

ANC YOUTH LEAGUE 24th NATIONAL CONGRESS DOCUMENT

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE BATTLE OF IDEAS IN THE AGE OF THE 'TWITTER REVOLUTIONS'!

INTRODUCTION

1. This document is presented for discussion within the ANC Youth League structures ahead of the National Conference to be held in Johannesburg in June 2011. The document comprises two principal parts, namely, the external and the internal environments respectively. The external environment deals with the policy and programmes that are needed to ensure that all South Africans have access to quality and affordable Information and communications technologies (ICTs) and media services. Finally, anecdotal questions are posed to assist discussions.
2. For the sake of this document, by ICTs we refer to technology services that are available because of the Internet. These include our ability to access data content such as facebook on the Internet, video and broadcast content such as You-Tube, media content such as reading newspapers online, and other content platforms such as online dating.
3. Because of the Internet, it is no longer possible to identify a separation between telephones, computers and media as these services can be transmitted over a single network or device. As a further example of this, a television set can now be used to browse the Internet, while a computer can be used to watch television or make a telephone call using innovations like Skype.
4. The use of these technologies allow us to do so many things without having to pay expensive transport costs, yet the potential of the ICT sector to facilitate change and development on a wider scale continue to be hampered by limited access to these technologies, especially in rural and urban poor settlements. The costs of using these technologies remain very high, resulting in many people only using cell phones to send sms or 'please call me'.
5. Many young people cannot use these technologies to access educational material or send assignments to distance learning centres because of the huge costs and poor quality. There are still so many drop calls whereby a person has to make many attempts before establishing connectivity. And this results in our people, having to

pay multiple prices for one call as any dropped call will need to be paid as if a conversation has been concluded.

6. With the twitter revolution sweeping across the Maghreb (Arab North Africa) and parts of the Persian Gulf, it has become plain evident that the communications revolution marked by the advent of high speed Internet networks, will define the socio-economic and political order for most of the 21st century and beyond.
7. Previously, the ANC Youth League expressed reservations on the abuse of technological innovations such as twitter, yet we remain convinced that the ICTs can still be used to better the life of the majority who live in abject poverty.
8. And contrary to media insinuations, the ANC Youth League has never been against the use of ICTs, provided all users respect the rights of individuals to dignity and privacy in line with internationally established legal instruments such as the Universal Declarations of Human Rights, 1948.
9. The Youth League believes, unreservedly, that the technological hype sweeping across the world should not negate the rights to be enjoyed by all citizens of the world. No human being should be denied these rights simply because of their position or place of origin.
10. The internal environment, on the other hand, deals with uptake and usage of ICTs within the structures of the ANC Youth League, including branches, regions, provinces and at the national level. As the organisation of most political active young people in our country, the ANC Youth League should endeavour to position itself as a model user of ICTs and its innovative services.
11. Without a heightened level of alertness in the use of ICTs, the organisation can be overtaken by events. As much as we see ICTs as tools of advancing the revolution, there are those who see the same tools as opportunities to wage rightwing counter-revolutions. At no point should we underestimate the ability of the international rightwing movement to use the same tools that we need to pursue further struggles against neo-colonialism and imperialism.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

12. Successive conferences of the ANC Youth League, especially since the unbanning of the National Liberation movement, have always endeavoured to find ways to ensure universal service and access to quality and affordable access to communications technologies and other media services.

13. For most of this period, decisions of our conferences were not implemented and this was not unique to the resolutions of the Youth League. Many resolutions of the ANC conferences remain unimplemented, making it difficult for us to take stock on progress made towards the diversification of the technological and media spaces.
14. Yet the recent discourse on the nationalisation of mines suggest that the ANC Youth league can still play a role in shaping policy discourse within the ANC and the broader democratic movement. This prime position in the public discourse is consistent with 23rd National Congress Resolution that said, "*The ANC Youth League should continue to position itself as a critical player in the battle of ideas, notwithstanding the dominance of the liberal ideology in the media.*" Below, we highlight critical policy and programmatic interventions to help enhance and create a new communications environment, underpinned by access and usage of the new tools of politics and social change!

Universal access and skills development in the ICT sector

15. Internet and other ICTs and media services are provided by big companies such as Vodacom, MTN, Telkom and Cell-C largely based on their commercial considerations although the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) can impose some obligations on these operators to ensure that services are available across the country.
16. Where necessary, government can use its fiscal resources to augment the market failure of these mainstream companies. Government intervenes through direct financial and infrastructure support to community centers. As stated above, there remains huge disparities in the distribution of ICT resources between communities. Rural areas and poor urban households remain under-served.
17. To address this, government needs to increase the obligations on companies to accelerate access in rural and urban areas. In particular, the Youth League believes that these interventions should be in the form of youth enterprises where young people with sound business acumen provide services to the people. Previous experience on community based centres has not been as successful, and we now need to experiment with youth based SMMEs and co-operatives to play a lead role in the deployment of infrastructure. In this process, the Universal Service and Access Agency (USAASA), as an agency of government charged with facilitating access, should provide infrastructure to youth enterprises and co-operatives while the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) should focus on skills training and the provision of seed capital.

18. Related to this, Government should accelerate its interventions to reduce the costs of telecommunications in the country. From a youth perspective, the decrease in costs will allow young people to access and provide ICTs services. Young people will for example use ICTs to access distance learning opportunities within and outside the country. They will also use ICTs to sell and market their products and services to local and international destinations. A long term framework is needed to inform the costs or prices of voice (normal telephone conversation), sms and data (internet to enable for social networks, educational and business opportunities).
19. While access is central to the uptake and usage of ICTs, we also need to consider ICT skills development in the country. As matter stand, our youth are being exploited by unscrupulous providers of so called IT education. Informed by the demands for ICT skilled workers, many young people, a significant number who are also our members, rely on fly- by- night colleges to get ICT education. They find themselves in this situation because of the failure of the SETAs and the education in general to ensure that no one passes high school without basic ICT knowledge. This has to come to an end, and sooner.
20. In response to the current state of high ICT illiteracy, the ANC Youth League takes a view that basic technology literacy should be introduced in all schools. No young person should complete or leave schools for whatever a reason without having attended ICT literacy classes. Proper certificates should be issued to authenticate various skills level. At the national level, the ANC Youth League believes that the idea of a standalone ICT University should be revived. ICT education should also be included in ABET classes.
21. Furthermore in light of the establishment of the Job Fund, the ICT sector should also play a role in job creation ventures, especially those that are co-owned with young people. Clear terms of reference should be put in place to ensure that companies that benefit from government funding to create jobs should embark on initiatives with clear targets and measurable outcomes. We cannot accept this opportunity to fail like the SETAs .
22. In South Africa broadband network connectivity is driven by multiple agencies without the alignment of their activities. These agencies include SENTECH, InfraCo, Tele Co (telecommunications companies), and municipalities with State Information Technology Agency as the hybrid tele co. The activities of these agencies remain duplicated without achieving the requisite impact and lack of decisiveness on investment in the broadband infrastructure. The steps towards achieving broader connectivity can be contextualised as:

- Alignment of government agencies' mandate on broadband infrastructure development;
- Dedicated investment in broadband infrastructure either through budget funding or industry partnership on a revenue and risk sharing basis;
- Adopt a 5-year target to attain broadband network connectivity

Media diversity and accountability

23. The mainstream media in South Africa remains one of the biggest influences on the direction of national discourse. While almost all the existing newspapers stood by idle or overtly support Apartheid, today they have positioned themselves as the principal defenders of our hard earned freedom and liberty.
24. Indeed the democratic movement should celebrate the turn of events, that we were able through heroic struggles, to make the other side to realise that there was only one truth in the equation – the nobility of our revolutionary ideals. Consistent with our long held revolutionary credentials, we should not complain when the mainstream media contribute to the nourishment of the democratic credentials of our nation.
25. The ANC Youth League belongs to a democratic movement with a proud history of the struggle, among others, for freedom of expression. It is the youth who suffered the most from the oppressive laws of the apartheid regime that went as far as suppressing artistic creativity forcing young artists to exile. Both freedom of expression and freedom of artistic creativity are enshrined in the democratic constitution and need to be defended for the benefit of future generations. However, some sections of the media have taken it upon themselves to abuse these freedoms to mean freedom to insult others.
26. Our pre-occupation should remain to do with the campaign to ensure that journalists report in a fair and just manner. No human being should be denied their constitutional guaranteed rights because of their social status. The ANC Youth League believes that it is possible for the right to free express to co-exist with other rights. Let us restate that we are vehemently opposed to any notion that suggests that journalists have more rights than everyone in society. This view is at worst unconstitutional and cannot be defended by any rational human being.
27. In our view, the Youth League should remain committed to the decisions of the 52nd National Conference of the ANC which called for a Parliamentary inquiry on the feasibility of the establishment of the Media Appeals Tribunal to augment the fledgling self regulatory institution, the Press Ombudsman. At no point did the ANC

decide to set any Tribunal outside the permits of the Constitution of our country. Whatever the views of various interested parties, it is our view that Parliament, as the only forum of the people, should be allowed to conclude this matter. By allowing the alarmist voices to drown out the role of Parliament, we are dealing a heavy blow on such an important institution of democracy.

28. In relation to media diversity, we note progress made towards the establishment of community radio stations in all districts across the country. While the deployment of community stations continues to take shape, more work still need to be done to stabilise their governance structures and to help them improve the quality of their news and current affairs. The Media Diversity and Development Agency (MDDA) is currently under-funded and the ANC YL should call for more funding of this development agency to enable the introduction of more community media, i.e. Community Radio stations, TV stations and newspapers.
29. The Youth League has also taken note of initiatives to introduce Community TV in places like Soweto, Tshwane, Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Metro amongst other places. While we should encourage these initiatives, we should guard against the marginalisation of rural areas. Government should intervene proactively to support potential initiatives in rural areas. In the process, we will propose that some of these stations should be run as small enterprises by young people, without compromising the right to serve the people. Alternatively, we could consider setting aside a small portion of
30. On public services, it is disheartening to note that the SABC remains terminal sick for a range of reasons which have been discussed in many Parliamentary hearings. This crisis needs urgent resolution before we witness the complete collapse of this strategic asset of our people. Instead of daily bickering, it is our view that more time should be spent on discussing the strategic future of the SABC in light of the changes in the media landscape. The advent of more pay TV services, internet services like Youtube pose threats to the future and stability of public broadcasting services. In future, citizens will not just watch the SABC out of self pity, but the content offered by the public broadcaster should continue to appeal to a wider section of society.
31. Following the successive resolutions of previous Conferences on the establishment of the National Youth Radio, there has finally been a principled agreement on the conversion of Radio 2000 into the National Youth Radio. The processes to effect the agreement are underway.

Battle of ideas in society

32. South Africa remains a highly contested terrain by both local and international standards. Locally, there is every evidenced to suggest that the former apartheid establishment remains largely intact although it often and conveniently so used the struggle language to defend its dominant position. Its ability to influence the outlook of society largely draws its weight from its direct or indirect control of the media and its dominant perspective in the judiciary.
33. As stated elsewhere in this document, this dominant class is happy with democracy provided it does not lead to any change in its social status. Fortunately or not, it remains our revolutionary duty to co-exist with this establishment. There is no other way round.
34. Our revolutionary task, however, should entail asserting our hegemony to remain influential when faced with an 'enemy' who is sometimes difficult to identify as we did in the past. The ANC Youth League should never ever shy away from raising uncomfortable truths about the state of our country. We need to do this understanding that the dominant class will always exert pressure on the ANC leadership to act harshly against its youth wing.
35. It is a huge irony that those who profess to champion free expression always find it necessary to call on the ANC leadership to stop the ANC Youth League from expressing its views on difficult and unpalatable issues in society. They behave as if freedom of expression applies to all of society except the ANCYL. They take the easy road of attempting to silence the ANCYL rather than engage with the substance of the issues raised. Meanwhile, we believe that it is our revolutionary duty to engage with whatever issues informed by our revolutionary tasks.
36. Indeed our ability to speak will depend on mass mobilisation; the extent to which we are able to mobilise the rest of society to support our revolutionary ideas and programmes. Our people constitute the sole tool we need to propel the NDR to new heights. Hence the discourse on the battle of ideas should always be linked to the discussion on organisational renewal and development. This should also include the extent to which the organisation accesses and uses ICT and other innovative media services to engage society, including the establishment.
37. Current "**Battle Issues**" the ANC Youth League is preoccupied with include:
- The Nationalisation of Mines
 - Generational Mix

- Land Expropriation
- Preservation and continued use of struggle songs
- Media Transformation

38. Resolutions of the 24th National Congress will guide the content of the key messages going forward

Digital Terrestrial Television

39. The Department of Communications is leading the country's migration from analogue to digital broadcasting. The Department has set December 2013 as the total switch-off deadline of the analogue signal.

40. It is envisaged that the migration process will result in the creation of thousands of jobs in the electronic manufacturing industry, content development and production, sales/retail, logistics and distribution.

41. This process presents is an opportunity for the revitalisation of the electronics manufacturing industry through the manufacturing of Set-Top-Boxes (decoders). Government intends to subsidise about 6 million Set-Top-Boxes to assist low income/poor households.

42. The migration process will also see a dramatic increase in the number of TV channels, i.e. The SABC currently has 3 TV channels. With the advent of digital terrestrial TV, the public broadcaster will have 14 channels. This will result in an increase in demand for content, therefore more opportunities for the content development and production industries. The introduction of more TV channels will also see more local and relevant content being shown on TV, and drastically reduce the use of foreign TV shows.

43. The ANC Youth League should therefore seize this opportunity to ensure that more young people participate in all aspects of the migration process, in particular content development and production to ensure that television serves as a vehicle for the achievement of our developmental objectives.

44. The benefits of this process particularly to young people should include;

- Economic opportunities/benefits for the country, and the youth in particular.
- Creation of jobs

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

45. Internally the ANC Youth League can be described as a model user of ICTs. A significant number of our members have access to ICTs, especially through mobile phones although the level of usage varies due to low quality in some areas and the high costs of communications which are not affordable to the unemployed young people.
46. We have already proposed above that government should support community ICT centres driven by young people through co-operatives and SMMEs. The success of this initiative will increase the uptake and usage of ICTs.
47. Based on this possibility to achieve further access to ICTs, the ANC Youth League should continue to increase its presence in all Internet based platforms. Specific online media products and services include:
- a) As much as in recent times ICTs have been used to inspire popular revolutions, it is equally true that technology can also be used to wage counter-revolution. It is for this reason that ICTs should always be at the hands of revolutionaries. In order to defend the revolution from future threats, our members should be the model users of communication technologies;
 - b) e-ANC YL – all branches of the YL should be online ideally with their own websites or social network groups linked to the main address www.anc.org.za/yl. For example, the Sandton branch will look like this: www.anc.org.za/ylsandton branch. Members of the organisation should be responsible to update content in their respective websites in line with organisational policy. The creation of these sites documenting community struggles will add the necessary impetus in the publication and broadcasting of alternative content on the Net. The sites should include video material showcasing democratic practices within the organisation;
 - c) e-membership – Young people across the country should also have an opportunity to renew and in future pay for their membership using the Internet. Only original memberships will be submitted to the branch secretaries and other designated officials in the branches;
 - d) During the 2009 elections, we proved our own capacity to use the social media networks to connect with young people beyond our membership. Attempts by unscrupulous dealers to use the Internet and social media should not deter us from using these platforms to communicate with our people. The presence of the YL in all social media platforms should increase. Pages should also be launched to commemorate young people who died pursuing the revolutionary ideals of our movement.
48. With respect to the media, it has been long since the closure of Horizon, the journal of the ANC YL. Recent attempts to revive it as a mouth piece of the YL are yet to

bear fruit. Initially we should consider relaunching Horizon as an online Magazine and only publish a hard copy once it is established. Although it will be a journal of a political party, the new look Horizon should not shy away from social issues which affect our members and the youth in general. The idea should be to launch a journal that can be read by young people beyond our membership.

49. The ANCYL draws its membership and support from young people aged between 14 and 35 years. Increasingly, this wide segment of youth is getting fragmented in terms of its interests and cannot continue to be treated as homogeneous. Even though working-class and poor youth remain majority of ANCYL members and youth population, the development and execution of the communication strategy inside and outside the organisation needs to factor the reality of segmentation if the ANCYL is to continue to mobilise all sections of young people of South Africa.
50. The casual use of militant statements to articulate the positions of the organisation has had a positive impact resulting in the ANCYL carving its own space in the public discourse. However, on its own, this method has often led to some of the positions being misinterpreted, deliberately or otherwise. Thus, the strategy going forward, needs to make use of well crafted written statements, articles and speeches by leaders to reduce a possibility of misrepresentation but also for maintenance of documentary records and archiving for the benefit of future generations.
51. The ANC Youth League's growing influence within the ANC and society in general has seen an increase in the responsibilities of the national Communication office under the leadership of the national spokesperson. It therefore becomes necessary that the ANC Youth League reviews the capacity of national office to deal with the increased demand from both the media and the general public. The review may consider a full DIP (Department of Information and Publicity)

KEY ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

52. On universal access to technologies

- a) Should government set a target to achieve universal access to quality and affordable ICT services, especially the internet, by 2014?
- b) By when should all public schools, including rural areas, have access to the Internet?
- c) How should the NYDA contribute to youth entrepreneurship in the ICT sector?
- d) Should there be cooperation between the NYDA and national, provincial and local governments to ensure youth participation in the ICT sector?
- e) Should NYDA offices also act as ICT access centres or Internet hubs? By when?
- f) Is there a need for a dedicated institution of higher learning focusing on ICT education and training?
- g) By when should high schools learners have access to mobile communication devices such as laptops for their research and assignments?
- h) What model of ownership is needed for community ICT access centres? SMME, co-operatives or non-profit?
- i) How should the ICT SETA improve the quality of ICT training to prevent the abuse of young people by fly by night institutions?
- j) Should basic ICT literacy be a compulsory subject at primary and/or high schools?

53. On media diversity and accountability

- a) By when should the National Youth Radio station start operating?
- b) What is the preferred ownership model for the National Youth Radio?
- c) How should the SABC be structured to respond to youth development needs?
- d) To ensure the sustainability of community radio and TV, is there a need to introduce a minimum private equity ownership without abrogating community service?
- e) With the ongoing transformation of the Press Ombudsman, is there still a need for an inquiry on a Media Appeal Tribunal?

54. On communications and the battle of ideas

- a) How does the ANCYL manage its engagement with the public without deviating from ANC positions?
- b) How does the ANCYL manage contradictions between itself and the ANC?
- c) What are the critical messages of the Youth League in public discourse in the next five years? And how can those messages be best packaged to accommodate all segments and sectors of youth?

55. Internal uptake and usage of ICTs

- a) By when should all ANC Youth League branches have online presence using various platforms such as facebook, twitter, and websites?

- b) How do we structure Hlomelang and Horizon to complement each other?
- c) How do we use the media to ensure accessibility of the YL publications?
- d) How do we improve the presence of the Youth League on the social media?
- e) How do we structure the Department of Information and Publicity at all levels of the organisation to respond effectively to modern communications challenges, including the flow of information within the organisation?
- f) Should the ANCYL invest in an online membership database, including online renewals and the management of credentials?
- g) Should all structures of the organisation introduce own communications strategies? How long should it take to develop such as a strategy?