

The Longest Painting In The World: Put Our Youth At The Forefront Of Environmental Issues

Written by NUEYS Admin

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By: Daniel Semere

[Pictures of Rally!](#)

On the 26 November 2011 the measurement process of the longest painting in the world was conducted on the outskirts of Asmara. The painting was measured on the ground by professional surveyors and engineers and with professional equipment coming from the National Mapping and Information Center. After four hours the measurement was confirmed by the signature of the witnesses to be 7.166 km long. And now this outstanding feat by the Eritrean children has deservingly broken the record for the longest canvas painting in the world which so far has been held by Mexico. The painting measures 7.166 m and is officially put in the Guinness World Record.

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This painting which was accomplished by Eritrean youth organized under the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS) was given the theme "Pollution Free world". The project has a representational effect that has implications in terms of its theme and participants, and also its associated significance. In this respect the longest painting has tried to address the issue of one of the most important challenges of the world, which is environmental pollution. Moreover, the fact that the task was done by children has symbolically communicates the message that the solution for such a global challenge lies on the awareness we should create on the youth, who are the future of the world.

The issue of environment is a pervasive challenge in the world today. Indeed climate change is the first issue that is truly global that no one can get away from as everybody is at risk. Breaking news like flooding, the melting of the poles, the rising of the sea level and the consequent sinking of coastal areas, ozone depletion, no more come as a surprise. It is repeatedly said that global warming may be the first challenge in history that human societies across the globe should act upon together. All these challenges necessitate the need for a coordinated global effort and political will for their effective solution. And as the nature and the most important characteristic of most of these problems is that they put the future in danger, it automatically entails the need for awareness from everybody; and especially the youth.

The painting coincides with Eritrea's belief and commitment in dealing with the global challenge of Environment through the involvement of a consciously aware, organized and dedicated youth. Eritrea has a vested interest in protecting the environment. As a country that is situated in a region where desertification is looming, and also that witnessed decades of war and environmental destruction, Eritrea is conscious of the significance of environmental threats. Since independence, the country has accomplished a lot in the reconstruction endeavour. According to the UN report, it is on track to achieving the MDGs relating to gender equality in primary education, child health, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases, access to safe water and environmental sustainability.

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The issue of environment is directly linked with the core principles and values of Eritrea which includes social justice, self-reliance, and food security. Hence, much has been invested to protect the environment through soil and water conservation efforts, terracing, constructing dams and check dams, planting of trees, environmental awareness efforts and so on. The outcomes of these programs have been very encouraging as its successes can be witness in places like Serejeka where the summer work plantation program has made the area green. One can also witness the increasing in diversity and number of wild life in Gash Barka zone and the green belt of Filfil Solomuna. Besides these in rural areas where wood is the major source of energy, the traditional oven has been upgraded in to a much efficient and energy saving oven called Adhanet. Banning toxic and harmful objects like plastic bags and the import of old cars can also be mentioned as efforts being taken to reduce pollution in the country.

As the common argument goes; when dealing with environmental challenges the most important factor is raising awareness. And this task is most effective in bringing about its intended result when it is rooted in the youth. The painting represents the message of raising the awareness of the youth to tackle the urgent challenge of environmental pollution. Moreover it symbolizes the need for unity both in Eritrea and around the world by involving children from the 6 regions and all ethnic groups of Eritrea, and also from both genders in unison.

There is no doubt that the painting has left a deep impression on the participants that anything is possible; even fighting pollution. Materializing such a long painting with such a big effort on their part is certainly a source of inspiration, instilling in their receptive mind that nothing is impossible and out of reach if you come together, define your problem, put your mind to it, and work hard. Isn't that what the world needs for its challenge one of which is saving our environment? Such a lesson and message in the heart of our future generation is indeed the strong point made by the project. Moreover it has proved that guided activism bears fruits and enables inspiration to transcend across the world.

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The international community has been expressing its concerns over climate change and environmental damage through numerous conferences and conventions, especially since the 1992 Earth summit of Rio de Janeiro. However the responses and actions of the world governments, and particularly developed countries have been anything but commendable.

Developed countries have been responsible to much of these problems. But on the other hand, mismanagement of resources in developing countries is also causing a good deal of damage to the environment although it is a recent phenomenon. Therefore, it would only be fair for the developed nations to shoulder much of the responsibility and take a leading initiative in addressing the pressing issue of environment. However, every country should do whatever it can in order to save the planet. Hence, in the international conference for sustainable development that is going to be held in Rio de Janeiro, there should be the political will to back the conviction that all countries should reach out to the world environment soon, if we are going to survive at all. These commitments should be coordinated to guarantee the safety of our environment and hence the safety and existence of our future generation.