challenging for youth with albinism before the pandemic because of the stigma associated with albinism, now it is almost impossible. You find young people with albinism are struggling.

So, in general I can just say Covid-19 has affected young people with albinism in a lot of areas. To make matters worse, persons with albinism were not considered in the Covid 19 responses.

So, at the moment I'm not aware of any research which has been done on the impact of the pandemic on secluded populations such as young people with albinism.

**2. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to support young people and ensure the full implementation of their rights during and after the pandemic? Please provide examples of policies and programmes adopted to this end, in particular regarding**

A: So, I can say at the moment that there are no measures which the government has put in place specifically for young persons to cope with Covid-19 and none for young persons with albinism and other disabilities. Maybe this is due to the fact that we have a new government following the recently held elections. As the Albinism Foundation of Zambia, we are trying to engage the new government and see how they can work with us to address the challenges being faced by persons with albinism including youth with albinism.

- **right to work and social security (including, for example, to address the job loss, reduction of working hours, wage cut, etc.);**

A: The new government has set up a new Ministry called the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises. The Ministry will provide loans and training for small to medium businesses. The government has made it clear that youth will be prioritised. So, the hope is that many youths will benefit from this new Ministry. The Albinism Foundation of Zambia is fighting to ensure that youth with albinism are included in the initiative. Most of the young related programmes which have been happening in Zambia especially youth empowerment programmes have not always benefitted youth with albinism.

I think the Zambian government should be taking more measures during this period to provide some social protection for youths. Youths are really suffering here in Zambia. So, I feel like the government has to set up a certain grant specifically for



youths because at the moment at this period in the pandemic a lot of youths are unemployed and have no means of earning a living. A growing number are taking drugs as a way of coping while some have started harassing people in the street so that they can get a little money for themselves. So, in order for that to stop I feel that the government has to empower youths by setting up a certain grant for unemployed youths. So that they are at least able to manage themselves in these difficult times.

- **right to education (including in the context of the closure of educational institutions and transition to online learning);**

A: The new government used to promise the Zambian youth during the time of electoral campaigns that once they acquire power, they will provide free education from the primary level to the secondary level and now we have them in power they have fulfilled that promise which they made to the Zambian youth. As we are talking right now in Zambia, we have got free education from primary up to the secondary level. And as the Albinism Foundation of Zambia, we applaud the government for this because it is also going to give a chance to young persons with albinism, especially those who did not manage to go to school due to lack of funds to go to school as well as those whose education was disrupted by the pandemic.

- **right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (including with the increase in domestic violence and abuse, anxiety and depression, stress caused by social isolation, etc.);**

A: As mentioned earlier there is a new government in Zambia, so maybe they are still working on their promises but at the moment I can tell you that in the health sector there are no specific measures to support youth.

- **right to participate meaningfully in political and public affairs (including in connection with the prohibition of gatherings and transition to online rallies);**

A: Generally, I think here in Zambia the Zambian government has turned a deaf ear to issues to do with persons with albinism from the time Zambia got its independence up to now. The Zambian government has not seriously considered the rights of persons with albinism.

So even the activities which were happening in Zambia such as voter registration during the 2021 general elections those with albinism were not considered. Before elections as Albinism Foundation of Zambia we started a campaign encouraging persons with albinism to go and vote because we discovered that there was lack of confidence amongst persons with albinism to go and vote.



Part of the reluctance to vote also has to do with undesirable voting conditions. You find that people with albinism have to stand in long queues whilst it is very hot at polling stations. No one cares to put them in the shade. The polling assistants don't even allow persons with albinism to go in front of the queue to vote first.

So, we were doing campaigns to educate people with albinism, especially the youth that they need to exercise their right to vote because they are also citizens of this country. We even produced a documentary called *Leaving no one behind*. A number of people with albinism voted as a result.

We didn't have youth with albinism standing for elections. Here in Zambia politics are tough. The way politics are done here in Zambia they are done with intimidation; they are done with some threats and politicians make the environment so uncomfortable that youth in general do not want to participate. Candidates attack and insult one another. So, I feel like persons with albinism fear they will experience even more discrimination, rejection and stigma when they enter into the political arena.

**3. What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts in the country/region where you operate?**

A: Young people including those with albinism haven't played much of a role. Many are not even vaccinated and more needs to be done.

**4. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to encourage the role of youth in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts?**

A: What the government has done at the moment is to come up with different types of messages about the health guidelines and how you can avoid getting infected with Covid-19. But the government has not encouraged the youth or involved them in the fight against Covid-19. Apart from these health messages I don't think there is any other message directed at the youths or messages encouraging the youth to join the fight against Covid-19. And I feel like even if the government is trying to sensitise the general public on the health guidelines on Covid-19, I feel they have not done much especially in rural areas. We went to a certain remote area where we were running a sensitisation programme on albinism, and we observed that people were not taking Covid-19 seriously at all. We found people were living as if there was no Covid-19. People were not following the measures set by the government such as masking up, social distancing and washing hands. So, we concluded that the government has not disseminated enough information especially in rural areas.

**Recommendations**

A: I have a recommendation for the government. We, as Albinism Foundation in Zambia have noticed that the government does not concentrate on issues to do with

albinism. In the past government activities, programmes and initiatives have not included persons with albinism. Even if we approach them there has been no reservation of a portion of allocated funds to be given to persons with albinism. So, my hope is that this new age government in all of its activities, initiatives and programmes should include or consider persons with albinism. Because I am pretty sure the Zambian government is aware that they have persons with albinism in Zambia, and these persons are Zambian citizens and are entitled by law to enjoy all the benefits and privileges which a Zambian citizen should enjoy because they are citizens of Zambia. So, I think this time around the government should be considering persons with albinism in whatever they do including in the Covid- 19 recovery strategy. Persons with albinism need to start to feel at home because at the moment persons with albinism are feeling left out and yet the government is preaching that they will leave no man behind.

**Response to call for input by the OHCHR on Social development challenges faced by persons with albinism, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Country: **Ghana**

Contributing Organisation: Kwame Andrews Daklo Albinism Rights Activist and Albinism Programs Coordinator at Engage Now Africa. He is an Obama Leader and a YALI RLC Alumni; [dakloandrewsk@gmail.com](mailto:dakloandrewsk@gmail.com) or [dakloandrews@yahoo.com](mailto:dakloandrews@yahoo.com)

- 1) What are the main challenges that young people face in the country/region where you operate in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it? If any age-disaggregated data has been collected in this regard, please include it in your response.**

A: Young people with albinism experienced a heightened level of discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion during this period due to pre-existing misconception surrounding albinism. There was a belief at the start of the pandemic in Ghana that since the disease originated in China anyone who looked Caucasian including young people with albinism was a carrier. The pandemic, therefore, increased the stigma already experienced by young people with albinism in the country. I, as a young person with albinism, experienced this on 3 occasions whilst in Accra.

The first instance I was sitting in the front seat of a minivan taxi. There was a traffic jam so the cars were moving slowly. A driver on a motorbike stopped next to the minivan and asked the driver why he was letting me ride in the taxi when people like me were spreading the virus. He became confrontational and demanded to know where I was from and kept shouting

that I should go back and stop spreading the virus. In another incident, I went into a supermarket to get some groceries as I was sanitising my hands. A guy walked up to me and asked in a local language if I was Chinese. I replied that I was not in the vernacular. He went on to say if I had been, he would have prevented me from going into the shops because Chinese people are spreading the virus. I have had instances when I was walking down the street and had people call me *Mr. Coronavirus man*.

- **Disruption in health care services and sunscreen distribution**

Access to health care was already a problem for young people with albinism even before the outbreak. It has gotten much worse since the pandemic started. Someone I know was suffering from skin cancer when the pandemic broke out. We were in the process of helping him get treatment but, when the pandemic hit the hospitals shifted all their focus to those affected by the virus. The person's treatment was put on hold for a whole year. His skin cancer worsened considerably affecting other organs. When the public hospitals reopened there was such a huge backlog of patients waiting for treatment that in the end, he resorted to getting treatment from a private hospital, which was costly because now he needs extensive chemotherapy.

Community health outreaches targeting persons with albinism were stopped during the height of the pandemic. Organisations such as Engage now Africa who used to go to communities and distribute sunscreen lotion and sunglasses for persons with albinism including youth and also educate them about sun protective behaviours could not do so because of restrictions in movements placed by government. This has affected the health of those beneficiaries as no alternative measures were put in place. There has been a marked deterioration in the skin condition of many young persons with albinism in the community due to this disruption in accessing sunscreen lotion.

- **Reasonable accommodation during closure of education institutions**

During the pandemic, all schools closed down and everyone stayed home for about 7 months at all levels of education from basic to tertiary education. The Ministry of Education came up with TV and Radio programs where teachers taught various subjects on the Ghana broadcasting corporation channels. The problem with this was that it excluded young people with albinism in rural areas who have no access to gadgets like TV and Radio thus denying them access to education during that time. Those with access to TVs could not adequately see what was being displayed on the TV screen because not much thought was given to making programs accessible to those with low vision. The Ministry of Education did not try to reach students with albinism so that they could share material being taught on TV in large print. Therefore, students with albinism just sat in front of their TVs during these lessons but could not see, especially maths lessons, which involve a lot of writing on board. These are some of the challenges students with albinism faced during the Covid 19 pandemic. At the tertiary level, universities were running courses on zoom and google classes but failed to take into account the fact that some of the students with albinism from poor households have no access to smartphones, personal computers, and other devices for them to participate in online learning. There is a second-year undergraduate student with albinism I know from the village who could not take part in the classes and ended up dropping out. She did not have the laptop or smartphone that would allow her to take part and as a result missed her exams. Online platforms are also a strain on those with low vision.

- **Employment and livelihood opportunities limited**

Honestly getting employment and retaining it has always been problematic for young people with albinism. Youth with albinism employed in the private sector were affected the most by the pandemic. Many young people were laid off from work. As persons with albinism were considered to be spreading the virus people did not want to engage them in their businesses in the case of entrepreneurs during this time.

There are no published reports on the impact of the pandemic on youth with albinism. Organisations working on albinism could not collect data in the field during the pandemic.

**2) What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to support young people and ensure the full implementation of their rights during and after the pandemic? Please provide examples of policies and programmes adopted to this end, in particular regarding:**

A: There are a number of measures taken by the government to safeguard the rights of people during the pandemic, but most did not target youth nor consider vulnerable groups such as those with albinism. It is uncertain how many young people benefitted from the programme. The few measures that targeted young persons were driven by Civil Society and not the government.

- **right to work and social security (including, for example, to address the job loss, reduction of working hours, wage cut, etc.);**

A: The government did not put measures in place to address the employment related challenges experienced by youth. The government has put measures to control the number of employees working from the office. Employers are expected to allow those who can work from home to do so. Additional support to enable people to work from home was not considered.

There is a Coronavirus alleviation programme that the government introduced to support businesses that were greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is about 1 billion dollars or so if I get it right made available to support businesses through this programme. This however, doesn't specifically target young people in business and I am not certain how many young people have benefitted from it.

- **right to education (including in the context of the closure of educational institutions and transition to online learning);**

A: Now that the more stringent restrictions have been relaxed, and schools are back in session, the normal processes of doing things have been restored. So young people with albinism are back to the challenges they faced in schools before the pandemic such as not having access to textbooks with large fonts, not having the adequate technologies and necessary reasonable accommodation in the classroom. There has been no conscious effort to help those students with albinism whose education was negatively impacted by the issues already highlighted and have fallen behind. It's back to business as usual.

- **other rights or freedoms.**

A: At the height of the pandemic, the government distributed relief items such as food parcels, PEE to persons with albinism and persons with disabilities including youth. The

majority of young persons with albinism in the rural areas did not benefit, as efforts were concentrated in urban settings.

**3) What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts in the country/region where you operate?**

A: I would say the role that young people with albinism have played has been at a personal level or encouraged by civil society and not something initiated or encouraged by the government. Some organisations working on albinism such as Engage now Africa, Ghana Association of Persons with Albinism involved youth with albinism in creating Covid health promotion messages, videos and pamphlets. There have not been forums created to allow young people with albinism to share their ideas on what can be done to relieve the impact of Covid 19 on their society.

**4) What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to value/encourage the role of youth in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts?**

A: I don't know if there are any measures taken to encourage youth to play an active role in Covid-19 responses, vaccination, or recovery efforts. I think for the greater part the government stance has been to do things by themselves.

But I would like to see more youth with albinism moving forward being more involved in recovery efforts. You know, the Coronavirus has affected us differently, so we also need youth with albinism to be engaged as to how they are impacted by the pandemic. The emergence of the Coronavirus has increased the level of stigma and discrimination that surrounds persons with albinism. So, these kinds of engagements are needed to understand the situations of persons with albinism and how the government can respond to this. When government is working on Covid-19 messaging they should include content that addresses the misconception that individuals with albinism are carriers of Covid-19 in order to curb the ongoing discrimination and stigmatization against them. Government should also create inclusive messages and have young persons with albinism also featured in videos and other messages. This will have the effect of also raising awareness on albinism.



**Response to call for input by the OHCHR on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people**

Country: **Benin**

Contributing Organisation: Divine Connexion Worldwide ([www.dcw.bj](http://www.dcw.bj))

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- 1. What are the main challenges that young people face in the country/region where you operate in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it? If any age-disaggregated data has been collected in this regard, please include it in your response.**

A: Young people have faced a lot of challenges. The first one being at the beginning of the pandemic economic activity decreased as people were mandated to stay indoors. This led to many people closing their businesses, in some cases scaling down and others being retrenched. Young people with albinism were equally affected, many who had small businesses closed their businesses. Those in the entertainment industry like musicians could not perform as all gatherings were banned and struggled to survive.

The other challenge is that when the pandemic broke out every gathering was forbidden. Universities closed and started offering courses online. Young people with albinism in particular struggled to adjust. Some were not computer literate. Many of them, because of their sight problems, found it difficult to cope with sitting for hours in front of a computer screen and most of them don't have personal computers to use. When the classes went online young people with albinism actually, most young people in general didn't have the capacity to pay for data or internet cafes. This resulted in many missing online classes. So, even if the class is recorded, which is rare, they still needed data to download the recording.

There was no official health plan on how to take care of the health needs of persons with albinism during the pandemic. No structure was in place. Even before the pandemic health service delivery was in general terrible. When the pandemic broke, our organisation could not do our dermatology and ophthalmology program, so the services we rendered to persons with albinism were disrupted.

- 2. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to support young people and ensure the full implementation of their rights during and after the pandemic? Please provide examples of policies and programmes adopted to this end, in particular regarding**
  - right to work and social security (including, for example, to address the job loss, reduction of working hours, wage cut, etc.);**

A: To be straight the government didn't do anything that was particularly oriented towards youth. But the government has set up a fund for small businesses in distress because the government believes that the pandemic has affected the businesses which is true, but nothing was aimed directly at young people. We don't know young people with albinism who have benefited from this, but we can't definitively say they didn't benefit. But also, the requirements are so stressful that many people feel that the government put forward this initiative to register small businesses, so they pay taxes later. For the business to be considered it needed to be registered. Tax is high in Benin so people do not want to register their businesses and be liable for tax so many did not apply for this grant. Craftsmen such as mechanics and artists, seamstresses were meant to benefit from this.

- **right to education (including in the context of the closure of educational institutions and transition to online learning);**

A: No, no the government didn't do anything to ensure accessibility to the online classes. But the government did assist universities to transition to online learning by helping them in building online platforms which was new for universities. But that is only one part of the equation. The other part of ensuring young people can access the platform was left unsolved.

- **right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (including with the increase in domestic violence and abuse, anxiety and depression, stress caused by social isolation, etc.);**

A: Mental health problems amongst the youth have increased during this time. Many are anxious, others depressed and some people have even committed suicide. The government's response was to combat fake news and launch a communication campaign on all the radio and television stations as well as on the web. They launched a huge campaign on mental wellness and combating misinformation about the virus. But youth with albinism didn't get particular attention in terms of their specific health care needs.

- **right to participate meaningfully in political and public affairs (including in connection with the prohibition of gatherings and transition to online rallies);**

A: The government forbade all gatherings at the start of the pandemic so every gathering that was not in the framework of the government, was dispersed by the police. But when it came time for politics the government held huge political gatherings even ignoring Covid-19 regulations in some cases. I wrote a lengthy article saying the virus fears the government since it is only present at churches, concerts and elsewhere but is absent from political rallies or anything pertaining to the government. The government's approach is inconsistent.

### **3. What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts in the country/region where you operate?**

A: Young people here play key roles like raising awareness about the virus. Some associations of young people have done a lot including the distribution of facemasks in public places and putting together funds to procure hand sanitizers and hand washing devices that are put in public places. Youth with albinism have been involved.

I am part of the Benin YALI Alumni Association. We contributed money from our pockets, and we distributed facemasks, we even bought handwash and hand wash devices which we gave away. We also distributed sanitizer. There is another association in my network that is called the Vie Amis, which was very active in that, they even produced videos to sensitise people to wash their hands and on how to wash. They did a lot of things, they even got grants from IRIS and other funders in order to distribute facemasks and other Covid-19 response items. Another organisation Divine Connexion Worldwide also distributed facemasks, they did it at the beginning of the pandemic and they did a lot to raise awareness about the pandemic. When the vaccine was out some young people took the side of vaccination and the good information about Covid-19, so they encouraged people to get vaccinated. They are doing their best to share information about vaccinations



**4. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to value/encourage the role of youth in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts?**

A: I think the government has done a lot in general in responding to Covid-19 virus. However, intentionally allocating funds for youth organisations to contribute to the fight against the pandemic government did not.



**Response to call for input by the OHCHR on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people**

Country: **South Africa**

Contributing Organisation: Albinism Advocacy for Access South Africa

Contact person for more information: Mpho Tjope, Founder & Director of Albinism Advocacy for Access South Africa & Chairperson of the South Africa Albinism Taskforce, [tjopem@yahoo.com](mailto:tjopem@yahoo.com)

**1. What are the main challenges that young people face in the country/region where you operate in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it? If any age-disaggregated data has been collected in this regard, please include it in your response.**

A: Learners moved to remote learning for some time during the pandemic. That was a challenge particularly to those with albinism who had no access to devices to connect to online learning. Those with laptops didn't always have or know how to navigate assistive programmes. With university learners, no consideration was given to the need for extra time during assessment. There was not enough planning or consultation done to ensure inclusive remote learning. The government would give a student a laptop, but that particular laptop does not cater to the individual needs of students with albinism. It didn't take into account that they are short sighted and needed software that allows them to easily zoom into texts. I have had many university students complain about that. The closure of schools also meant students with albinism didn't have the support systems and a safe environment that schools provide and many returned to hostile communities where they experienced bullying and

teasing. It's important to realise that some young people are using school as an escape from community abuse. So many learners with albinism experienced emotional and mental strain during lockdown. They felt alone. School provided companions they could talk to about things that were bothering them.

The other thing was food parcels. When food parcels were being distributed last year to persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Persons with albinism were not given because many who were giving out food parcels felt that persons with albinism were not disabled. Unemployed youth with albinism were thus sometimes denied food packages. So, the issue of whether albinism is a disability came up when it came to accessing certain benefits earmarked for persons with disabilities.

And also work, it has been difficult for youth to get work because of the high unemployment rate even before the pandemic. Now with Covid-19 it has become worse. With the transition to working online, youth with albinism struggle even more to get a job because of their poor eyesight and also to retain it. I look at myself for example, I've never worked fully online and now I have to work online most of the time which is a strain on my eyesight and reduces my productivity. This is often not touched on. Where these challenges are not acknowledged it adds to the erroneous perception that people with disability or people with albinism are incompetent and so forth.

Abuse cases have increased especially with women and girls now that they are at home more with their partners. Young migrants with albinism are also challenged by unemployment and lack social support structures. I think it's something we don't discuss but there are lots of people with albinism who are migrants and if South African citizens with albinism are struggling, then migrants are also struggling ten times harder just because they are not originally from here.

**2. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to support young people and ensure the full implementation of their rights during and after the pandemic? Please provide examples of policies and programmes adopted to this end, in particular regarding**

- **right to work and social security (including, for example, to address the job loss, reduction of working hours, wage cut, etc.);**

A: I don't think that there has been anything that has been done for young people. I think the measures taken have been more focused on survival of the population and economy as well as flattening the curve. There hasn't been time for the government to come out of this survival mode and look at specific vulnerable groups in society.

- **right to education (including in the context of the closure of educational institutions and transition to online learning);**

A: No, and to be fair to the government this thing happened so suddenly and caught most of our governments by surprise because now they were closing schools and dealing with rising

rates of infection. So, there hasn't been much of a response or even a mini response to assist youth including those with albinism.

- **right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (including with the increase in domestic violence and abuse, anxiety and depression, stress caused by social isolation, etc.);**

A: No, in fact there have been more problems. Because of the research I've been doing I've noticed that most hospitals because of Covid-19 were closed to the general public and as a result young persons with albinism who had to collect sunscreen were unable to do so because of that. There haven't been mental health services provided like counselling and even if they were the counsellors, they failed to take into account the peculiarities of the experiences of youth with albinism. Most youth who I have spoken with who went to counselling in various spaces say it did not help because people who were counselling them do not understand what the people with albinism were dealing with.

**3. What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts in the country/region where you operate?**

A: There was an initiative started by young people called Grandkids4Gogo to help older persons register online for the vaccine. However, young people with albinism have been marginalised.

**4. What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to value/encourage the role of youth in COVID-19 response, vaccination and recovery efforts?**

A: Yes, they are encouraging people to help in the recovery efforts, but it is more of a general encouragement and not specifically aimed at the youth or young persons with albinism.

**Additional comments**

A: Speedily approving the draft National Action Plan. The plan has a detailed strategy to improve the lives of persons with albinism and address the economical, health, education, and other challenges they currently face. The plan was written by rights bearers so solutions came from the ground up.



## **Response to call for input by the OHCHR on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights of young people**

**Country focus: Mozambique**

**Contributing Organization: Associação Ze Manuel Pinto (AZEMAP)**

**Contact person for more information: Flavia Pinto, President, Associação Ze Manuel Pinto (AZEMAP) [associacaozemanuelpinto@gmail.com](mailto:associacaozemanuelpinto@gmail.com)**

- 1) What are the main challenges that young people face in the country/region where you operate in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it? If any age-disaggregated data has been collected in this regard, please include it in your response.**

A: The challenges are many and the Covid-19 pandemic made the situation worse. The lack of opportunities for young persons with albinism in almost everything is very high.

- 2) What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to support young people and ensure the full implementation of their rights during and after the pandemic? Please provide examples of policies and programmes adopted to this end, regarding**

- right to work and social security (including, for example, to address the job loss, reduction of working hours, wage cut, etc.);**

A: AZEMAP operates in the entire city of Tete and its districts. In the regions we operate in Mozambique, and from our database, all young persons with albinism don't have a job, there are not many opportunities for them. Our government is doing nothing to change this scenario.

- **right to education (including in the context of the closure of educational institutions and transition to online learning);**

A: Regarding education, we are making good progress in reintegrating children and adolescents with albinism back to school following the closure of schools. As AZEMAP, we provide everything from registration fees, complete material, books and uniforms. Civil society is taking more of a lead compared to the government. Online learning is almost non-existent in Mozambique.

- **right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (including with the increase in domestic violence and abuse, anxiety and depression, stress caused by social isolation, etc.);**

A: Within our association, we have a professional who deals with social inclusion, who also helps with cases of domestic violence and abuse. Fortunately, during this time of the pandemic, we didn't see an increase in domestic violence cases. Regarding social isolation, there was not much drastic change in the lives of youth with albinism. But we have been monitoring the situation.

- **right to participate meaningfully in political and public affairs (including in connection with the prohibition of gatherings and transition to online rallies);**

A: Our government has always ignored the situation of persons with albinism in our country. This group even before the onset of the pandemic was always marginalised and disadvantaged. Several factors hinder their effective and efficient participation in society. Opportunities are rarely given for young people with albinism to actively participate in political, social, civic, and cultural life.

**3) What role have the young people had in COVID-19 response, vaccination, and recovery efforts in the country/region where you operate?**

A: In our region, we didn't have many young persons with albinism infected, thank goodness. As for vaccination, according to the reports we have received, the processes are still ongoing. But we already have a significant number of vaccinated.

**4) What measures are taken in the country/region where you operate to value/encourage the role of youth in COVID-19 response, vaccination, and recovery efforts?**



A: Convincing them to vaccinate has not been an easy task, it is a process of conversations and showing the evidence and information that the Ministry of Health disseminates in the social media about the effectiveness and importance of getting vaccinated and consequently preventing the spread and COVID-19 contamination.