

Caravan of Hope

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Since Cyclone Idai in March 2019, southern Africa has experienced back-to-back cyclones and tropical storms: Kenneth (2019), Chalane (2020), Eloise (2021), Ana (2022), Gombe (2022), Freddy (2023). These extreme weather events have affected more than three million people and have left a trail of destruction and damage. Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique are the most affected countries in southern Africa, with Mozambique being the hardest hit due to its geographical location along the Indian Ocean. In 2022, the Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development brought together thirty-seven young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five to embark on a journey to capture stories and raise awareness of the impacts of climate-induced disasters to frontline communities. This journey was dubbed 'The Heal the Earth Caravan of Hope Tour' and took fifteen days, covering approximately 2,000 kilometres across Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi.

During the Caravan of Hope 2022



Tour, the young people saw and experienced how frontline communities are suffering from climate change. The sad reality is that these communities have contributed least to the causes of this crisis, yet they are the most impacted by climate change. Hence the key message of the Caravan was, 'We want climate justice now!'

Here is what some of the young people had to say about the situation:

'I did not know that people are suffering like this. This Caravan of Hope has inspired me to do more as a teacher, and I commit to teach and advocate for climate justice and make everyone aware that he/she is a steward of creation. Care for creation is everyone's responsibility.' – Chaliwa Kaboma, teacher and youth leader.



'It is painful to see that the most affected and marginalised have least contributed to climate change. I pledge to passionately commit myself in caring for creation by acknowledging first that I am part of the ecosystem.' – Colleta Kachepa.

'We all need to act now and make a difference. I believe that the youth can actively contribute to sustainable environment conservation for climate justice. I commit to continuously amplify the voices of the marginalised in need of mindful assistance. Let's unite for this cause as future generations rely on our actions today.' – Shingai Anselmo Nhala, climate justice advocate.

What is striking is that each participant made a personal commitment for

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the future.

The Caravan of Hope provided a platform for young people to journey with frontline communities and listen to their stories. One of the powerful stories we heard during the Caravan of Hope was from a young man from Chimanimani (Zimbabwe) called Panashe, who is a survivor of cyclone Idai. He narrated how an intuitive visit to his aunt's place saved him from a perilous disaster that washed away all his family members and the entire village, about 300 people died. The most painful thing is that the few survivors did not have an opportunity to properly bury their loved ones, as most of the bodies were not found. In Mozambique and Malawi, we heard similar tales of such gruesome death and traumatising loss and damage. These are the kind of stories that need to be told and heard at global climate negotiation meetings: stories of real people, real experience and real losses.

The Caravan of Hope continues and the call for climate justice grows stronger ... and we continue to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

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