A STUDY ON THE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

An Independent Expert Report Commissioned by the

Peace and Security Council of the African Union

June 2020

Foreword

H.E. Ambassador, Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union Commission

The recognition and appreciation of Africa's vibrant youth demographic is beyond rhetoric. The role of youth in Africa's development agenda gained traction with the Africa Union (AU) Constitutive Act which expressly took cognisance of youth as important partners to strengthen solidarity and cohesion among 'our peoples'. Further, the African Union Commission's (AUC) strategic plan 2004-2007 prioritized youth development and empowerment. The Africa Youth Charter (AYC), adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments in Banjul, The Gambia, in 2006, crystallized the recognition of young men and women in Africa's development by providing a continental framework with provisions on youth: rights, duties and freedoms; active participation in the continent's development at all levels; guidelines and responsibilities of Member States to promote empowerment; and, responsibilities to contribute to national, regional and continental development.

Specifically, the role of youth in promoting peace and security in Africa is expressed via Article 17 of the AYC. Pursuant to this and other normative frameworks on youth, peace and security (YPS), including the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, the AU Peace and Security Department inaugurated the Youth for Peace Africa Program in 2018 with the primary objective and responsibility of mainstreaming African youth into peace and security. The core mandates of the Program derived from consultations with youth and their networks as well as RECs/RMs include: to finalize a continental framework on YPS to facilitate the meaningful participation of youth in all spheres of peace and security; change the predominantly negative and false narrative that 'youth' is synonymous with trouble; build youth capacity and optimize their contributions to peace and security; and, publicise the positive roles and contributions of youth to peace and security on the continent.

This study, mandated by the AU PSC at its 807th meeting dedicated to YPS, is integral to achieving the above goals. Motivated by the presentation of representatives of youth to the Council at the meeting, it was decided that this study be commissioned. The study - 'The Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa' brings to the fore the untold stories of young women and men dedicated to contribute their quotas to advance Aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063 'a peaceful and secure Africa'. Young people were engaged in their spaces with regional consultations and country field visits conducted to hear, see and verify their experiences and activities. This document captures and expresses the essence of youth experiences; their roles and contributions to peace and security, the challenges they face, resilience adapted to overcome hindrances as well as recommendations to enable policymakers make cogent, pragmatic and tailored responses that are relevant and goal oriented to optimize youth contributions to sustainable peace in Africa.

This study anticipates policy and programmatic responses from the AU, RECs/RMs and Member States, and immediately provides an alternative narrative to that, which portrays youth, primarily as either perpetrators or victims of violence. It tells of the lived experiences and daily endeavours of young African women and men dedicating their time, energy and resources to promote various

peace and security initiatives at community, national, regional and continental levels. They are occupying and exploiting both formal and informal spaces, using traditional and new media, forging local and international alliances to design, implement and report on activities to support multilateral institutions and their national governments efforts to maintain peace and security. The report discovers the Africa youth that are not limited by the vision to become 'leaders of tomorrow' but seizing the initiative to bring immediate and sustainable positive impacts that underlie peace, security and development in their communities, countries, regions and continent. Evidently, Africa's youth are integral to and have taken on the responsibility to 'Silence the Guns' in Africa.

I believe that the numerous resilience of young African women and men that work daily to overcome human security challenges, drawing on their inherent strengths and innovation to advance peace and security in Africa are the unsung heroes of our 'Silencing the Guns' campaign. Indeed, it is noteworthy that this report is adopted in 2020, the year the AU has adopted the theme: Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

ACAS – Central African Association for Relief

ACDIEF – Collective Action for the Integral Development of Childhood and the Girl

ACIREDED – Action for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainable Development

ACRD – Almajiri Child Rights Day

ACRI – Almajiri Child Rights Initiative

AFPCA – Action of Women for Progress in the Central African Republic

AfriPAHR – African Parliamentarians Association for Human Rights

AFSC – American Friends Service Committee

AGT – Guide Association of Chad

AJAP – Association for a progressive African Youth

AJFDD – Youth and Women Actions for Sustainable Development

AJLP – Association of Young Fighters for Peace

ANYL4PSD – African Network of Young Leaders for Peace and Sustainable Development

ASCOA – Association for Community Awareness

AU – African Union

AUC – African Union Commission

AYAN – African Youth Action Network

AYC – African Youth Charter

AYHD – Advocates for Youth Health and Development

AYINET – African Youth Initiative Network

BCPI – Botswana Centre for Public Integrity

BDO – Batwa Development Organization

BIDC – Business Incubation and Development Centre

BOSCDA – Borno State Community and Social Development Agency

CAR – Central Africa Republic

CCIAG – Head of Training Service at the Guinea Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Handicrafts

CDFDH – Human Rights Documentation and Training Center

CDJM – Development Centre for Youth in Mozambique

CEPO – Community Empowerment Programme Organisation

CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa

CNJ – National Youth Council

CSO – Civil Society Organizations

CYFM – Christian Youth Fellowship Movement

CYLA – Centre for Young Leaders in Africa

DA DUDE – Drug Abuse Don't Use Don't Encourage

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

DMJ – World Dynamics of Young People

EAC – East African Community

ECA – Economic Commission for Africa

ECCAS – Economic Community of Central African States

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

FONAIFEP-GB – National Forum of Insertion for Extra-School Training and Professional

G5SY – G5 Sahel Youth

GBV – Gender Based Violence

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GPC – Global Peace Chain

GRET – International Research and Exchange Group

ICWF – International Children's Welfare Foundation

ICJ -International Court of justice

IDP – Internally Displaced Persons

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IPHRD – International Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Development

IPYG – International Peace Youth Group

JCI – Junior Chamber International

KSP – Kufour Scholars Programme

LET – The Tunisian League of Women Electors

LOYOC – Local Youth Corner Cameroon

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

MEYE-SL – Movement towards Education and Youth Empowerment-Sierra Leone

MINUSCA – United Nations Mission to Central African Republic

MINUSMA – Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali

MOP – Messengers of Peace

MOVAAR – Making Our Visions and Aspirations a Reality

NGO – Non-Governmental Organizations

NYC – National Youth Council

NYP – National Youth Parliament

OLF – Open Leadership Foundation

OWP – Organization for the World Peace

OYA – Ogodo Youth Association

PAYNCoP – Pan-African Youth Network for the Culture of Peace

PCCB – Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau

PCRD – Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development

PIJCA – Interfaith Platform of Central African Youth

PSC – Peace and Security Council

PSO – Peace Support Operation

PWDs – People With Disabilities

RAEES – Network of Pupils and Students Associations of the North

RAJ-GUI – Africa Youth Network of Guinea

REC – Regional Economic Community

RET – Resilience Through Education

RM – Regional Mechanisms

ROSS – Resilience Organisation of South Sudan

RRG – Reset Rivers Group

RYDEC – Rural Youth Development Council

SADC – Southern Africa Development Commission

SALW – Small Arms and Light Weapons

SAP – Structural Adjustment Programme

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SGBV – Sexual and Gender Based Violence

SHC-F – Sanctuary of Hope Charity Foundation

SHF – Shared Humanity Foundation

SONAD – Sudanese Organization for Nonviolence and Development

SSCSNEAC – South Sudan Civil Society Network to East Africa

SSR – Security Sector Reforms

SSYPADO – South Sudan Youth for Peace and Development Organisation

SWNOT - South-West North-West Task force

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Right

UJMCA – Union of Young Central African Muslims

UJSARIO – Saharawi Youth Union (UJSARIO)

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF -United Nations Children Education Fund

UNMAS – United Nations Mine Action Service

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNOWAS – United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

UVF – Uganda Victims Foundation

WfaC – Women for a Change Cameroon

WYC – World Youth Centre

Y4P – Youth for Peace

YEFL – Young Egyptian Feminists League

YEI – Young adult Empowerment Initiative

YFDC – Youth Forum for Democracy and Citizenship

YIAGA – Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement

YIID – Youth Initiative for Inclusive Dialogue

YONER – Youth Network for Reform

YOUPBDA – Youths for Peace-Building and Development in Africa

YPB – Youth Peace Brigades

YPSI – Youth for Peace and Security Initiative

YVF – Yearning Voices Foundation

YWAP – Youth With A Purpose

Executive Summary

"Each generation of youth must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it'- Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 1961.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no 'one-size-fit-all' narrative of the daily encounters and lived experiences of African youth. From setting up of ideas incubators and business start-ups[1] in response to socioeconomic challenges as well as mobilization for good governance and accountability, young Africans in their different spaces or circumstances are discovering, fulfilling and /or betraying their mission in equal measures as Franz Fanon predicted almost 60 years ago. This study captures and documents the rich but often ignored or underrated experiences of young people and the implications of what they do, or fail to do, for peace and security on the continent. It responds to the imperative to put the unique stories of young Africans in their proper perspective, the same ways that they would prefer them told; than how the patronizing, contemptuous and disdainful manner society often tell them.

Chimamanda Adichie, the acclaimed writer, had warned about *'the danger of a single story'*[2] a situation in which stories about persons, groups or countries; in this case, the African youth, are sometimes deliberately narrated in negative ways. This may be likened to how societies and governments across Africa to some extent view and treat its young population; often far from who or what they really are. A single story is not only imagined, nurtured and reproduced by layers of prejudices, misconceptions or outright falsehood but also circulated and reinforced in ways that make them assume 'the truth' or an element of truth with the passage of time. This report therefore provides a more nuanced and balanced story of African youth, one that began by listening attentively to and learning from them in their own spaces, away from the world of adults, on how much they are fulfilling or betraying the ideals of the present times. The report envisages that the hundreds of youth that took time off the daily grind of livelihood pursuits and survival choices to contribute to the insights offered in this report would see and feel their stories come to life. They had expressed hope that telling their stories would serve as a turning point towards positive change; one that brings about a major paradigm or policy shift from the way government and society purportedly treat youth and issues that affect them.

2. METHODOLOGY

The insights contained in this report are distilled from the remarkably rich and diverse perspectives of youth and youth groups across the continent. It is, first and foremost, based on discussions during the five regional consultations held in Abuja, Asmara, Gaborone, Libreville and Tunis. The regional consultations attracted a broad range of youth groups working in diverse peace and security sectors: 26 in East Africa; 14 in Central Africa; 15 in North Africa; 45 in West Africa; and 26 in Southern Africa,

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[1]In 2018 alone, 146 African start-ups raised US$1.163 billion in equity funding, a phenomenal growth rate of 108 percent from 33 and 53 percent growth in 2016 and 2017, respectively, with Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal leading the pack).

[2] Chimamanda Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story, TedX, University of Oxford, 2016

respectively. Secondly, field visits were held in a total of 13 countries across Africa's five regions. A total of 32 in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held in Guinea Bissau, Mali and Nigeria; 36 in Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic (CAR); 18 in Mozambique and South Africa; 23 in Tunisia and Libya; and 28 in Madagascar, South Sudan and Uganda. Finally, the report benefitted from long hours of moderated as well as informal online conversations with youth to further understand their perspectives on major themes relating to peace and security.

An important caveat to make is that in view of the diversity that has become the distinctive hallmark of the youth sector in and across Africa, it could not have been possible that all the shades or categories of youth could be at the table or in the rooms where the discussions that form the basis for this report were held. Nonetheless, considerable effort is made to reflect this diversity in the selection of participants, showing particular bias for youth and youth groups that have demonstrated commitment to issues of peace and security in their respective countries and at the regional level. The challenge of 'finding the youth' who are willing to share their experiences freely is compounded by the difficulty that sometimes come when trying to win their trust and the time to participate actively in interviews, focus group discussions and online conversations. The periods of field visits coincided, for instance, with multiple events capable of 'distracting' the youth: the commencement of national examinations, the peak of the farming season when they join other members of the family to till the grounds, the deterioration of security situations, and interruptions to electricity supply and internet connectivity.

3. CONTEXT: AFRICAN YOUTH IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTIVE TRANSITIONS

Africa has the youngest, largest and fastest growing population in the world. Although public perceptions of youth are a mix of opportunities and threats, it is almost always the case that popular narratives see them more as threats by virtue of the risk factors associated with the violent actions of a handful of youth. Such perceptions presume that young people are easily lured into participating in violent actions in the context where widespread unemployment and socioeconomic vulnerabilities are on the rise. The less acknowledged flipside is of course that the continent's young population are at the forefronts of positive innovation and social change that contribute to economic growth and development. The continent, invariably, faces a double-edged situation: whereas the weight of evidence tilts towards the conclusion that young Africans represent an opportunity, as unique and successful peacebuilders, the popular fixation is still with a small percentage of them that engage in unwholesome activities that contribute to undermining the same peace.

The study that formed the basis for this report takes its cue from the landmark decision taken during the first Open Session of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) on 'Youth, Peace and Security' (YPS) held in November 2018, which amongst others called for the appointment of youth ambassadors for peace, finalization of a continental framework on youth, peace and security as well as the conduct of a continental study on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa and submit to Council for consideration and appropriate action. In this report, therefore, considerable efforts have been made to document the rich and diverse experiences of African youth, individually or as collectives, within the groups or networks they have

established to give practical expression to their expectations and aspirations. Even if they are inclined not to follow or be constrained by them, particular bias is for youth and youth groups working on different thematic areas relating to peacebuilding namely conflict prevention, management and resolution (CMPR), peace support operations (PSOs), post conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD), Security Sector Reforms (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The point is made that finding ways to make their activities fit into the thematic areas around which key regional, continental and global institutions work may help youth groups to specialise, maintain the right connections, properly align their activities and attract long-term benefits.

For the moment, youth groups working in the peace and security sector would rather continue to engage on multiple and cross-cutting themes that impact on peace and security such as those around gender equity and gender-based violence; racial divides and disparities; vulnerabilities and social protection; urbanisation and migration; drug abuse, gang violence and transnational organized crimes; violent extremism and terrorism; climate change, land degradation and desertification; and the protection of human rights, etc. Even at that, they shared very personal stories, experiences and testimonies of what they are doing; the lessons, challenges and gaps they face; and what they might need to deepen their contributions to peace and security across Africa.

The report clearly shows that what young Africans do is ultimately shaped by the political, economic and social contexts they find themselves. What this implies is that the different contexts in which young people are contributing to-- or undermining-- peace and security are determined by national and regional variations in their circumstances and experiences. In Central African region, for instance, many of the countries have become economically vulnerable due to fluctuations in world prices of agricultural commodities and minerals. The unexpected drop in oil price and revenues in 2014, for instance, triggered public financing and socioeconomic crises across the region that further aggravated unemployment and social unrest. In political terms, much of the region's post-independence history is marked by cycles of political instability linked to power succession, armed rebellion and secessionist conflicts. In more recent times, declining security situations primarily due to economic, social and governance factors are exacerbating new security threats linked to violent extremism and terrorism, transnational organized crimes such as arms, drugs and human trafficking as well as maritime piracy.

In East Africa, protracted experiences of domestic political instability, mass atrocities in the context of civil wars, climate change-induced threats and humanitarian challenges, the growing surge in the activities of terrorist groups have left in their wake unprecedented internal displacements, cross-border armed banditry and forced migration. The region is also prone to episodes of occasional politicization of past grievances, tension and impunity; social trauma caused by past incidents of violence not adequately addressed and continuation of feelings of loss, displacement, injustice and possible desire for revenge; widespread mistrust between some ethnic groups against the state; and finally, the growing incidences of hate speeches, inflammatory rhetoric and propaganda targeting particular groups, populations of individuals and government.

In North Africa, the prospects of democratic consolidation, peace and security are still marred by major challenges linked to the limited access to subsidized socio-economic and political opportunities for a vast number of citizens, internal political strife, the spread of new forms of radical and extremist ideologies that fan transnational terrorism. A wave of popular protests and uprisings linked to growing demands for legal, constitutional, institutional and political reform have triggered momentous events, including those popularly known as the Arab Spring.

Southern African countries are unique in their social, political, governance and security experiences in comparison to other regions within the continent. The region is home to six out of the ten best-governed countries in Africa, and has relatively higher levels of human development. Although, some violence attributed to political transitions and socio-economic grievances exists, it is virtually free of any major civil war or armed insurrection to warrant international peace support operations. Regular cycles of democratic transitions have considerably helped to decompress and decrease the likelihood of large-scale civil war but income inequalities within and between countries are increasingly exacerbating old fault-lines and new vulnerabilities. Its peculiar context also makes issues of corruption; economic, racial and gender inequalities; and governance fragility, of critical concern.

Finally, in West Africa, the peace and security landscape has evolved rapidly over the last two decades. In the 1990s, it experienced several civil wars, armed insurrections, intermittent secessionist agitations and violence associated with elections and power succession. In more recent times, the region has witnessed an upsurge in the activities of transnational insurgency and terrorist movements across the Sahel region. While much of the region may be considered relatively safer and quieter, new threats imposed by the insidious activities of armed non-state and transnational groups with criminal, insurgent, extremist and terrorist orientations such as those linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, threaten peace and security and setbacks economic and political prospects.

4. <u>ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA</u>

The myriad contributions of African youth to peace and security are still mostly unseen, understated and undocumented. The major aim in this section is therefore to illustrate them using only a handful of specific regional examples, with the hope that doing so would inform a more sobered acknowledgement of the urgent imperative to foster effective and meaningful youth participation in the promotion of peace and security.

4.1. CENTRAL AFRICA

Majority of youth groups in Africa concentrate their peacebuilding efforts around CMPR, and those in the Central African Region are no exception. Evidence from the field point to how they are at the forefronts of tackling hate speeches and fake news which are increasingly known to cause inter-group frictions, rivalries and violent conflicts. For instance, *Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC)* launched the *Spread Love Campaign,* with the aim of

providing young people with the capacity to design and implement initiatives on preventing and countering hate speech. It has so far supported the creation of 30 *Spread Love Clubs* in primary and secondary schools, and used multiple media platforms to sensitize over 500,000 people across the country. A major outcome of the initiative is the promotion of a more conscious use of language among young people and the adult population. *LifeAID* organization developed the Youth Initiative for Inclusive Dialogue (YIID) program to encourage youth to step forward to contribute to sustainable peacebuilding by interrogating the causes and trajectories of conflict, and implement innovative conflict transformation strategies. The YIID initiative puts in place a neutral, objective and frank platform for inclusive and cross-sector intergenerational dialogue to foster inclusive dialogue between and among parties.

In the area of PCRD, one of the more concrete initiatives by youth is the Interfaith Platform of Central African Youth (PIJCA) aimed at preventing and managing sectarian conflicts in the **Central African Republic** (CAR). Its primary goal is to foster dialogue with a view to ending violence, promoting peace and rebuilding their respective communities. The group played prominent roles during the peak of violence in Bangui, by organizing several activities to reach out and persuade belligerent groups to work towards peaceful mediation. It also promoted and facilitated safe humanitarian assistance, including those of national and international NGOs as well as the personnel of the United Nations Mission to Central African Republic, MINUSCA, in the 4th district (*4ème Arrondissement*) of Bangui. Notably, this district was at one time was the epicentre of violent battles in the country. Furthermore, PIJCA has provided material and financial support to former young combatants to engage in subsistence livelihoods opportunities such as fishing and farming, especially in Kulamandja (Pk 20 Damara Road). This development has significantly contributed to reducing the economic vulnerability of young ex-combatants, and made them less disposed to returning to the trenches.

Within the DDR context, *LOCOC* is currently working in eight prisons in **Cameroon** to provide repeat offenders an opportunity to pursue crime-free lifestyles and shun radicalization. So far, they have impacted on about 5,000 young people in prisons around the country. The group has also built the capacity of over 300 youth peer educators within prisons by exposing them to financial literacy and empowerment to become *prison entrepreneurs* capable of creating jobs in and out of prisons. Finally, in response to growing incidences of sexual and gender-based violence, *AZUR Développement* monitors and reports cases of domestic and sexual abuse to the police and other law enforcement agencies for investigation and prosecution in Pointe-Noire area of the Republic of **Congo**. The group created an online platform to track, document and follow-up cases of domestic and sexual violence across the entire country, including providing victims with a wide range of psychosocial, legal and financial assistance.

4.2.   EAST AFRICA

In East Africa, CPMR is also very popular among youth groups. In **Uganda,** the Batwa Development Organization (BDO) promotes peaceful coexistence between the Bakiga and Batwa communities that have intermittently been at loggerheads and in violent contestations. The group also provide security agencies with early warning information on potential or existing threats of violence and insecurity, and helped the two communities to establish 'peacebuilders committees' at the grassroots level. *In Ethiopia, DitniTek* in collaboration with relevant authorities fostered peace between two factions of refugees and their respective host communities, especially in the aftermath of the violence that led to the destruction of properties at Tharpam Kebele Itang Woreda in Gambella region. Upon approval by the Gambella Regional Authorities, the group initiated dialogue and confidence building measures that brought the major interlocutors together and contributed to the restoration of peace within the refugee camp and its environs.

Another area of focus of youth groups in East Africa is in the prevention of youth radicalisation and combating violent extremism. The Centre for Youth Empowerment (CYE) in **Somali**a, for example, engages its members and the wider constituency of young people in the capital, Mogadishu, on initiatives to prevent violent extremism and promote peace by mobilizing dozens of creative, visual and performing artists to revisit and re-tell the stories of the country. This is with a view to changing the narrative that everything is about terrorism and tribal violence. CYE also mobilizes medical practitioners to conduct free medical outreach programmes, with particular emphasis on eye testing and treatment as well as teaching basic hygiene. As part of efforts to prevent Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and promote women's rights, *Mama's Hope Organization for Legal Assistance (MHOLA)* in **Tanzania** conduct public sensitization and awareness campaigns on the threats and ills of SGBV; advocate for respect of women's right as enshrined in the constitution, especially the right to own land and property; and provides free legal assistance to marginalized groups that includes court representation, mediation and drafting of documents. The group's interventions have contributed to increasing demands by women for the recognition of their rights through mediation and adjudication, and the establishment of legal aid clubs in secondary schools where student offer support on SGBV issues.

4.3.   NORTH AFRICA

The activities of four youth groups in four different countries offer a sampling of what they do in the area of CPMR. To promote a culture of peace, for instance, the Islamic Scouts Association in Bouira, **Algeria**, uses peaceful dialogue as model to diagnose and find solutions to potential threats of violent conflicts in different parts of the country. Through local youth advisory councils established by the Association, young people are able to interrogate the major factors responsible for the myriad challenges they are facing and explore local solutions or remedies to them. *In Sahrawi Democratic Arab Republic,* the Youth Union of Sakia El Hamra and OuedEddahab (UJSARIO) conducts workshops and carries out advocacy campaigns to sensitize youth citizens against returning to armed struggle. The group consistently encourages their peers to intensify advocacy towards the implementation of lasting solutions.

In the area of DDR, the Peace Vision Awareness Organization in **Libya** conducts workshops and campaigns to create awareness on the dangers of the acquisition, circulation and indiscriminate use of small arms and light weapons (SALW), especially storing them inside homes. In collaboration with local authorities, the group also engages in public campaign for complete disarmament and demobilization of youth involved in violent conflicts as part of concerted efforts to promote reintegration and achieve social peace at local and community levels. Regarding gender and persons with disabilities (PWD), the **Tunisian** League of Women Electors (LET) promotes women participation in peace and security especially in the context of elections. During the 2011 elections, LET conducted massive sensitization against electoral violence and helped rural women across the country to obtain the required identification cards that would allow them to register and become eligible to vote.

4.4.   SOUTHERN AFRICA

Youth in Southern Africa aspire and want to be instrumental in forestalling the outbreak or escalation of violent conflicts. The International Peace Youth Group (IPYG), a youth group based in South Africa organises regular youth camps and uses them as platform to promote interfaith dialogue, conflict prevention and a culture of tolerance. According to them, '[The] hope is to create values which will prevent religious extremism and promote sustainable interfaith harmony.' On the socioeconomic front, the Mooto Cashew Suppliers Limited is a youth organization in *Zambia* promoting food security and income generation by distributing cashew seeds for planting to young

people and across local communities as part of efforts to prevent and mitigate potential conflicts caused by food insecurity and the erosion of livelihoods. In 2019, the company produced over 50,000 seedlings and provided the Ministry of Agriculture with 15,000 of those for distribution to women and youth groups. Further, youth groups in the region are also actively involved in efforts to transform existing conflicts, foster peaceful coexistence and promote stability. In *Zimbabwe,* Community Solutions Zimbabwe (CSZ) implements capacity building and advocacy initiatives on national peace and reconciliation. The group also directs its advocacy at the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) urging it to encourage greater and meaningful youth participation in formal peace processes.

Various youth groups in Southern Africa are actively involved in advocacy for gender equity and equality, and to expand what they see as the shrinking political space for young women in politics, governance and society. One such group in **Mozambique** called *Olho do Cidadão* focuses on mentoring young women in local tertiary institutions to take up civic leadership duties and positions. With limited resources, the group uses the social media to advocate for more participation of women in various campaigns directed at fighting corruption, promoting voters' education among women and occasionally organizing peaceful march to 'make sure that policy makers recognize and respond to their calls for action.'

4.5.   WEST AFRICA

The quest by young West Africans to participate in the political life of their countries is increasingly recognised and acknowledged as major CPMR technique. For instance, ahead of the 2016 elections in *The Gambia,* the National Youth Parliament (NYP) facilitated inter-party youth dialogues to address incessant conflicts across tribal lines that are mostly fuelled by verbal harassment and physical assault. Their interventions contributed to promoting unity, especially amongst young people, in demanding for progressive political reforms and electoral processes. It also increased youth participation either as aspirants or voters in the elections. In response to the protracted conflict in Casamance region of *Senegal*, the Women's Platform for Peace in Casamance promotes the revival of inclusive dialogue between the government and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). Given the spill-over of the conflict to neighbouring Guinea Bissau and the Gambia, the group also works to advance the involvement of women in those countries in the management of the conflict, engages in sensitization, and also lobby high-profile politicians and government officials to get their buy-in to transform the conflict.

One of the unconventional DDR initiatives in West Africa is the ongoing effort to transform the living condition of prisoners in Kumasi prisons in the Ashanti region of **Ghana** where an estimated 70% of the inmates are under 35 years. A major youth-led initiative under the umbrella of the John Kufuor Foundation is the 'Cell Not Hell' programme which aims to provide educational materials, refurbish and stock prison libraries and to generally facilitate teaching and learning processes. This intervention has not only enhanced the access to and quality of education for inmates but also significantly improved their academic performance in secondary schools examinations. Invariably, the expectation is that the initiative would considerable ease the socio-economic reintegration of former inmates back into the society.

A recent study by the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use covering the period between 2014 and 2017 shows that drug abuse is no longer just a public health challenge but also a major peace and security threat in many parts of West Africa. Many youth groups recognise both the health and security dimensions of growing drug abuse. The Sanctuary of Hope Charity Foundation (SHC-F) in **Nigeria**, for instance, focuses on weaning youth from drug abuse across 20 states and touched over 8,000 lives, particularly those in tertiary institutions. With a mission to 'assist rather than arrest,' and working in close collaboration with the Nigerian Drug and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), medical doctors and counsellors, the SHC-F has rescued over 19 young people from drug abuse and facilitated the reintegration of more than 49 victims, including one survivor that was eventually recruited by the NDLEA.

5. <u>GAPS AND CHALLENGES</u>

A crosscutting factor inhibiting the effective contributions of youth to peace and security in the different regions is limited financial resources to implement their intervention activities. This constraint partly arises from their inability to fundraise but also due to limited public awareness of the incredible innovative and diverse activities they are engaged in different countries across the continent. Most youth groups rely on personal funds, membership dues and only minimal fundraising from individuals, corporate entities and their immediate communities. However, such funds are hardly enough to carry out any sustained advocacy or interventions. Despite this, it is important to note that funding is necessary but certainly not sufficient for youth groups to expand the scope and range of their activities. Even if they have all the money they need, there are still myriad challenges in the way of their operations including limited technical capacity to engage in capital-intensive and time-consuming advocacy and intervention programmes. They are also constrained by limited access to communities in the interior due to bad road networks; negative

perceptions of youth by communities; incessant demand for money in exchange for participating in programmes, especially focus group discussions; and concerns over insecurity.

Until after many years of their existence, most youth groups hardly get the opportunity or take advantage to network with peer groups at the national, regional and continental levels where they are better placed to support themselves, access more resources, and generally gain visibility. All of these explains why many youth groups tend to gravitate towards less capital-intensive conflict prevention activities than other areas of peacebuilding. It also partly explains why their activities are mostly limited to advocacy and sensitisation activities that primarily only requires using multiple media platforms and words of mouth. It further explains the reasons they engage in activities that only happen intermittent, until they are able to find more secured sources of funding and technical support.

6. <u>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u>

A number of important conclusions could be distilled from the insights and perspectives on youth roles and contributions to peace and security in Africa. The first, and perhaps more obvious one, is the evidence that the youth landscape on the continent is much more diverse, vibrant and complex than is often assumed and acknowledged. Despite widespread view that they are responsible for the collapse of public order in many countries, it is remarkable that a large and growing number of youth groups are actively involved in tackling nagging issues that threaten peace and security, even if they most tend to do so within a limited geographical area, especially at the community level, at any given point in time. Further, despite the diverse challenges confronting their meaningful and impactful interventions, youth and youth groups are resilient in their pursuit for sustainable development, peace and security. Resilience in this context is understood in the context of the capacity or ability to recover quickly from a given situation, endure hard times and cope with the pressure of operating in a challenging environment while standing up for a noble social cause. Even though it is context-specific, resilience generally requires adjusting to change and aiming to find creative and alternative solution to an adverse state of affair. The ability of individuals or a group to build resilience is therefore determined as much by environmental factors (society) as by learned or acquired capabilities. The ultimate goal of resilience building is to claim the kind of spaces that allow them to play a meaningful role in shaping policies and societal disposition towards youth issues.

During the five regional consultations, field visits to 15 countries, online conversations, and the validation workshop to round off this study, young people made a number of key recommendations to the AU Commission, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), with a view to enhancing their roles and contributions to peace and security, as follows:

1. Institutionalize a quota for youth participation and representation at governance, peace and security processes;
2. Popularise continental normative frameworks and decisions on youth, peace and security, and use them as benchmark to track progress on youth issues by member states and other stakeholders on annual basis;

3. Enhance the visibility of the AU/RECs/RMs at the local/community level by disseminating key decisions and reporting on the activities of the institutions especially on peace and security, through multiple sources;

4. Commit Member States to sign, ratify and domesticate youth policies; and to report, on regular basis, on progress made to mainstream youth participation in peace and security;

5. Identify and collaborate with African institutions with the requisite capacity and resources to administer capacity building and training on peace and security to reverse the trend towards radical and violent orientations among youth;

6. Invest more in evidence-based research and documentation on youth activities in order to inform a more balanced, appropriate and timely policy interventions on youth development;

7. Encourage Member States to contribute to improving the relationship between youth groups and law enforcement institutions; including police, army and correctional services;

8. Institutionalize youth, peace and security programmes at the AUC and RECs/RMs levels to foster strategic and meaningful participation and mainstreaming of youth in all areas of peace and security.

INTRODUCTION

"Each generation of youth must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it."[3]

When Franz Fanon wrote '*The Wretched of the Earth*' in 1961, he was 36 years old; just crossing the upper limit of 15-35 years prescribed as the youth age bracket by the AU. Many young Africans of that age today may not necessarily be familiar with his charge to them, or even be attentive enough to grasp its profound importance and implications. From protests against what they perceive as insensitive or bad governance to setting up of ideas incubators and business start-ups,[4] young Africans in the different places or circumstances they find themselves are not only discovering their mission but also engaging in activities that are either fulfilling or betraying them. Throughout this report, a vigorous attempt is made to capture and document the rich- but often overlooked, or sometimes even deliberately undervalued- activities and experiences of young Africans in the peace and security sector; and the implications of what they do, or fail to do, for society and state, in general, and also for peace and security, in particular.

Often expressed in sometimes patronizing, contemptuous and disdainful manner, how government and the general public view and treat young people is what the Nigerian author, Chimamanda Adichie, had aptly described as "the danger of a single story."[5] A single story, according to her, is the kind that is imagined, nurtured and reproduced by layers of prejudices, misconceptions or outright falsehood but circulated and reinforced in ways that, over time, make them to assume a false element of truth. Telling a 'balanced story' of youth, as we have attempted to do here, naturally begins by listening attentively to and learning from young African women and men in their own spaces, away from the world of adults, on how much their generation is fulfilling or betraying the ideals and standards of their different societies.

By placing the youth at the centre of the discourse, the expectation is that the richer and more balanced account in this report is as close (and faithful) to their yearnings and aspirations as possible. The hope, is that the hundreds of youth that took time off the daily grind of pursuing difficult livelihoods and survival choices to contribute their remarkable insights, and also frustrations, would see and feel their stories come to life. They had expressed the optimism, moving forward, that telling their stories would serve as a turning point towards positive change; one that brings about a major paradigm or policy shift from the way government and society have for long treated youth and issues that affect them. It should not come as a surprise therefore that the central message from young Africans that resonate throughout this report is that the pledge by their governments, regional institutions and the AU not to leave the youth, or anyone for that matter, behind in the quest for a peaceful and prosperous Africa is still mostly forlorn.

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[3] Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth. New York : Grove Press, 1961 (1963 translation)

[4] In 2018 alone, 146 African start-ups raised US$1.163 billion in equity funding, a phenomenal growth rate of 108 percent from 33 and 53 percent growth in 2016 and 2017, respectively, with Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal leading the pack).

[5] Chimamanda Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story, TedX, University of Oxford, 2016

While they recognise several key milestone decisions such as the adoption of the African Youth Charter (2006) and Agenda 2063, and also the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 and 2419, Africa's young people are generally disappointed that those goals and aspirations have not translated into practical results or outcomes capable of lifting them from their current situations of drudgery and despondency towards that of qualitative lives and greater access to subsidized socioeconomic opportunities and meaningful participation in peace and security. For them, what is required as a matter of urgency is to talk less and act more,[6] and to begin to hold government accountable in terms of how well they are integrating youth issues into policy and planning at all levels. They are insisting that their governments should invest more ambitiously and sustainably in harnessing the talent, creativity and resourcefulness of young people if they are expected to contribute more, and sustainably, to the society.

Africa has the youngest and fastest-growing population in the world. Although public perceptions of this large and youthful population is characteristically that of a mix of threat and opportunity, the former tends to be more dominant in virtue of the multiple risk factors associated with the violent actions of a tiny number of youth.[7] It is widely presumed that young people are readily lured into participating in conflict and violent activities, particularly in contexts where unemployment and socioeconomic vulnerabilities are on the rise.[8]The flipside to this sadly common narrative is that a young population offers an opportunity for innovation, economic growth and development. In particular, several studies have shown that young people already play an active role as peacebuilders around the world.[9] In Africa, the weight of evidence clearly point to the fact that youth represents an opportunity as contributors to and successful peacebuilders despite the popular fixation with how a small percentage of them engage in activities that contribute to undermining public order.[10] With specific attributes or qualities that are particularly conducive to peacebuilding, young people possess valuable knowledge of the pressing needs of their generation that is based on many decades of experiences.[11]A major challenge, however, is that the myriad positive contributions of youth to society, in general, and to peace and security particularly, are mostly unseen, understated[12] and undocumented.[13]

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[6]This view resonated during all of the five regional consultations held in Abuja, Gaborone, Asmara, Libreville and Tunis in 2019

[7] Urdal, H. (2012). 'A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence'. *Expert Paper N° 2012/1*, United Nations Population Division, New York.

[8]Azeng, T. F. (2018). "Youth Unemployment, Education and Political Instability: Evidence from Selected Developing Countries 1991-2009". Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of African Economists: Growth, Employment and Inequalities in Africa. Volume 2. pp. 87–101. Addis Ababa : African Union Commission (ISSN 1993-6177).

[9] For the discussion on the dynamics of the role of Youth in Peacebuilding see, for example, Simpson, G. (2018). *The missing peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*. UNFPA/PBSO Secretariat; Di Renato Cursi (2017). *The role of Youth in Peacebuilding*. Roma: Centro Study Difesa Civile; Berents, H. and McEvoy-Levy, S. (2015). "Theorizing youth and everyday peace(building)". *Journal of Peacebuilding*. Issue 2: Every Day Peace and Youth. 3(5): 115-125; Freddy, H.J. (2015) "Youth and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka", *International Journal of Society Systems Science.* Vol 7. Issue 3; Del Felice, C. and Wisler, A. (2007) "The Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth as Peacebuilders", *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*. N° 11.

[10] Chakraborty, S. (2016). *Human Rights, Peace and Conflict Mobilization of Youth,* in Pandey C. and Upadhyay, P. (eds.), *Promoting Global Peace and Civic Engagement through Education*, IGI Global, p. 160.

[11] Del Felice, C. &Wisler, A. (2007) "The *Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth as Peace-builders",* Journal of Peace Conflict & Development Issue 11, November, p. 24-25.

[12] This statement was made by youth representatives during the inaugural meeting of the Y4P Africa held in Lagos, Nigeria, in September 2018.

[13] This is based on the selection of 53 resources from book chapters, reports, academic journal articles, MA and PhD theses published

One of the key points to note in reading this report is not only that young people are involved or engaged in multiple spaces but also that the political, economic and social contexts they find themselves shape what they are able to do, or not do, at any given time. It is therefore crucial to recognise how Africa's plural composition and context, evident in the broad or specific peace and security challenges that different regions are experiencing, go a long way in determining the role and contributions of young people to peace and security. To illustrate this require looking at the variations as well as similarities in the circumstances that undermine peace and security in Africa.

The Central Africa Region comprises nine countries[14] that showcase a mixture of remarkable and disturbing contrasts. On the one hand, they have abundant natural resources, especially oil, which alone accounts for 70 per cent of exports, 50% of GDP, and 60% of fiscal revenue.[15] Because of their weak growth and economic base, however, they have all become vulnerable to external price shocks due to fluctuation in world prices of their primary agricultural and mineral products. The 2014 drop of oil price and revenues had triggered serious crises in public financing and the socioeconomic sector that have, in turn, accentuated unemployment and social unrest. In the political sphere, much of the region's post-independence history is punctuated by cycles of political instability and violence mostly linked to power succession and transfer of power, protracted armed and secessionist conflicts. The declining security situation is not only exacerbating old security threats but also bringing new ones linked to transnational organized crimes such as arms and drug trafficking, terrorism and maritime piracy to the fore.

In East Africa, protracted experiences of internal political instability, mass atrocities in the context of civil wars, climate change-induced humanitarian challenges, the growing surge in the activities of terrorist groups have triggered unprecedented waves of internal displacements and forced migration, cross border movement and armed banditry. The region is also constrained by rampant and deep-seated ethnic divisions and violence, political and religious intolerances, structural inequalities and public-sector corruption, cross-border conflicts, and widespread unemployment. Other threats to peace and security are caused by the indiscriminate manipulation of legal, electoral and constitutional provisions; the excessive influence of money in determining electoral outcomes; and inadequate state capacity to prevent and manage the outbreak of disease epidemics or natural disasters. Finally, the region is prone to episodic politicization of past grievances, tension and impunity; social trauma caused by the continuation of feelings of loss, displacement, injustice as well as the desire for revenge; widespread mistrust between some ethnic groups against the state; and finally, the growing incidences of hate speeches, inflammatory rhetoric and propaganda targeting particular groups, populations of individuals and government.

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between 2000 and 2016 on the link between youth, youth organizations and peacebuilding. See, Del Felice, C. and Ruud, H. (2016). *Annotated bibliography – The role of youth in peacebuilding*. The Hague: United Network of Young Peacebuilders.

[14]Based on the 1976 decision of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of African Unity, OAU, the precursor to the African Union, there are nine countries in the Central African region, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tomé and Principe. See CM/Res. 464-QCXVI/1976

[15] Data drawn from IMF (2018) Africa Regional Economic Outlook. Retrieved from https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/datasets/AFRREO/(2019, June 3)

In North Africa, the prospects of democratic consolidation, peace and security are still marred by major challenges linked to the limited access to subsidized socio-economic and political opportunities for a vast number of citizens, as well as by internal political strife, civil war and the spread of new forms of radical and extremist ideologies that fan transnational terrorism. A wave of popular protests and uprisings linked to growing demands for legal, constitutional, institutional and political reform have triggered momentous events, including those popularly known as the Arab Spring.

The Southern African region has unique social, political, governance and security features or experiences that makes its experiences qualitatively different from those of other regions within the continent. In the first instance, regular cycles of democratic transitions have to some extent helped to decompress and decrease the likelihood of large-scale civil war and cross-border conflict even if this has not completely removed the use or threat of use of violence as a political strategy during elections. Indeed, the region comprises six of the ten best-governed countries in Africa,[16] has relatively higher levels of human development,[17] and it is virtually free of any major violent conflict to warrant the peace support operation by the regional community, SADC; the AU, or the United Nations.[18] However, income inequalities within and between countries are high[19] to such an extent that they are exacerbating old and new vulnerabilities. Its peculiar context make issues of corruption; economic, racial and gender inequalities; and governance fragility of particular concern.

Finally, the peace and security landscape in West Africa has evolved rapidly over the last two decades. Since the 1990s, the region has experienced some of the deadliest armed insurrections and civil wars, intermittent secessionist agitations and violence associated with elections and power succession. In more recent times, it has seen an upsurge in the activities of transnational insurgency and terrorist movements, especially along the Sahel corridor and in the Lake Chad Basin area. While much of the region may be considered relatively safer and quieter, new threats imposed by the insidious activities of armed non-state and transnational groups with criminal, insurgent, extremist and terrorist orientations such as those linked to *Al-Qaeda* and the Islamic State, imposes intermittent threats to peace and security and setback to economic and political prospects. These regional contexts, and the remarkable contrasts they offer, set the tone for understanding and explaining the present status or conditions of youth in Africa, and what alternative futures to expect if governments fail individually and collectively to act speedily to tackle the myriad challenges facing their young citizens.

The youth demographic has become the first and key reference point whenever attention is drawn to the bundle of paradoxes and contradictions that Africa's young population represents or portends. To describe the continent as 'youthful' would not be misplaced. With a population of about 1.308 billion, representing 17.44% of the global total, one forecast suggest that Africa's youth

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[16] Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance.

[17] UNDP, Beyond Income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st Century. Human Development Report 2019, New York.

[18] See ZIF Centre for International Peace Operations, World Map of Peace Support Operations 2018/2019. www.zif-berlin.org

[19] UNDP, Income Inequality Trends In Sub-Saharan Africa: Divergence, Determinants and Consequences. New York, UNDP, 2017

population would be in the range of 42% of the world's total by 2030.[20] When the upper limit is raised from 15-24 to 15-35 years as prescribed by the AU, however, young people would account for three-quarters of the continent's entire population. It has been estimated that much of the boom in youth population worldwide will be in sub-Saharan Africa where four of the top five most populous countries in Africa – Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Africa- are located. Despite the lack of uniformity in terms of how countries classify youth age, the percentage of youth to total population typically ranges from over 40% in Central and Eastern Africa to 64% in Central Africa[21] and close to the 70% threshold in North and West Africa, respectively.[22]

The problem is however not in their ever-increasing numbers; it is in the stark socioeconomic and political realities and circumstances that are piling up against them, and how those are eroding the options or choices available to them to maintain and improve their quality of life or livelihoods. Certainly, young Africans are curious, creative and full of the kinds of energy and drive that can be a force for good, but also the converse. Despite the odds, a growing number of African youth are breaking from the proverbial mould as they nurture and lead a new ecosystem of change actors seeking to find innovative and lasting solutions to many of the intractable problems facing their societies. Unfortunately, a majority of them still live in conditions that make it difficult- if not impossible- to fully harness their potentials. In their large numbers, they are literally forced to live on the fringes of society that might well fit into the Hobbesian state of nature where life is nasty, brutish and short. The outlook presented by the African Development Bank (AfDB) on the status of youth in the Central African region could as well fittingly illustrate the dilemma that young people face throughout the continent: more than one-thirds of them are unemployed, another third are vulnerably employed, and only one in six is in wage employment.[23]

The potential that young people hold for social, economic and political change has been the subject of keen public debate at different levels, especially in the wake of recent social upheavals around the continent. Still, very little is done to anticipate the ever-changing needs and expectations of African youth or to cushion them from existing or new vulnerabilities. It is not just their numbers that matter, policymakers should worry much more about how the foreclosure of access to myriad opportunities is pushing more of them to the fringes of society; to that tipping point where they are left with little or no option than to engage in activities that undermine society and the state.

The current state of play in the peace and security sector in Africa is therefore a reflection of deep and festering challenges that are linked to the erosion of state-society relations, the dwindling capacity of the state to effectively guarantee law and order, and to deliver the minimum dividends of governance and development to a growing number of citizens, especially the youth. Although most African countries maintained steady economic growth encouraged by a boom in global commodity prices in an atmosphere of relative political stability during the first two decades, the multiparty systems that ushered them into independence sooner began to give way for one-party

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[20] See, UN, Youth Empowerment, UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), New York. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/Africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml (October 22 2019)

[21]Data drawn from 2019 Population Data, Retrieved fromhttps://www.populationdata.net/continents/afrique/(October 22 2019)

[22] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019

[23]AfDB 2019. Central Africa Economic Outlook 2019. Abidjan: African Development Bank.

civilian or military rules that complicated political and security situations. Most African countries have also not fully recovered from the debilitating impacts of neo-liberal economic reform prescriptions, which began in the mid-1980s with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and continues to date. While the current outlook suggest that more countries have embraced multiparty systems and are holding regular elections, the extent that majority of citizens have been able to enjoy the promises of governance and economic development is doubtful.

It is within the dense layers of socioeconomic, political and security realities across Africa that the diverse experiences, roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in this report are anchored and examined. This report showcases how, in those different contexts and circumstances, the continent's youth are engaging in activities that challenge unlawful constitutional changes, confront the authoritarian excesses of the state and also engage in a broad spectrum of citizenship activities through advocacy, elections or popular protests. Regardless of the pace, direction and quality of ongoing political and economic reforms taking place, there is no question that they are spurring the opening up of the space for youth groups to mushroom and blossom. They also offer new windows of opportunity for young people to organize around civil, political and associational life on the most important issues that face them. While progress may be slow and sometimes painstaking, and their efforts yet to be adequately captured, empirical evidence clearly shows that young people are making their ways into critical decision-making space, especially at community and subnational levels, where they had previously been disenfranchised and excluded.

THE METHODOLOGY

The insights contained in this chapter are distilled from the rich and diverse perspectives of youth and youth groups across Africa: first, during five regional consultations held in Abuja, Asmara, Gaborone, Libreville and Tunis; second, in 13-country field visits; and third, in hours of extensive online and offline conversations with them. Each of the five regional consultations attracted a broad range of youth groups working in diverse peace and security sectors: 26 in East Africa; 14 in Central Africa; 15 in North Africa; 45 in West Africa; and 26 in Southern Africa, respectively. A total of 32 in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held in Guinea Bissau, Mali and Nigeria; 36 in Burundi, Cameroon and Central African Republic; 18 in Mozambique and South Africa; 23 in Tunisia and Libya; and 28 in Madagascar, South Sudan and Uganda[24].

Considerable effort is made to identify and document the rich and diverse experiences of African youth, either individually or within the groups or networks they have established to give practical expression to their yearnings and aspirations. It shows particular bias for youth and youth groups that are working in the peacebuilding sector, broadly defined to include CPMR, PSOs, PCRD and other thematic areas. It draws upon weeks of frank conversations with young people from different backgrounds, experiences and localities. The aim was also to meet and listen to their individual and collective stories on how they perceive their place and status vis-à-vis society and state, and what

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[24] The five regional clusters are in tandem with the African Union's grouping of regions on the continent adopted earlier by the Council of Ministers of the OAU in 1976 (CM/Res.464-QCXVI). Retrieved from https://au.int/en/memberstates/countryprofiles2 (20th October 2019)

they see as their future priorities and prospects. This report acknowledges, in the end, the remarkably diverse agencies of African youth in ways that should give policymakers enough basis to make more informed decisions about how, in what direction or substantive ways, to engage them now and in the near future.

With the benefit of hindsight, engaging the various youth and youth groups away from the prying eyes of adults and in spaces that could be appropriately described as their natural habitat made it possible to gain richer and far more revealing insights as to what makes them tick, or "feel cool," in their own slang. Throughout the report, considerable attention is given to *talk and work with* youth rather than *talk about them.* Quite often, the voices of young people are muffled or totally missing either because policy makers take them for granted or simply believe they know what is best for them. In this study, an attempt is made both to acknowledge that the agency of African youth, as those of their peers in other parts of the world, is alive, real and substantive enough not to be ignored. There were collections of very personal stories, experiences, testimonies, initiatives and lessons, but also challenges and gaps in current efforts towards meaningfully engaging youth in peace and security. It is hoped that the insights contained in this report would inform ongoing efforts at the national, regional and continental levels to enrich and engage youth as key actors in promoting peace and security.

An important caveat to insert is that in view of the diversity that has become the distinctive hallmark of the youth sector across Africa, it was not feasible that all categories of youth can be at the table or in the rooms and spaces where the kind of conversation that form the basis for this study happened. Nonetheless, considerable effort is made to reflect this diversity in the selection of respondents; showing particular bias for those youth and youth groups specifically committed to issues of peacebuilding. Beyond the challenge of 'finding the youth' is the additional constraint of winning their trust and time to participate in long hours of interviews, focus group discussions and even online discussions; not the least because the periods of the field visits typically coincided with events such as the commencement of national examination, the peak of the farming season, declining security situation, interruptions to electricity supply and internet connectivity, or the daily grind of pursuing survival and livelihoods, that often 'distracted' the youth.

CHAPTER ONE: The Changing Trend and Status of Youth and Youth Groups in Peace and Security in Africa

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a broad overview of the changing trend and status of youth in Africa. This is important in order to shed light on the multiple and creative ways that young people are embracing change and promoting peace at the same time that the continent is witnessing several disruptive transitions. It takes off from the premise that the violent activities of a small number of youth is no longer enough and helpful to overshadow the wide and remarkable range of positive engagements involving a much larger number of them in different parts of the continent.

The chapter is divided into six parts. Apart from this introductory section, the second part briefly juxtaposes the experiences of African youth with those of their peers in other regions of the world, especially in the context of how globalization is shaping their orientation and outlook in substantive and fundamental ways. It explains why a uniform definition, or understanding, of who an 'African youth' is may be difficult given how their experiences are located at the intersection of multiple- and often difficult- encounters and contexts that render any yardstick based solely on chronological age unhelpful. This provides a critical backdrop for a better appreciation of the plurality, and complexity, that is the distinguishing feature of the youth landscape in contemporary Africa. The third section examines some of the emerging trends in peace and security on the continent, and how the changing demography in favour of youth is reordering and reshaping the landscape in profound and disturbing ways.

The fourth part showcases the various ways that young Africans are 'seizing the moment' in an era that is unfortunately characterized by several disruptive transitions in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. It explores how African youth, confronted with real situations of exclusion, including from spaces where decisions that affect them are to be taken, are mobilising a menu of options to respond to changing peace and security threats. Section five explores how far- and in what qualitative ways- state and institutional responses are mobilized to address the myriad constraints that youth and youth groups face. The last section draws key conclusions on the alternative futures for African youth in a changing world.

1.2. AFRICAN YOUTH: CONTRASTING NOTIONS AND REALITIES

The global youth population between the ages of 15 and 24 years is about 1.8 billion, or approximately 19% of the world population. Current projections indicate that Africa's population, at the very least, would more than double from 1.2 billion in 2015 to 3 billion by the terminal year of Agenda 2063 of the AU.[25] However, the problem does not lie in the

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[25] See, UN, Youth Empowerment, UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), New York. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/Africa/osaa/peace/.youth.shtml (2019 October 22)

geometric increase in their numbers but in the plethora of excruciating socioeconomic and political circumstances that pile up against youth and diminish the choices as well as opportunities available to them.

While they would account for 46% of the continent's work force by 2063, youth up to the age of 35 years are unlikely to get and keep their jobs[26]. Significantly, youth unemployment figures exceed 60% and it is so at a time when an estimated 83% of the 11 million Africans entering the job market every year would not be able to find secured wage jobs in the formal sector. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had aptly described as a socio-political time bomb, the ominous nexus between youth demographic growth and violence.[27]

There are qualitative differences between how African youth have been treated vis-à-vis their peers in other parts of the world. Over several generations, for instance, the Western world has nurtured a generation of conscious, vigilant and progressive youth whose place in the modern world is no longer a subject of debate. Decades of democratic practices, including adherence to civil, political and socio-economic rights, have considerably shaped the way young people express themselves and identify with social values and priorities compared to their peers in the developing world. Several decades of consistent and priority investment in formal as well as informal education have exposed youth to knowledge and skills they require for the workplace of the 21st Century and, at the same time, allowing them to transcend social, economic and political barriers that impose severe constraints on their contemporaries in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In the West, there is always an implicit assumption that stages of human growth occur in a fixed, linear, mechanical and orderly manner from childhood to adolescent, youth and adulthood, in that order. This was the context in which the UN, for instance, defines youth as a very specific stage between childhood and adulthood, when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and social economic changes in order to manoeuvre the 'transition' from dependence to independence, take effective control of their own lives and assume social commitments.'[28] In Africa, however, the period of youth is not only elongated but also socially constructed; one in which the interactions between youth and society is frequently punctuated by experiences of marginalisation, alienation and conflict.

Without implying that youth in the West are immune from myriad existential challenges which tell on their status, they are increasingly more concerned about issues of terrorism, climate change, environmental pollution, sexuality, gender equality, personal safety, among others, that are only slowly beginning to trend in other parts of the world. In a recent *Aljazeera* interview with youth environmentalists protesting in front of the White House in Washington DC, young people questioned the essence of going to school, getting a job or

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[26]AU-ECHO, Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth. Addis Ababa : AU, 2017.

[27] UNDP*, Youth Strategy, 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future*.' UNDP, New York (2014). P. 1.

[28] United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2004). *UNESCO's Contribution: Empowering Youth through National Policies*. Paris.

striving to make the best of their youth when adverse environmental changes that have mostly been ignored or politicised by government are threatening their future.

In Africa, however, decades of harsh neoliberal adjustment policies starting from the mid-1980s have kept large numbers of youth in a vicious and extreme poverty trap. Whereas living conditions have improved minimally in several parts, limited provision or uneven distribution of social security benefits is common in the face of the widening of inequality gap between the rich and the poor. This, in turn, partly accounts for the resurgence of social tensions and violent conflicts, and also the desperation by young Africans to undertake perilous sojourn abroad in search for better opportunities.

Because of the peculiar circumstances that young people find themselves across much of the developing world, any characterization of 'African youth' must necessarily be context-specific; way beyond the use of biological or chronological age that is popular in the West and developed societies. Although it does not truly reflect the reality on ground, the official benchmark often used to identify who a youth is in Africa is based on chronological age.[29]

The AYC was adopted by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Banjul, the Gambia, in July 2006, to provide a strategic framework and chart pathways to ensure the mainstreaming of youth in development. The Charter categorizes "youth'' as the population between the ages of 15 and 35 years, but there are substantial variations in the age classifications of youth in most African countries.[30] Figure 1 below indicates the age categorization of youth used in Member States of the AU, which ranges between 10 and 40 years. Figure 1 indicates that apart from the 23 countries (representing 41.8%) that have adopted the 15-35 years benchmark prescribed in the AYC, almost a dozen others use slightly different parameters while nine (9) or 16.3% have no official definition or classification of youth.

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[29]Under Resolution 2250, the UN Security Council (UNSC) put the youth age bracket at 18 to 29 years while the Economic Commission for Africa prescribes 15 to 35 years.

[30] For instance, in Ghana, the National Youth Policy adopts 18-35 as the definition of youth while the New Patriotic Party's definition is between 18 and 39; the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), 14-38 whereas, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) places no limit to who is regarded as a youth.

Figure 1. YOUTH AGE BRACKET AMONG AU MEMBER STATES (%)
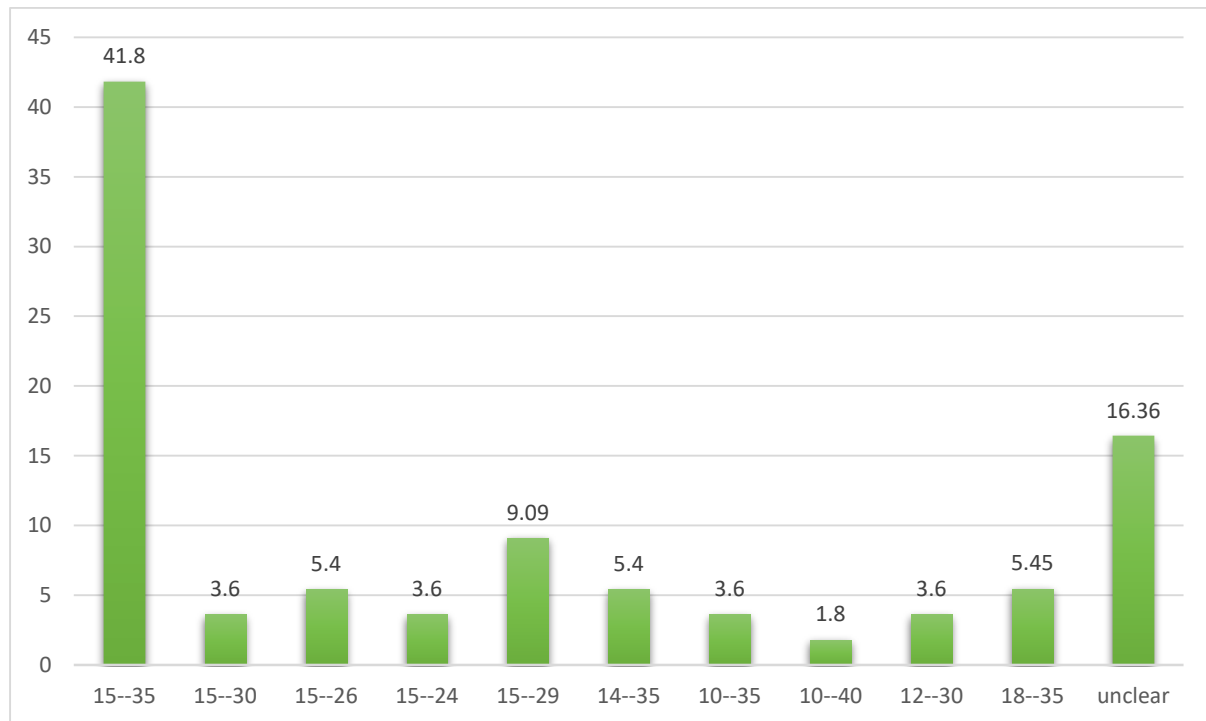
Source: author's compilation from various national youth policies of AU Member States

The absence of uniformity in the definition or understanding of who an 'African youth' is must be located at the intersection of their multiple experiences that have very little or nothing to do with their age in purely biological or chronological terms. Invariably, notions of youth in Africa can only further end up becoming distorted and maligned given the peculiar ways they are intersecting with variables such as culture, tradition, class, ethnicity, gender and race, all of which have implications for imagining and labelling African youth.

The question of who a 'youth' is in Africa is therefore a function of many factors out of which, paradoxically, chronological age is perhaps the least consequential. For some, youth could describe positionality, such as when an adult uses it to describe a younger person. It could be a social label, to describe a person that may be 'old' in terms of chronological age but is still incapable of performing functions or meeting responsibilities ascribed by society such as to start and take responsibility for his family. Lastly, the concept of 'youth' is gendered, often used to describe a young male (rather than a female of the same age) that is neither in school nor gainful employment, living on the social fringes of society and who is easily predisposed to engage in violence. What is instructive about these multiple and contrasting public images of youth is that they shape the perceptions and reactions of the public as well as policymakers towards youth. It explains how, for instance, a young male or female in the twenties or thirties that is educated, has a secured job, and is married and could fend for immediate and extended family, is not considered as a 'youth' whereas someone well above 40 years that is in exact opposite situation is still considered and treated as one.

There is a sense in which African youth themselves create who they think they are or how they want to be perceived within a dynamic social landscape of power, knowledge, rights and cultural notions of agency and personhood.[31] Irrespective of how they are classified or perceived, they represent a potent force for socio-political change and development, but only if those potentials are properly leveraged and fully harnessed. While the diversity of youth experiences in Africa sometimes make generalization difficult, there is no question that the continent is close to the bottom of the global league in respect of these key indicators that define the status and quality of youth.

1.3. EMERGING TRENDS IN PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

The peace and security landscape in contemporary Africa is both heterogeneous and complex. This is as much a reflection of the ever-changing social, economic and political dynamics in different communities, countries and regions but also the existence of multiple factors that shape the nature, trajectory, scope, intensity and duration of conflicts across the continent. In the immediate post-independence period, for instance, African conflicts were mostly linked to the legacies of arbitrary colonial boundaries, state and nation-building challenges, and disputes involving colonial or super powers and their proxies to retain spheres of influence. There was hardly any conflict during those early periods that did not directly or otherwise implicate the post-colonial state for its culpability or failure to prevent and quickly resolve nagging problems before they degenerate into full-blown armed conflicts.

In contemporary times, there is a growing rank of youth that have become all too disillusioned with the state for letting down their generation in virtually all spheres. This disappointment was, for instance, at the heart of the grievances that stoked the 'Arab Spring' in North Africa between 2011 and 2013, during which young people formed the revolutionary frontrunners demanding radical political and socioeconomic reforms. The spate of political protests in other parts of the continent since then have shown that anti-authority movements would linger and spread; even if they lack the same energy and dramatic features of the Arab Spring. There is evidence to also suggest that young people are going to continue, and even intensify, their contentions and secessionist aspirations against the state primarily because conditions have either not changed or have further deteriorated. As more and more of them are caught in the web of multiple conflicts over natural resources including land or political power, they keep such conflicts going for substantive as well as sundry reasons, including the quest for survival in the midst of eroding livelihoods opportunities.

A new dimension to the landscape of violent conflict in Africa is linked to the threat of violent extremism and terrorism involving a plethora of non-state armed actors taking up arms against the state and, in equal measure, threatening human security. Groups such as *Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb* (AQIM), Islamic State in West Africa (ISIWA), Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, or their affiliate and splinter versions, have gained notoriety for how their dramatic

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[31] De Boeck, Filip and Honwana, Alcinda (2005). Children and Youth in Africa: Agency, Identity and Place InHonwana, Alcinda and De Boeck, Filip (eds) (2005). *Makers and Bakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*. Africa World Press. p. 4.

activities are re-defining the nature and landscape of armed conflicts on the continent in several unprecedented ways. [32] They form part of a dense network of entities that are motivated by radical religious and social ideologies that have become transnational in outlook. They have become notorious for their indiscriminate attacks, which are long and weary for governments and devastating for citizens. In the final analysis, they dangle many attractive socio-economic opportunities at young Africans who themselves are caught between the dangerous excitement of taking up arms to survive or continue with a life that is characterized by drudgery and the foreclosure of access to subsidized socioeconomic and political benefits.

From extensive interactions with African youth across the different regions for the study, the realities that confront them could be located at the intersection of five crosscutting contradictions, as follows: (i) the crisis of governance; (ii) deepening economic crises; (iii) deterioration of the educational sector/system; (iii) the limited social policies and safety net that protect citizens, including the most vulnerable; and (v) the adverse impacts of globalization. These factors, individually and as a collective, are leading to the reconfiguration of social, economic, political and cultural relationships that impact on the youth in several different ways.

1.3.1. **The governance crises in Africa**

The state of governance as well as the plethora of crises it is producing are typically underscored by a recurrent tension in state-society relations. This relationship has continued to exacerbate old and new social fault-lines given the peculiar and multiple ways that class, ethnicity and religious identities are mobilised. The initial optimism that the advent of multi-party if not democratic- rule during the 1990s would open new doors of prosperity, peace and security has not fully materialized in many countries. Instead, the transitions created the illusion of popular participation; one in which citizens intermittently exercised their right to vote but are uncertain if such civic duty counted for much in dislodging the old order and replacing it with a new one. Compounded by issues such as the immense cost of governance, over-bloated public service, mismanagement of state resources, widespread and systemic corruption, and the persistence of weak institutions, the prospective value of multiparty governance is eroding very fast across Africa, a development that is raising concerns over the potency of democracy especially in the wake of enormous violence that accompanies democratic elections.

The various dimensions of the crises of governance that many African countries are currently facing to some extent provide the impetus for youth restiveness and violent agitations around the continent since the turn of the 1990s. During the long and tedious political transitions that the continent witnessed since then, young Africans were at the vanguards of pro-

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[32] See, Akin EjodameOlojo, Resistance through Islamic clerics against Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, African Security Review, 3, 26, 2017: 308-324; by the same author, Dialogue with Boko Haram: back on the agenda? ISS Today, 02 July 2019

democracy movements that helped to dismantle military and one-party civilian rule. Today, they are becoming exasperated that the same 'old-guard' politicians that continue to maintain firm grip on the levers of political power have virtually hijacked their efforts. Since regime type or perception of it can be motivator for riot and uprising,[33] it is not a surprise that the foreclosure of access to political opportunities have become a major driver of youth agitations and violence.

1.3.2. <u>Deepening economy crises</u>

One of the most unsettling evidence of the continent's myriad economic problems is showcased by the number of youth roaming the streets without the prospect of gainful employment, subsistence and livelihood opportunities. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), just about 3 million of the estimated 13 million African youth that enter the labour market each year eventually get a job. Another estimate notes that only about 33% of the youth are in wage employment while the rest are underemployed or in 'vulnerable employment.'[34] Only 7 and 10%, respectively, of Africa's population between the ages of 15 and 24 years in low- and medium-income countries could boast of a decent job.[35]

The multiplier effect of the deepening economic crisis is the growing number and prevalence of conflicts that are taking a heavy toll on citizens. At the same time that conflicts limit opportunities available to young people they also create new risks that exacerbate the youth vulnerability as they see what is ahead of them in bleak terms. Since the road to socio-economic recovery is either unduly elongated or somewhat chaotic in many African countries, young people are increasingly overwhelmed in ways that make it 'easier to mobilize them for war.'[36] It is not a coincidence that some of the continent's worst performing countries in economic terms are invariably also the same sliding into deteriorating peace and security situations.

1.3.3. <u>The deterioration of the educational system/sector</u>

One of the negative consequences of the implementation of neoliberal reforms since the mid-1980s was that it precipitated a steep decline in government budgetary allocation to the educational sector. Today, only a few African countries spend anything close to the threshold of 26% of budgetary allocation recommended by UNESCO on the education sector; with only a few countries closer to the benchmark performing far better than those that spending less.

With the corresponding proliferation of private schools priced way beyond the reach of the majority, the quality of the once preferred public schools dropped drastically in ways that

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[33] Goldstone, Jack A. (2001). 'Demography, Environment, and Security', In Diehl, F. Paul and Gleditsch, P. Nils (eds) Environmental Conflict. Boulder, CO: Westview (84-108).

[34] World Economic Situation and Prospects. Monthly Briefing. Economic Analysis and Policy Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. No. 125. P. 3.

[35] African Economic Outlook, 2018. African Development Bank Group.

[36] Kemper, Yvonne (2005). *Youth in Approaches of War to Peace Transitions*. Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin. P. 26.

created a huge knowledge deficit in the same era that knowledge production has become the new global currency of power. Incessant disruptions of school calendars and closure of educational institutions due to security threats or unmet demands have not only translated into poor curriculum and learning opportunities but also unduly exacerbated the psychological impact on students. The situation is even more troubling in several African countries experiencing incessant fiscal and security challenges where teachers are too poorly paid to put in their best and where they and their pupils are becoming easy target of attack, kidnap or death in the hands of criminals, kidnappers and non-state armed groups.

Given the disincentive created by the poor remuneration of teachers and the decaying state of infrastructure at all levels, the educational sector is no longer viable enough to train and produce the kind of manpower and skills required to meet the challenges and demands of the 21st Century. Also, school enrolment as an important component of assessing the status of educational system has a direct correlation with exacerbating or reducing the risk of conflict.[37] With millions of young Africans not enrolled in school, and girls experiencing far more disadvantages for social, economic and cultural reasons, there is an urgent need to renew commitments to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); especially Goal 4, on quality education. It is for the same reasons that the global ranking of universities has consistently shown an abysmal performance by most African institutions in terms of performance and innovation to deliver quality teaching, learning and research. A youth in Bamako, Mali, opined that what once highly-rated universities in many parts of Africa have become in terms of the quality of their graduates: the "largest producers of unemployment".[38] Across the continent, graduates spend many frustrating years looking for gainful employment due to the dwindling quality of education including the mismatch between university curriculums and the technical skill sets required by the labour market.

1.3.4. <u>Limited social security and social policy</u>

The AU recognizes 'the right of young Africans to benefit from social security and social insurance [39] Unfortunately, by admonishing the state to withdraw from, or fully commercialize, the provision of essential services and welfare needs, neoliberal reforms continue to weaken state capacity to meet this standard and to arrest deteriorating human security condition. This is best illustrated by how the yearly Human Development Index (HDI) published by the UNDP consistently ranks African countries as some of the worst performers on indicators such as access to health, education and secured employment that determines overall quality of living and livelihoods.

There is no doubt that such absence or uneven distribution of social benefits at subsidized rates to citizens is a recurrent factor precipitating tensions and violent conflicts. That many

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[37] Urdal, Henrik (2006). A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence. *International Studies Quaterly.* 50, 607-629. P. 612.
[38] Field visit, 2019
[39] Article 14, Section 3: Poverty Eradication and Socio-Economic Integration of Youth. *African Youth Charter*. 2006.

African countries have, over time, systematically reduced funding to critical social sectors that have direct impacts on the quality of lives is all too obvious.[40] So also is the dilapidating state of public infrastructure such as hospitals, power and roads that the declaration of the state of emergency and massive investment in social security and policy is overdue.

1.3.5. <u>Globalization and its contradictions</u>

The post-Cold War international system has witnessed rapid transformation with tremendous implications for both state and society relations in Africa. Revolutions in transportation and communication, including the advent of new media, have broken down many societal and environmental barriers at exactly the same time that they are also instigating unprecedented fragmentations and crises. Globalization is partly to blame for contributing to the decline and eroding influence of States as it must have to contend with a fluid but formidable network of transnational actors seeking to undermine its power and authority. With the multiple impulses it is producing, the challenge for African States is more exacerbated by their disadvantageous entry into and current status in the age of globalization. With the forces of globalization moving far too quickly, rapidly and dangerously, many African countries are unable to cope with and come out of external shocks to even begin to fully contemplate how to set new priorities that place their citizens and vulnerable youth at the heart of development discourse and process.[41]

Two features of globalization that are having substantive impacts on youth and at the same time contributing to profound changes across the continent derive from the phenomenal growth of and access to new social media as well as role of Africa's diaspora. It is widely acknowledged that social media is an instrument of social change and mobilization, such that in one breath, it can become a major source of empowerment to once oppressed, marginalized and suppressed voices and in another sense, as a veritable source of disempowerment, it is prone to abuse or misuse.[42] Still mostly unregulated, the Internet and the revolutions in information and communication technology (ICT) are proving to also be appealing to the forces of good and evil in equal measures. At the same time that it is capable of having massive social, political and economic spread effects, it could easily become a handle for hate speech, toxic ideologies and transnational terrorism in many parts of Africa.

What is mostly known about the African diaspora, a large number of who fall within the youth age bracket, is that the remittances they send home, accounts for a large chunk of annual foreign exchange inflows. According to the World Bank, remittances to sub-Saharan Africa reached record high in 2017 at $37 billion,[43] climbed to $46 billion in 2018 and are projected

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[40] Education Sector gets Paltry N3.9 Trillion out of N55.19 Trillion in 10 years. vanguardngr.com/2019/04/education-free-fall/amp/

[41] Alao, Abiodun and Ismail, Olawale (2007). Youth in the Interface of Development and Security. Conflict, Security and Development. Routledge, London. P. 5.

[42] Manase, Kudzai Chiwoshe (2017). Social Networks as Anti-Revolutionary Forces: Facebook and Political Apathy among Youth in Urban Harare, Zimbabwe. P. 130. *Africa Development*, 42(2), 129-147.

[43] *Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook. Special Topic: Return Migration.* World Bank Group, KNOMAD. Migration and Development Brief 28. October 2017.

to increase in 2019.[44] Top recipient countries in 2018 include Comoros, the Gambia, Lesotho, Cabo Verde, Liberia,[45] Zimbabwe, Senegal, Togo, Ghana and Nigeria. Besides remittances, however, youth in the diaspora are also frontline investors in many countries; In Somalia, they contribute over $1 billion in remittances and are responsible for 80% of the start-up capital for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).[46] Asides remittances, however, African diaspora are an important political constituency shaping national discourse on major issues and applying pressure to influence the behaviour of national governments in places and times when it matters, especially through social media campaigns.

Despite the immense possibilities that the continent's diaspora community offer for political and economic development as well as for peace and security, it is uncertain how much African governments are leveraging them for the long term. Currently, only a few countries have full-fledged government departments or agencies with direct mandate on diaspora issues. There is also the tendency to see them merely as 'cash cows' to meet fiscal gaps than as partners in the design and implementation of creative policy solutions and less so as contributors to political developments. Indeed, some governments have shown their disdain for the diaspora that share views, which are critical of the state.

1.4.   SEIZING THE MOMENT: AFRICAN YOUTH IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTIVE TRANSITIONS

The age of disruptive transitions that young Africans currently live in shape, for good or bad, their outlooks and dispositions towards society and state.[47] There are, of certainty, many positives sides to the creativity and pulsating energy exhibited by African youth in the different political, economic, social and cultural contexts they find themselves. Listening to them in their different 'cool spaces,' distant from the adult population, they recognize the ubiquitous challenges they face as well as the immeasurable opportunities they also offer. Across the continent, they are setting the pace in the emerging ecosystems of technology and start-up businesses, in the creative industry where they are demonstrating boldness, consciousness and resilience.

In the political sphere, for instance, young people are enlarging the democratic space not only by maintaining vigilance during elections as well as through protests and public advocacy on social media and offline. They are demanding that political leaders address several issues including the lack of inclusion that hinder them from active participation in politics and governance; breaking the policy and institutional barriers that traditionally limited the full expression of their political and developmental aspirations; as well as holding government officials to account on issues of transparency and accountability. Youth are also providing

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[44] World Bank, Record High Remittances Sent Globally in 2018. World Bank Press Release. Retrieved from www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/08/record-high-remittances-sent-globally-in-2018 (13 August 2019).

[45] Op Cit. Migration and Remittances, 2017.

[46] Sheikh, Hassan and Sally Healy (2009). *Somalia Missing Million: The Somali Diaspora and its Role in Development*. New York, UNDP, 2009

[47] 2019 World Population Data Sheet. Europe and Asia Aging Rapidly, While Africa is Home to the Largest Youth Population. Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved from https://www.prb.org/worldpopdata/ (13 August 2019).

early warning resources to effectively douse or manage potential conflicts and pursuing advocacy on behalf of vulnerable groups amongst others.

In a growing number of countries, the push by them has become pivotal in the passing of legislations such as Nigeria's 'Not too Young to Run' law just before the 2019 general elections to eliminate one of the visible obstacles to youth participation in political processes. They are also lending their voice to politics where they had hitherto been ignored or muffled. Young people are floating political parties, standing for elections and getting actively involved in political processes in multiple and unique ways. In North Africa, they are the champions of most of the momentous and irreversible revolutionary political changes, effectively employing different social media platforms to launch peaceful demonstrations and protests that force governments previously reluctant to embrace change.

Disaggregated and current data on the direct and substantive contributions of African youth to economic growth is still scanty. Even on the basis of anecdotes, they are contributing to finding new and creative ways to solve once intractable problems in the business, environmental, agricultural, educational, health and service sectors. They are exceptionally savvy in deploying technology to drive innovations that are, in turn, opening up new jobs and business opportunities. In 2018 alone, 146 African start-ups reportedly raised US$1.163 billion in equity funding, increasing at a phenomenal growth rate of 108% from 33% and 53% in 2016 and 2017, respectively.[48] African start-ups are active in alternative renewable energy, consumer services, media and creative arts, medicine and cosmetics as well as in efficient public service delivery to tackle problems in urban mass transit and traffic gridlocks, design authentication procedures to ascertain genuine or fake pharmaceutics, among others.

From movie to music, fashion and sports, African youth are not only dominating the creative industry but also reshaping contemporary youth culture. They are doing these on the back of 'the expansion of hip hop in Africa; increasing accessibility to digital technologies and the formation of a cosmopolitan and tech-savvy generation of African youth.'[49] The evolution and expansion of the movie industry, especially the Nigerian brand popularly called Nollywood, has created lots of job through content creation, production, commercials, and distribution value chain. The music industry perhaps draws greater enthusiasm and passion from across the region as African music has significantly dissolved cultural boundaries and replacing them with a more continental fusion of hip hop, Afro beats and jazz music which allows young artists to convey the way they feel about society and their place in it. It was precisely for all of these reasons, and more, that the President of the African Development Bank, (AfDB), recently urged African governments to recognize that what young people really need is no

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[48] 2018 was a Monumental Year for African Tech Start-ups with US$1.163 Billion Raised in Equity Funding, 108% YoY Growth. Retrieved from https://www.partechpartners.com/

[49] Krystal, Strong and Ossei-Owusu (2014). Naija Boy Remix: Afroexploitation and the New Media Creative Economies of Cosmopolitan African Youth. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. 26(2), 189-205.

longer merely empowerment but heavy and sustained investments that create new capacities and enabling environment for them.[50]

One of the important highlights of how African youth are seizing the moment that is particularly crucial to this report are their diverse and meaningful contributions to various aspects of peacebuilding through the establishment and proliferation of youth-led groups or networks. Article 17 of the AYC rightly stresses the need to 'strengthen the capacity of young people and youth organizations in all spectrums of peacebuilding.'[51] The intent here is not to examine in any substantial detail the scope, mandate, activities and impacts of what youth-led groups are doing in the sphere of peace and security. Instead, there is need to make the equivocal point that the emergence and proliferation of youth groups working in peace and security sector is in itself a recognition that young people know where the proverbial shoes pinch and the responsibility upon them to fulfil, or betray, the mission upon them to contribute to finding creative solutions to pressing societal problems.

Africa's youth groups are emerging and spreading in the backdrop of mounting pressures associated with festering crises of democracy (especially elections), social problems, adverse climate change and famine, and to ameliorate the impacts of insurgency and terrorism. They are at the forefronts of a wide range of advocacies that impact on community development and civic engagement. In setting up the groups, as one youth opined, *"we need to move from presence to active participation… because the former is about visibility while the other is about influence."[52]* Finally, while certain youth groups have made more progress in spheres and activities outside the murky terrain of politics others have become deeply involved despite the obvious challenges.

The AU has committed itself to the integration of youth and youth agenda in all its activities. Following the adoption of the AYC in 2006, it took another bold step by dedicating 2009-2018 as the "decade of youth;" first, to acknowledge how young Africans represent an important asset and resource, and second, observe that 'a new emergent and integrated Africa can be fully realized only if its population of youth is mobilized and equipped to drive Africa's integration, peace and development agenda.'[53] Although there are complaints from youth groups that the AU needs to raise its own bar in terms of robust and meaningful engagement with youth groups, there is evidence to suggest that the organization is keen to encourage the growth of youth groups to complement current efforts towards peacebuilding. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention,

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[50] AfDB, From Youth Empowerment to Youth Investment: The Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy, 30 July 2019. Retrieved from https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/youth-empowerment-youth-investment-jobs-youth-africa-strategy-27951(13 August 2019).

[51] AU, *African Youth Charter* (especially Article 17 on Peace and Security). Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, 2006

[52] Field visit, 2019

[53] AU, African Youth Decade, 2009-2018: Plan of Action. *Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development. Roadmap Towards the Implementation of the African Youth Charter, May 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_decade_2009-2018.pdf (14 August 2019).

Management and Resolution (RMs) are also scaling up their interests and interventions to advance youth issues in their respective regions.

Experiences of 'real or perceived exclusion and inadequate representation has been the most recurrent and underlying cause of violence and armed conflict.'[54] In several interactions with them, young people frequently expressed disappointment over their "exclusion," "marginalization," and "underrepresentation" in peacebuilding, political and economic spheres, including on issues that directly affect them. For as long as policy-makers continue to portray the youth as either victims or perpetrators of violence instead of drawing on the increasing evidence that they are also leaders, agents, assets and partners to peacebuilding,[55] the disconnect between the state and youth would continue to multiply and stoke violence. Peace education can help tame what the adults erroneously described as exuberance in youth by channelling their energy towards genuine dialogue and meaningful development enterprises.

Even where the space for active youth participation exists, they see a wide range of legal, institutional and structural constraints, which make it extremely difficult for them to be meaningfully and sustainably involved. It was for this reason that several youth leaders are not only insisting on the need to move from presence to participation but also that the latter should actually be classified as a fundamental and inalienable right. For them, any further marginalization and exclusion would only end up creating a society that is unequal and unjust. Still, without access to political power, young people may never have as much opportunity to shape society the way they want. Mainstreaming them in all efforts is the first crucial step towards mobilizing and building consensus on citizens (and local) ownership of peace processes.[56]

Another key issue that would determine how quickly and successful the task of mainstreaming youth presence and participation beyond tokenism is for national governments to faithfully commit to legislating, resourcing and implementing national youth policies. This is in line with Articles 11 to 19 of the AYC which provides for youth participation, education and skills development, socio-economic integration of youths, sustainable livelihoods, youth employment, health, peace and security, sustainable development, protection of the environment, responsibilities of youth and law enforcement. Unfortunately, some of the key highlights contained in the AYC appear to be missing from the policy roadmap that several African countries are adopting.

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[54] Keng, Golda (2017). *New Threats to Africa's security: The Role of Youth in Preventing Conflict and Building Sustainable Peace*. https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2017/11/09/new-threats-to-africas-peace-and-security-the-role-of-youth-in-preventing-conflicts-and-building-sustainable-peace/ (13 October 2019).

[55] Op. Cit. African Youth Charter.

[56] The Challenge of Instituting Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN Peace-building Architecture. UN. 29th June 2015.

The AU recognizes how issues such as violence, poverty and lack of educational opportunity are capable of seducing youth to join criminal and non-state armed groups[57] that offer them 'an income, occupation, status, identity and the excitement of violence.'[58] Even though the nexus between peace, security and governance is widely recognized in existing normative and institutional frameworks adopted by the AU and RECs/RMs, there are considerable gaps from one region to another when it comes to resourcing and implementation. In 2016, African Heads of States and Governments met in Nairobi, Kenya, to make a solemn declaration on the importance of 'youth empowerment and capacity development towards harnessing demographic dividends, preventing forced migration and conflict, and promoting peacebuilding.'[59]

1.5. STATE AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

From extensive conversations with youth, it is evident the aspirations of young people have still not been fully met.[60] Even if the progress so far made is more of symbolism, they demonstrate the remarkable power and energy of youth to conquer their fears by mobilizing power of the social media. They have also heralded modest socio-political and economic concessions that can only whet the appetite of youth for more. It has, finally, given hope to a new generation of young Africans who look forward to a different future that is partly their own making. What cannot be taken away from them is that recent political engagement by young Africans is emboldening them and their peers around the continent to also start nursing similar ambition, asking discomforting questions, and making demands on their governments.

Despite the identified gaps, it is important to highlight a number of state responses, especially in view of variations between and among countries. The nature of political systems and institutions, and the capacity or willingness of the state are crucial in assessing the progress made towards enhancing the presence and participation of youth in public policy and decision-making. There is still room for more substantive action on the part of African states beyond the mere adoption and ratification of key international instruments for the promotion of youth engagements, especially in the context of peace and security. It is crucial that Member States of the AU embrace the letter and spirit of the Charter, and use its key provisions to benchmark progress and measure youth contributions to the advancement of peace and security in Africa. Figure 2 below shows, in percentage terms, how the 55 Member States of the AU have performed in terms of the adoption, ratification and domestication of the AYC. The chart indicates that prior to the adoption of AYC, 14 African countries (or 25%) had policies that shaped their engagement on youth issues, broadly defined.

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[57] Martone, Gerald (2010). An Unexpected Lifeline. In Cahill, M. Kevin (ed.) (2010). Even in Chaos: Education in Times of Emergencies. Fordham University Press and the Centre for International Humanitarian Cooperation. New York. Pp. 89-108.
[58] Kemper, Yvonne (2005). Youth in Approaches of War to Peace Transitions. Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin. P. 3.
[59] Nairobi Declaration (TICAD VI). Joint Statement by African and Japanese Leaders at the Sixth TICAD, Nairobi, Kenya, 2016.
[60] OECD (2015). Youth in the MENA Region: How to Bring Them in. Retrieved from https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/youth-in-the-mena-region_9789264265721-en#page1 (10 September 2019).

FIGURE 2: ADOPTION STATUS OF THE AYC BY AU MEMBER STATES (%)
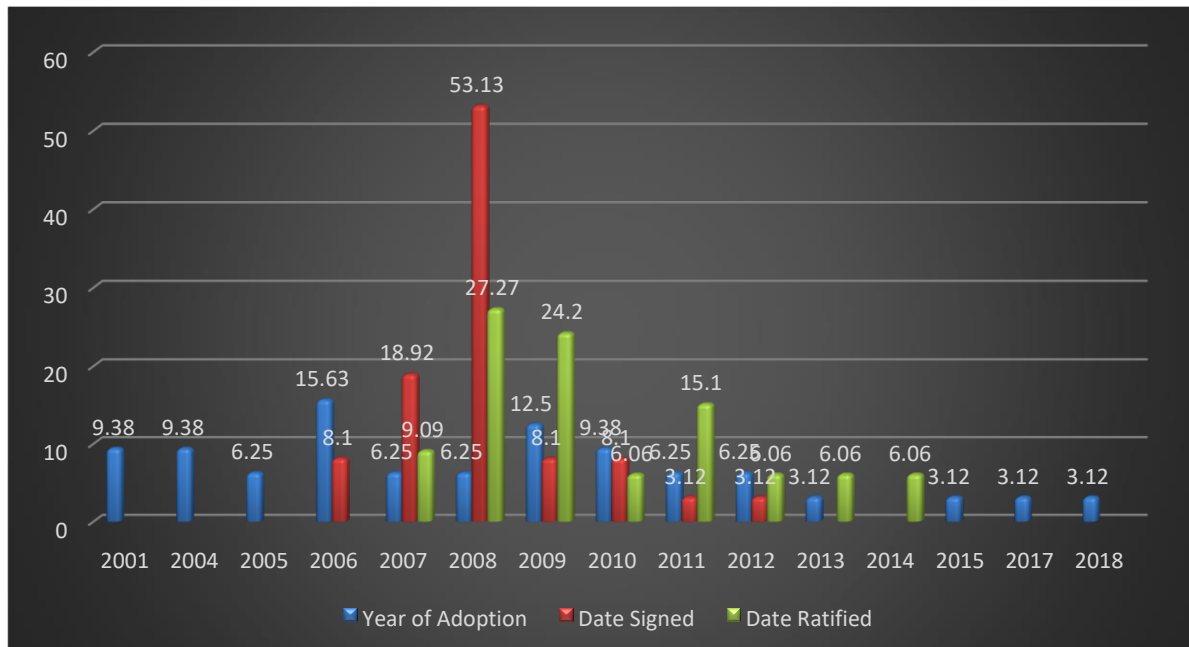
Source: Author's compilation from various national youth policies of AU Member States

Following the adoption of the AYC in 2006, however, there was a marked improvement in the rate of adoption and signing, with ratification of the Charter starting only during the following year- 2007. By 2008, when the AYC had gained more prominence, a total of 29 African countries (or 53%) had signed and another 15 countries (27%) ratified. By 2014, only three countries (or 6.06%) had signed the Charter during previous years and also took the bold step of ratifying and domesticating it.

Only 38 (or 69.3%) African countries have so far adopted National Youth Policies to give expression to and mirror Article 12 of the AYC while the rest are at different stages in the process of adopting such policy. However, the adoption rate of the AYC has been rather slow and disjointed. According to Figure 3, only nine (or 16%) Member States promptly promulgated national youth policies the same year that the AYC was adopted in July 2006. By 2009 that the Charter came into force, seven (or 12.5%) additional African countries took the same bold step. Other than those two peak years, and the 16 countries that have national youth policies, however, subsequent adoptions have been in trickles.

Figure 2: Percentages of countries vis-à-vis year of adoption of national youth policies

National Youth Policy

	2001	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2015	2017	2018
Percentages(%)	9.38	9.38	6.25	15.63	6.25	6.25	12.5	9.38	6.25	6.25	3.12	3.12	3.12	3.12

Percentages(%)   ⋯ Linear (Percentages(%))   ⋯ 2 per. Mov. Avg. (Percentages(%))
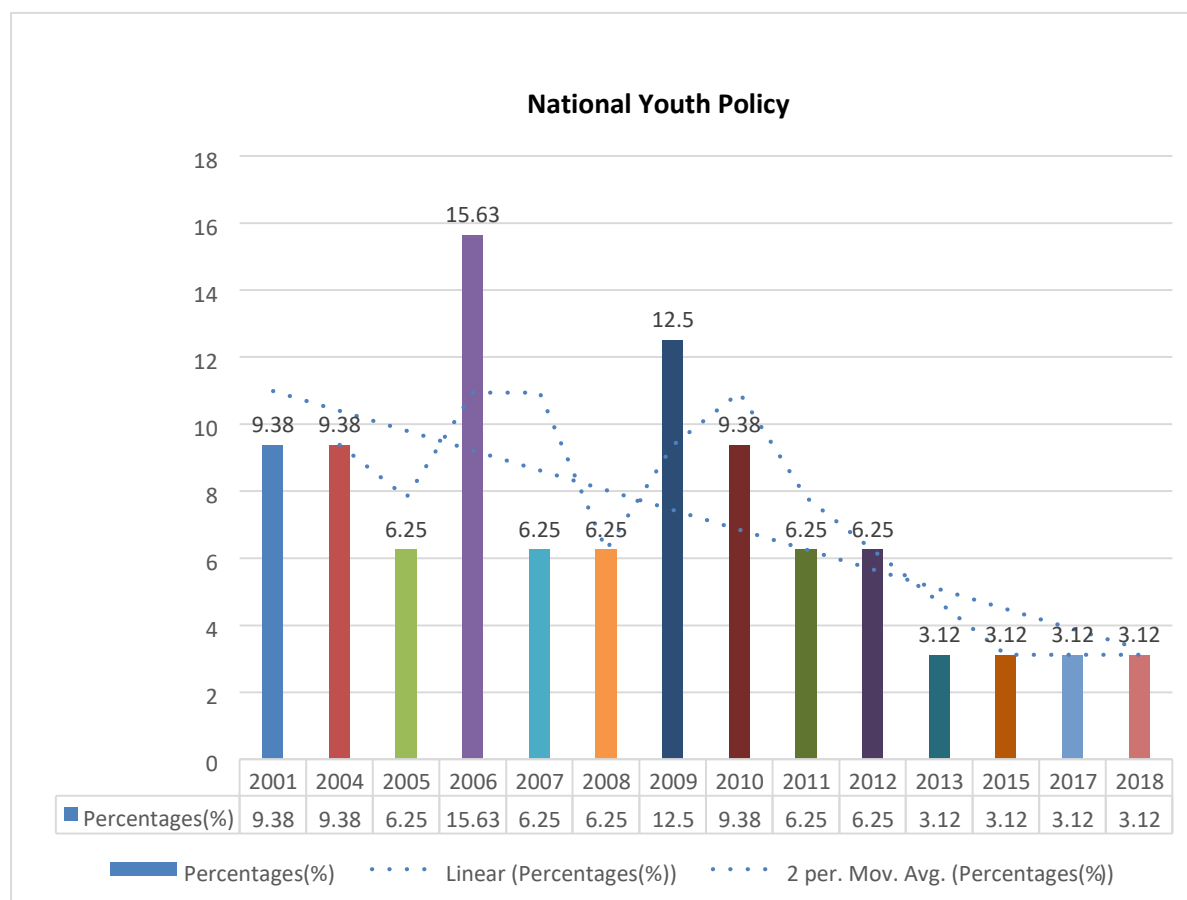
Sources: compiled from the national youth policies of AU Member States

Articles 11 to 19 of the AYC identified several parameters for benchmarking progress in the youth sector, around youth participation, education and skills development, socio-economic integration of youths, sustainable livelihoods, youth employment, health, peace and security, sustainable development, protection of the environment, responsibilities of youth and law enforcement. For the most part, progress has been slow on each of the indicators in view of how the key prescriptions contained in the Charter are missing in the national youth policies of several African countries.

In line with Article 12 of the AYC, many African states have adopted national youth policies and institutionalized national youth councils or typically designate ministry, department or agency to drive youth agenda and priorities. Such national policy documents on youth are generic in many ways. Some of them have recently undergone major review to reflect changing realities and circumstances but many young people interviewed claim they were not adequately consulted in their preparation. A few countries even face the dilemma of different government departments exercising overlapping jurisdictions. For instance, there are ministries of women or gender and youth affairs; youth and sports, labour and youth, but what typically happens is that the youth component end up receiving far less budgetary

allocation and commensurate attention. There is an unsettled debate among youth groups on whether having an autonomous youth agency is the way to go or retaining the current status quo. Even if all of them have national youth policies and councils, undertaking concrete interventions including legislations that translates policy into actionable interventions is a different matter entirely. Since a number of countries have still not ratified and domesticated the AYC, making progress on peace and security issues may also be difficult to maximize and manage.

To conclude this section, it is important to add that the AfDB as well as other multilateral institutions have been very active in supporting the youth sector in Africa. Particularly, the bank has been working with the RECs/RMs to address the numerous economic challenges and employment gap in Africa through the creation of a synergy between agenda and interventions. According to the Bank, five priority areas described as 'High 5s' are critical to the launch of Africa's next growth chapter: (I) Lighting and powering Africa; (II) Feeding Africa; (III) Industrializing Africa; (IV) Integrating Africa and (V) Improving the quality of life for the people of Africa. The AfDB sees African youth as indispensable resources for achieving the 'H5s,' and it is creating platforms to harness their skills and entrepreneurial ideas. Under this scheme, the AfDB established the 'Jobs for Youth in Africa' initiative with the aim of creating 25 million jobs over ten years; mobilize $3 billion to support young Africans and also aid the establishment of skills enhancement zones, in conjunction with the regional organizations.[61]

1.6.   CONCLUSIONS

There are five key conclusions from this chapter. Firstly, there is obviously a disconnect between the extent and quality of progress made by youth groups vis-à-vis limited recognition and appreciation of their efforts as well as little or no support from their governments. There was not a single youth group that participated in this continental study that did not complain about lack of funding and a disappointment that any form of government assistance was not forthcoming. This explains why a large number of youth groups maintain and carry out low-profile activities; rely on personal and crowd fundraising; prefer to recruit volunteers to work on projects; and generally, lack the requisite human and material resource, and institutional capacity, to thrive.

The second conclusion has to do with the survival threshold of youth groups in the face of funding constraints and weak or limited capacity. Typically, the lifespan of majority of the youth groups owing to funding challenges is 5 years; beyond which they are likely to survive for much longer. It perhaps explains why they mostly congregate around advocacy and public sensitization, issues that cost only small amounts in the age of new media and ICT. Modern

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[61] Jobs for youth in Africa is one of AfDB's High 5s for Transforming Africa is classified under "Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Africa". See, AfDB's High 5s: a game changer in Africa's development discourse. Retrieved from https://www.afdb.org/en/high5s(9 September 2019).

tools of communication have made it easier for youth groups to engage in advocacy and mobilize from the comfort of their homes- with a laptop, mobile phone and Internet dongle.

It is important to add that there are growing concerns that the new social media is also encouraging more young people to stay away from important events such as voting during elections that shape their lives and futures. Indeed, the new media is taking youth docility and indifference to a whole new, unprecedented and dangerous level such that they may have become more vocal and expressive at the same time that they are 'withdrawing' from civic duties that have far more impact on them and the future of their countries. One of the implications is that youth that are actively involved on the social media and offline in actual political processes may be getting demotivated due to the wide gap from one region to another. As equivocally stated by a youth activist, the verdict in line is: *"we are 'here' where impressions matter and not 'there' where real changes matter."[62]*

The third conclusion is that the number, frequency and intensity of protests around the world are validating the view the current youth age is also the new age of protests. The debate over whether or not ongoing protests are merely producing modest gains or are leading to big and real changes capable of precipitating radical transformation of society and the state in Africa is still unsettled. What is obvious is that many governments are underestimating the resolve of protesters only to realize that early intervention to peacefully address substantive youth grievances could have saved the day. Except in Central Africa region, massive anti-government public demonstrations have successfully ousted governments and in some cases retained the status quo. Also, political, social and security conditions are changing in countries that experienced popular uprisings at the same time, that it did not diffuse to other countries within and beyond the region. In their aftermaths, instead, weapons in the custody of rebels, insurgent and terrorist groups are fanning turbulence in some states.

The fourth point is that it is incontrovertible that Africa's changing demography present both opportunities and challenges for policy makers, religious community and regional authorities, and to the youth themselves. African youth are insisting that they must get immediate attention to the development agenda but also governance. They also insist that elections must translate into meaningful state policies and interventions that support vulnerable groups across the continent. Finally, they are concerned that exclusionary arrangements that centre around ethnic, religious and political marginalization should give way to more inclusive, transparent and merit-based processes that give young people equal opportunities and access to educational and employment opportunities, and also to regain a sense of belonging that allows them to reach their full potential.

In the final analysis, they are insisting that youth agenda and priorities must first and foremost be at the heart of national development policies and planning if the full potentials of the largest demographic group are to be fast-tracked and harnessed. According to several youth

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[62] Regional consultation, Asmara, 2019

leaders interviewed, Africa's successful transformation would largely depend on changing the current and mostly negative narrative and public perception towards young people to see them as architects of African struggles against underdevelopment, poverty, misery and illiteracy.[63] While governments must double efforts to minimize or end the plethora of challenges, their ultimate goal should be to recognize, appreciate and support the activities of youth in peace and security in the short, medium and long terms.[64]

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[63] Op. Cit. Diouf, Mamadou (2003). P. 4.

[64] MacNeil, Carole (2013). Supporting Asset-Based and Community Development in Conflict Zones: A Training Example from the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 23 (1), 211-220.

CHAPTER TWO: Central Africa

2.1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

Based on 2019 estimates, the total population of the nine countries classified by the AU within the Central Africa region[65] is around 161 million, with an estimated average of more than 64 per cent of that number under the age of 24.[66] Despite this substantial demographic profile, however, the majority of youth across the region lack access to stable and secured economic opportunities. In specific terms, one-thirds of the young people are unemployed and discouraged; another third are vulnerably employed, and only one in six have one form of wage employment or another.[67] Almost six decades after independence, countries in the region continue to struggle to achieve sustainable socioeconomic development despite an abundance of natural resources and agricultural commodities.[68] While they are also key exporters of a wide range of raw materials such as timber, uranium, diamonds, manganese, and cobalt, the centrality of the oil sector for economic survival of countries in the region is evident in how it account for about 70% of exports, 50% of GDP and 60% of fiscal revenue.[69] During the 2000 decade, the region became one of the fastest growing on the African continent particularly following the discovery of large oil reserves within the Gulf of Guinea.[70]

Due to slow growth rate and excessive exposure to external shocks, virtually all of the region's economies are vulnerable to fluctuating world market prices. The unexpected drop in global oil price in the international market in 2014, for instance, led to a major crisis in public sector financing that further put pressure on government to meet the welfare needs of citizens, particularly that of the region's teeming youth population. Strike actions, peaceful demonstrations and riots to draw attention to the harsh effects of austerity measures imposed by government became frequent, often ending in government clampdown. The

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[65] These are Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Principe.

[66] Population Data. Net webpage, Retrieved from https://en.populationdata.net/continents/africa/ (12 October 2019).

[67] AfDB (2019a), Central Africa Economic Outlook 2019. Abidjan: African Development Bank.

[68] Ibid. AfDB (2019a).

[69] IMF (2018) Africa Regional Economic Outlook. Retrieved from https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/datasets/AFRREO/(3 September 2019)

[70]AfDB (2019b). African Economic Outlook 2019. Abidjan: African Development Bank.

declining socio-economic situation in many countries eventually exacerbated insecurity and violent conflicts.

A number of countries in the region have also experienced various forms of violent conflicts and instability due, for the most part, to weak consolidation of state institutions, *coup d'état,* tension over access, control and distribution of natural resources, secessionist agitations, transnational organized crimes linked to arms, drugs and human trafficking, maritime insecurity and the upsurge of violent extremism and terrorism. The security landscape in the region is fragile, as many countries have to cope with high risks of conflict relapse.

While states are central to peacebuilding initiatives or efforts especially within the context of globalization, conflict prevention, management and resolution requires a multiplicity of actor to achieve success. Youth are a critical element in peacebuilding as their vast experiences in different countries across the Central African region, as elsewhere across the continent, have vividly shown. This chapter outlines the major findings of the study on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in the region. The findings derive from the triangulation of qualitative data collected from multiple sources: first, during regional consultations with youth representatives which held in Libreville, Gabon, in June 2019; second, during field visits to three countries: Burundi[71], Cameroon,[72] and CAR[73] and finally, extensive online discussions with representatives of youth groups across the region.

This chapter is organized in five parts. Following this introduction, the second part provides empirical insights on the roles and contributions of youth in peace and security in the Central African region paying particular attention to the divergent contexts within which youth and youth organizations/networks, are operating and what those might portend for advancing or slowing down their contributions to peace and security at the national and regional levels. The third part presents the challenges and gaps that result from the status of youth participation in peace and security while part four explores the resilience options that youth groups mobilise in the face of the multiple challenges they face in the different circumstances they are finding themselves. Finally, Part 5 identifies key opportunities and also recommendations to different stakeholders within the region.

2.2. ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY

Getting a sense of the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in the Central African region must begin by taking into consideration its unique political, economic and social contexts and dynamics. During the regional consultation, a participant articulated the consensus among the youth, thus: *"[We] all have this same feeling of exclusion from political processes and decision-making. In this region, political power is entirely captured by a single person and/or by one dominant political party."* This is a common impression among young people in the region, and it goes a long way in shaping how they view and engage the State.

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[71] The field visits in Burundi took place in September 2019
[72] The field visits in Cameroon was launched from the 8th June to 5th July 2019.
[73] The field visit in Bangui (CAR) took place from the 19th to the 22nd May 2019.

It also reflects the growing disconnect- and mistrust- between youth and State that is becoming a major source of public anomie and tension in several countries. For the youth, the peculiarity of the political environment coupled with the socioeconomic challenges that citizens face have become the most common incubator of grievances and frustrations. Finally, it explains how young people see the prospects and constraints they face across the entire spectrum of peace and security; CMPR, PCRD and in myriad other crosscutting issues that affect human security.

2.2.1   Conflict Prevention

There is no doubt that states have the primary responsibility to promote and maintain peace and security, and should do so by mobilising concerted efforts to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict. However, given the nature of the current peace and security landscape, the myriad tasks relating to conflict prevention are too important to be left in the hands of the state alone. There is a compelling need to allow multiple stakeholders within each country and across the region, including youth and youth-led organisations, to contribute their quota to sustainable peace and security. A key finding from the study is that youth-led organizations are increasingly playing multiple roles in conflict prevention within the Central African region that can no longer be ignored.

Notably, in this instance, is the role that youth groups are playing following the spill-over of the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency group from Nigeria to neighbouring countries around the Lake Chad Basin, particularly into Chad and Cameroon, two countries that fall within the Central African region. Although accurate figures are not readily available,[74] it is believed that many of the active members of the terrorist group wilfully joined or were forcefully conscripted from the large pool of unemployed youth [75] from the region. Paradoxically, also, a much larger number of youth are caught in the massive humanitarian crisis in the region as innocent civilians and victims of the brutal exploits of the terrorists.[76]

Several youth groups are at the forefronts of community mobilisations to stem the tide of violent extremism and related threats through several initiatives at the community and national levels. They are, in specific terms, contributing through a range of interventions such as building resilience, maintaining social cohesion and promoting peace. One of such youth groups established in 2014 in response to the Boko Haram insurgency is *the youth peace art consortium in Yaoundé, which is popularly known as Sweet@rt'frica. The group* is committed to the promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance among youth. It successfully launched a 14-month peace campaign in partnership with World Dynamics of Young People (DMJ) that

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[74] UNODC (2017). *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The role of the Justice System*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

[75] MERCY CORPS (2016). "Motivations and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth. Portland: Mercy Corps.

[76] Warner, Jason and Matfess, Hilary. (2017) "Exploding Stereotypes: The Unexpected Operational and Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram Suicide Bombers". *Combating Terrorism Center*. Retrieved from https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2017/08/Exploding-Stereotypes-1.pdf (8 October 2019).

involved extensive travels across seven out of the 10 regions of Cameroon. In that period, the "No To Terror Caravan" held 30 public exhibitions in different art media to sensitize more than 30,000 youth on non-violence, tolerance and peacebuilding imperatives.[77]Sweet@art'frica also participated in the February 2017 Yaoundé International Business Exhibition, the largest of its kind in Central African region, which brought together 1,300 exhibitors and over 10,000 visitors. The activities of the group are premised on the view that arts is not just a veritable tool for the mobilisation of youth consciousness but also to empower young people to imbibe the right disposition towards the prevention and countering of violent extremism.

In some countries of the region, resource scarcity and/or competition over land ownership and access to water and pastures for livestock have become a major bone of contention between and among communities. Recent experiences of violence between herders and farmers in rural and semi urban areas have increased the frequency and intensity of inter-communal violence. In other parts, national cohesion and stability are undermined by the outbreak of internal rebellion and the activities of transnational terrorist groups. These interrelated concerns are central to the activities of the Global Peace Chain (GPC) in Chad, which uses education, sport and art to promote and consolidate harmonious relationship between and among communities. Using the slogan Peace through Dialogue to promote the culture of peace, living together, forgiveness, tolerance and love, GPC appoints young peace ambassadors to serve as arrowheads of peace promotion in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in the country. Despite its modest achievements, GPC is currently implementing its advocacy and social intervention activities without any external financial and material support. While lack of financial resources is a recurrent challenge to many groups, the GPC model is designed to operate on the basis of youth volunteerism and the corresponding dedication of its members towards the realisation of set goals.

The third aspect of youth engagement in conflict prevention in Central Africa is related to the growing concern around the spread and impact of hate speech. Increasingly, the use of hate speech, fake news, invectives or propaganda has become very rampant in many countries across the region, as it is in other parts of the continent and around the world. With the visibility and growing use of the internet and online social media by young people, in particular, the phenomenon of hate speech has become a major public policy- and security-concern. The Local Youth Corner in Cameroon (LOYOC) is addressing the nexus between hate speech and violent conflict.[78] Publications by the group show that the emergence of social media has increased the use and spread of hate speech across the country. It also recognized that "the inability to curtail or check social media has made users of social media platforms

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[77] Sweet@art'frica (2018). 2018 Activity Report. Yaoundé. Cameroon.
[78] The complete study can be find in Local Youth Corner Cameroon (2019). "Hate Speech and Violent Conflict in Cameroon." Yaoundé. Retrieved from https://t.co/ONMgXCpT8Q (5 September 2019).

like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp to disseminate hate languages, fake news and misinformation" under the pretence of exercising the right to freedom of expression.[79]

LOYOC is implementing the 'Spread Love Campaign' to provide young people with the capacity to design and implement initiatives to prevent and counter hate speech in their local contexts. With financial support from Nexus Fund and the Commonwealth CVE Unit, the 2019 edition of the campaign trained 30 'Spread Love Ambassadors', including social media influencers, artist, musicians, comedians, bloggers, teachers, students, journalist and government officials. It also supported the creation of 30 'Spread Love Clubs' in primary and secondary schools, and developed music, arts, radio, television and social media contents to sensitize over 500,000 people across the country.[80] A major outcome of the initiative is the promotion of a more conscious use of language and sensitivity to hate speech. After the training by LOYOC, for instance, a beneficiary from the Far North Region of Cameroon is now actively engaged in community sensitization against hate speech among students. Her involvement in peacebuilding aim to develop awareness strategies to help young people identify risk factors that make them susceptible to religious and political radicalization.

Youth groups in the region have also organized to address the threats posed by economic decline, youth unemployment and governance deficits. The Gabon chapter of the Pan African Youth Network for the Culture of Peace (PAYNCoP)[81] has been working to reduce social instability, particularly amongst youth that are caused by the above factors in the context of recent political tension in the country. PAYNCoP's achievements are in two-folds. First, it has expanded within and beyond Gabon since its creation in 2014, with active chapters in 40 countries. [82] Second, the professional structure around which the network organises its activities (comprising of General Assembly, Board of Directors, and national coordinators in each of the country chapters) is an indication that youth groups are also able to organize themselves across multiple countries to address common threats driving violence across the continent.

After five years of its existence, PAYNCoP's country chapter in Sao Tomé and Principe featured prominently in the dialogue between youth and policy makers to address the incessant manipulation of young people, especially the unemployed ones, for political ends. Since youth participation in decision-making is recognised to be a critical element in promoting peace and security, the importance of having a vibrant youth group with country chapters in many countries all working to prevent conflict cannot be understated.

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[79] Field visit, 2019.
[80] Data drawn from LOYOC report.
[81] PAYNCOP Gabon is one of the branch of the organization across the continent. PAYNCOP was created in December 2014 following the Pan-African Forum held in Libreville, under the theme: "African youth and the challenge of promoting a culture of peace." The broad aim of PAYNCOP is to become a network of organizations of young Africans working to promote a culture of peace, non-violence and sustainable development in Africa. The PAYNCOP Permanent Secretariat is located in Libreville, with structures located in Northern, Western, Central, Eastern, Southern Africa and the Diaspora.
[82] Data from PAYNCOP 2019 Activity Report.

2.2.2 **Conflict Management and Resolution**

While some of the conflicts in the Central African region have been transformed, others have relapsed due to the persistence of unresolved grievances (PRIO, 2016).[83] Clearly, the way conflicts are managed and resolved impacts on its sustainability. This section focuses on the contributions of youth organizations to the peaceful management and resolution of conflicts in the region. The ongoing "Anglophone Crisis" mostly affecting the North-west and South-west regions of Cameroon offer an entry point for identifying the roles and contributions of youth groups to conflict management and resolution. The crisis itself has become a major challenge for state-society relations, with youth recognizing the urgent need for them to contribute to the search for peaceful resolution. This realization is reinforced by the fact that young men and women constitute more than 65% of the population in the two most-impacted regions.

At the inception of the crisis in 2016, a youth-led group known as Association for Community Awareness (ASCOA) organized several peace campaigns to raise awareness on the imperatives of peaceful coexistence in homes, communities and the whole country. The campaign took the form of marches, media sensitization on television and radio, as well as interfaith and intercommunity dialogues. To date, ASCOA has carried out several activities in Limbe and Buea in the South-West region. During the 2018 edition of the International Peace Day, for instance, the Association held a major peace conference that attracted community leaders and stakeholders, while in March 2019 it launched the Peace Crane Project in several schools in the region that have so far outreached to over 1,000 primary school pupils as well as students in secondary and tertiary institutions within the region.

LifeAID is another youth group in Cameroon that is employing a wide range of conflict management and resolution tools to transform the crisis. The work of the group is anchored on the belief that since majority of the country's population and main actors and victims of the Anglophone crisis are youth, they are also crucial in the quest for a lasting solution. The organization introduced the Youth Initiative for Inclusive Dialogue (YIID-Program) to engage youth in sustainable peacebuilding to resolve the Anglophone crisis. The YIID-Program has become well known as a platform for neutral, objective and frank intergenerational dialogue to move parties of the crisis "from the guns to the table" and to do so in an inclusive manner.[84] It also engages in various humanitarian and socio-economic actions as a way to assist victims of the crisis. In July 2019, The YIID-Program organized the 'Youth Pre-Sensitization and Consultation Mini-Summit' in Buea, a major town in the South West Region and in Bamenda, the Capital of the North-West Region. The two events provided an avenue not only for youth to contemplate their roles in a conflict that primarily affects them but also afforded an opportunity for inter-generational, inter-faith and inter-ethnic conversations between and among different constituencies drawn from the larger society. Each of the consultations

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83 PRIO (2016). Conflict recurrence. *Conflict trends*. N°2.
84 LifeAID (2019) *Youth Pre-Sensitization and Consultation Mini-Summit of the YIID Report*. Buea Cameroon.

attracted hundreds of youth leaders, religious and community leaders, government officials and professionals.

The *Association Pour Une Jeunesse Africaine Progressiste* (AJAP) is by far the leading and most popular youth organisation in Burundi, with over 15,000 members across the country. The story of the Association is a testimonial to what is feasible, and achievable, when youth groups establish vibrant networks that quickly become visible and successful enough to attract attention and government support rather than the suspicious and hostile relationships common in many countries. AJAP is involved in youth peace mobilisation and offers connection and partnership platform between youth initiatives and several NGO partners. When interviewed, the Country Head of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) did acknowledge that in a country like Burundi where CSOs lacks sufficient resources AJAP plays a big role in bridging the gaps.

It is important to acknowledge the increasingly visible and remarkable role of young women in conflict management and resolution. Undoubtedly, while youth and women bear the biggest brunt when there is insecurity in any form but they are also critical agents for peaceful resolution and positive change. The Women for a Change (WfaC) in Cameroon is actively involved in building the resilience of young women and girls in several conflict-affected areas. The group itself is part of the South-West North-West Task force (SWNOT), a coalition of several women and youth-led organizations working towards the restoration of peace in the Anglophone regions through dialogue, advocacy, campaigns, press conference as well as distribution of humanitarian materials to internally displaced youths and women. The young women and girl's rights initiative of the group involves conducting outreach in local communities and assisting target beneficiaries with educational tools. They also expose them to new techniques and skills in sustainable agricultural, provide grinding machines to women to relieve the hardship of food processing and also teach sexual and reproductive health education in Bafanji, a conflict-affected locality of Cameroon. Since its formation in 2009, over 250 young women, and men, have benefited from the different training and capacity building programmes of WfaC, while the group is now widely seen as a major voice in the 'No Violence on Women' movement across the country.

Further, the space for youth involvement in promoting peace and security is mainly conditioned by the often-protracted nature of violent conflicts and instability in the Central African region. Even in the absence of accurate statistics, it is self-evident that large numbers of those caught in the web of protracted violence are typically young people who have, to some extent, become disoriented and disillusioned. *Generation Epanouie* was established in 2008 by youth in Ibanda, Bukavu and South Kivu, with offices in North Kivu, South Kivu and Kinshasa areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to counter the growing experience of youth disorientation and disillusionment through its cardinal objective of fostering youth empowerment and sustainable development. As an international movement that brings together young people from different backgrounds to work around the vision of "Unity, Work

and Generosity," the activities of the youth group has spread to Uganda, Burundi and South Africa but also become established in Canada and Finland.

The group organizes training and capacity building workshops and conferences focusing on raising youth awareness of non-violence and the culture of peace in schools and universities across the country, especially in Kambehe, Bukavu, Kabare and Goma. Its work in the area of building social cohesion is also promoted through the organisation of social, cultural and sporting activities that contribute to the consolidation of peace in South Kivu and North Kivu, and more broadly across the DRC. Finally, *Generation Epanouie* disseminates peacebuilding news across communities through the publication of a periodical magazine, *Cloche des Jeunes Magazine,* (or, Youth Bell Magazine). Editions of the magazine have covered peacebuilding and reconstruction issues such as how to promote non-violence and the culture of peace in schools, the role of youth in peace, effective growth and development, youth entrepreneurship in a post-conflict environment, to name a few.

Youth in Central African Republic (CAR) are generally of the view that durable peace can and will only be achieved "with youth and by youth."[85] It is important to recall that the long-drawn sectarian conflict between Seleka rebels and Anti-Balakas continues to have negative impacts on youth, either as perpetrators and or the victims. Within the context of religious fragmentation, young people in the country created a network of youth-led associations to contribute to ending violence, promoting peace and rebuilding their respective communities. In April 2014, the coalition of youth groups created the Interfaith Platform of Central African Youth (PIJCA). PIJCA comprises of 40 youth-led groups and more than 2,000 members across diverse religious denominations with the broad objective to train young peacebuilders to "transcend religious and ethnic differences for conflict resolution, peace promotion, social cohesion and development" (Field Visit participant, 2019). Its visible presence in Bangui, the capital and where its headquarters is located, as well as in dozens of urban and rural areas across the country has made it easier for PIJCA to engage with young peacebuilders on a continuous basis.

The series of bi-annual training sessions for young people on human rights, democracy, citizenship, conflict management and peer mediation have become very popular. Since 2014, the group have organised specialised training sessions in Bangui, Boda, Yaloké and Boali that have so far trained more than 300 young women and girls in peer mediation techniques within the Social Mediators Peace Programme.[86] At the peak of violence in Bangui, PIJCA organised several advocacy missions to make appeal to the different armed groups to allow free movement of people; including staff of local and international NGOs as well as personnel of the United Nations Mission to Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in conflict-affected zones, especially in the 4th district (*4ème Arrondissement*) in the capital. During major

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85 Regional consultation, 2019
86 The Platform created in 2015 the National coordination of social mediators which is the branch of PIJCA dedicated to young women and girls.

religious celebrations, PIJCA members organize inter-faith activities that place emphases on promoting tolerance and inclusivity. Finally, the Association contributes to socio-economic empowerment initiatives that target young people. In 2016 and 2017, it financed small-scale income generation schemes that disbursed 1 million Francs CFA each (approximately 2,000 US Dollars) to youth beneficiaries in four cities- Boda, Yaloké, Damara and Liton- where PIJCA offices are located. The purpose was to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of youth and to make them more self-sufficient.

Another key issue that also became evident in the course of this study had to do with the engagement of a variety of community- and past political- leaders in recollecting and sharing common stories that resonate with the common experiences of young people in different parts of the region. The former President of Burundi, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, provided an important context for a better appreciation of the circumstances and past experiences that continue to shape the multiple roles of youth in peace and security, thus:

I experienced and survived genocide twice in my lifetime. First when I was 16 years and second when I was the President. I know the language of genocide… it is important that we pay attention to the role that youth are playing in civil society, in police, in military, in political parties and in private sectors. Some of these guys have been directly touched by past crisis, most of them are right now in institutions and with responsibility. Some of them are either positively or negatively being influenced by their history. And, while youth situations may be similar across, we also have to acknowledge that youth situations are also different in Rwanda, DRC and Burundi. I work with youth and always emphasize that they must deal with ethnic problems that continues to define our communities.[87]

2.2.3   DDR/SSR

Despite the obvious need for them in several countries in the Central African region, concrete and visible DDR/SSR initiatives are limited. Two youth groups in the region; PIJCA in CAR and LOYOC in Cameroon, have demonstrated the importance of placing greater premium on DDR/SSR issues, especially as they relate to the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants or offenders back into the society. PIJCA has been providing material and financial support to former young combatants that have renounced violence and now wish to embrace farming and fishing in Kulamandja, in the PK 20 Damara Road area of CAR. This intervention has created new livelihood opportunities, and also contributed to reducing economic vulnerabilities among beneficiaries. Because of its multi-faith identity, and its growing experience in supporting the return to peace and reconciliation through its projects for young ex-combatants as well as women in Bangui and other towns such as Boeing, Boda, Berberati and Carnot, PIJCA has acquired a public reputation as a credible and influential youth group at the forefront of making positive contributing to peace and security in CAR.

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[87] Field visit, 2019

LOYOC, on the other hand, is currently working in eight prisons across Cameroon to provide repeat offenders with alternative sources of livelihood to deter them from reoffending, and even embracing radicalization. It is estimated that this project has had positive impact on about 5,000 young people in prisons as well as empowered 300 youth peer educators in prisons to gain financial literacy and create jobs while continuing with their peacebuilding activities in and out of prisons.

2.2.4 Crosscutting issues

Youth groups and networks across Africa are known to engage in a wide range of cross-cutting activities that fall within the broad scope of peacebuilding but that may not necessary follow the typologies used by inter-governmental institutions such as the UN, AU and RECs/RMs as highlighted in the previous section of this chapter. The pertinent cross-cutting issues they focus on that are linked, directly or indirectly, to peace and security in the Central African region are related to drug abuse and trafficking in schools, street violence and delinquency, climate change, and gender-based violence.

2.2.4.1. Drug abuse and trafficking in schools

Drug abuse is a growing phenomenon in youth environments in the region. During interviews conducted in Cameroon, youth respondents agreed that drug abuse are linked to the rising incidences of violence such as gangsterism, mass riots and even separatist agitations.[88] They also drew attention to the direct nexus between widespread drug abuse and violent extremism in the Far North region that are adversely affected by the spread of Boko Haram insurgency. It is not by sheer coincidence that places such as Mayo-Sava, Mayo Tsanaga and Logone and Chari in that region are also notorious for high rates of drug abuse among youth.

To tackle the root causes of narcotic drug abuse especially in rural areas, Action for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainable Development (ACIREDED), a youth-led group launched a project in the Far North region in February 2019 on the theme 'Stop Drug and Narcotics Use'.[89] The project raised awareness among young students about the risks/dangers of drug use and abuse; facilitated students' expression of their perceptions on drugs; and sensitized students on ways to tackle the menace. The project uses video documentaries on the consequences of drug abuse to reach over 750 students in schools. Some of the major results recorded from this activity includes an increased knowledge of the dangers of drug use and abuse on young people; the willingness on the part of some of the chronic drug abusers to undergo rehabilitation; and finally, the enthusiastic commitment by

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[88] Data from *Business in Cameroon:* Retrieved from https://www.businessincameroon.com/health/2808-8289-21-of-the-cameroonian-population-have-already-tried-a-hard-drug-with-cannabis-atop-the-list-cnld(12 August 2019).

[89] ACIREDED (2019a). *Rapport sur le projet de Sensibilisation des Jeunes sur la Consommation des Drogues et Stupéfiants en Milieu Scolaire : Lycée de Meskine-Maroua*. Maroua : Action pour une Citoyenneté Responsable et un Développement Durable.

school officials to support the setting up of awareness committee on drug use and adequate monitoring infrastructures.

2.2.4.2. Street violence and delinquency

Street violence and juvenile delinquency are not new phenomenon in African societies, especially in urban zones. Due to high population density in urban centres, especially in predominant business districts, there is a corresponding risk, and upsurge- of criminal activities. Though, there is limited official statistics on the profile of young people involved in criminality and street violence, it is generally admitted that the trend is assuming more vicious and dangerous dimension given the rapid pace of urbanization as well as economic and social crises in the Central African region. Young people that shared their perspectives on this issue during the regional consultation as well as field visits frequently acknowledged that widespread youth unemployment, the foreclosure of opportunities for socio-economic enhancement are major root causes of violence, especially when combined with alcoholism and drug use among already vulnerable youth.

In Equatorial Guinea, a coalition of youth-led groups is working in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to sensitize youth on the need to tackle the escalation of urban violence and criminality in the country. This was the backdrop around which several skills acquisition and development programs are organized every Saturday in two major towns, namely Malabo and Bata. The aim of such weekly activities is to raise self-awareness among young people on citizenship responsibilities, including positive civic and public engagements, and to offer them alternative survival and livelihood skills to stem the tide of antisocial behaviors and street violence among youth. In addition, specific trainings are offered to vulnerable youth to enable them gain vocational skills to become self-employed.

The International Children's Welfare Foundation (ICWF) in Cameroon has worked to promote the welfare of vulnerable/needy children, especially street children, orphans, poor children, pregnant teens, trafficked/exploited, displaced children, etc. in the past 15 years. With the mandate of promoting human rights, development and integration into society, the group seeks to 'Give each vulnerable child a life opportunity'[90] by reaching out to abandoned and abused children. The group ensures that clinical psychologist assess and cater for the well-being of the children including provision of regular medication and vaccination; and also assists the street children with basic items including food, clothes, shoes, soap etc. They also empower some street kids with free life skills that enable them to raise revenue for themselves like producing accessories with beads, arts paintings and shoe mending.

2.2.4.3. Land degradation and desertification

Land degradation and desertification remain a real challenge to peace and security especially for some countries in the region including Chad and Cameroon. Major causes of these,

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[90] See ICWF (2019). *Eradicating the Street Kid Phenomenon to Enhance Peace & Security*. Yaoundé: International Children's Welfare Foundation

especially in the northern parts of Cameroon include the indiscriminate cutting of wood for domestic use,[91] commercial logging, and the recurrent long periods of drought in that region. Mostly working at the community levels, Action for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainable Development (ACIREDED), a youth group initiative in the Technical College of Meskine in the Far North region established to encourage students to become more actively involved in combatting deforestation and desertification. The initiative has so far led to the establishment of environmental clubs known as Friends of Nature in schools in Meskine, the sensitisation of over 300 school children on environmental issues, and planting of thousands of trees in the outskirts of the city of Maroua.[92] Interviews with youth indicate that they are fully aware of how the far-reaching impacts of adverse climate change combined with socio-economic hardships and insecurity caused by Boko Haram insurgency is creating a vicious circle of environmental conflicts, poverty and food insecurity, and mass forced migrations.

2.2.4.4. Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a major concern in the Central African region. This is particularly so against the background of several armed conflicts where women and girls are targets of harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual and gender based violence (S/GBV) by non-state armed groups and government forces alike. Due to insufficient legal and institutional responses, S/GBV often continues in post-conflict societies not just because perpetrators escape punishment but also because victims themselves are reluctant to report cases for fear of public stigmatization and alienation. Women and children are usually the victim of S/GBV that includes domestic and sexual violence, often by those closest to them, with cases of incest also becoming very common and victims often too traumatized that they end up dropping out of school. As noted by a youth participant during the regional consultations in Libreville, the consequences of S/GBV are dramatic, as "the majority of victims of such violence unfortunately do not openly denounce their aggressors."

AZUR Développement, a youth-led group created in 2007, is working in Pointe-Noire (Congo) to combat S/GBV. One of its flagship projects, *Africatti,* is carried out in Pointe-Noire, the economic capital of Congo, and also in Nkayi, a semi-urban district located within the Department of Boueza. The youth group follows up on reported cases of S/GBV with the police and other law enforcement agencies for investigation and prosecution. They have also created an online platform to follow-up, track and map cases of domestic and sexual violence within the country.[93] Finally, they provide victims with a wide range of support including psychosocial and financial assistance.

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[91] According to the Cameroon's National Action Plan for the Fight against Desertification (PAN/LCD), 97% of the rural population rely on wood as the primary source of fuel for cooking (PAN/LCD 2018 Cameroon Report. Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development.)

[92] ACIREDED (2019b). *Projet de Reboisement des Espaces Désert Au CETIC de Meskine*. Maroua : Action pour une Citoyenneté Responsable et un Développement Durable.

[93] The online platform is: http://www.violencedomestique-congo.net/main

Further, Avenir NEPAD Congo, a youth group tackles youth violence through sensitization. Between January and August 2016, the group received funding from GRET (*Groupe de Rechercheetd' Echange Internationale*), an international NGO to promote a reversal of decline in social values among youth and to advocate for peace in Brazzaville. The group promotes gender-parity, and works to deconstruct recurrent stereotypes targeted at women and girls. It also advocates for policy reforms on the rights of women and the girl child. Since 2016, it has successfully sensitized more than 1,000 young people drawn from various districts of Brazzaville.

2.3. <u>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</u>

A triangulation of the views of various youth groups across the Central African region acknowledges that there is a lot of similarities in the issues that they care about as young peacebuilders with those of their peers in other parts of Africa. According to a youth participant, "we want to be recognized as peace agents, we want to be part of solutions that lead to the promotion of peace in our region[94]" However, their quest to mobilise meaningfully and sustainably towards peace is hindered by several challenges that are either external or inherent to their groups or networks. "Our direct and indirect environment, as a youth insists, can constitute a barrier to our effective involvement in peace initiatives."[95]

Their reference to constraints imposed by the external environment is mainly in relation to the harsh economic, social, cultural and political realities in different countries. Most young people interviewed recognise that such realities ultimately determine what youth groups can do, or otherwise, as how perceptions of youth in society and within government have mostly been negative and problematic. Some specific external challenges that youth in the region face include intergenerational barrier, susceptibility to political manipulation, unstable youth political culture, youth diversity management as well as discrimination against them. They also suffer from global mistrust either from governmental actors or from their own communities. Moreover, young people complain of excessive mystification of leadership in their respective countries and how this is widening intergenerational divide: "[It] leaves us with the feeling of being abandoned by the older generation".[96] Finally, the lack of young people's political culture is a major barrier to their effective participation in governmental policy dialogues, as they recognize themselves to be not adequately capacitated to engage policy makers and participate in decision-making.

The internal challenges that youth groups face, on the other hand, are related to their inherent organizational and human capacity gaps. These include limited access to funding, technical capacities and resources and limited peer-to-peer collaboration. Most youth-led groups in the region complain about poor funding, with many of them virtually operating from hand-to-mouth or relying on personal or self-funding to survive. It is partly for this reason that

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[94] Regional Consultation, 2019.
[95] Field visit, 2019
[96] Regional Consultation, 2019.

the mortality rate among youth groups is very high, and why only a few of them survive beyond the first five years. Limited funding also has implications for technical, logistical and operational capacities of youth groups. They are often not able to independently conceive and put together funding proposals, communicate their ideas to prospective partners, or even to implement and bring their ideas to fruition with limited funding opportunities.

Finally, they are constrained by the outright absence of or only limited peer-to-peer collaboration among them in ways that allow them to enjoy economies of scale availing each other whatever little resources are at their disposal. It is often the case that youth groups also work in silos, either competing against or in conflict with one another. Further, limited trust amongst youth organizations and groups impedes the opportunity to collaborate and build synergy in the implementation of far-reaching and impactful programmes. The lack of transparency in the process of selecting their leaders sometimes also expose youth groups to bitter rivalries, divisions and conflicts that distract them from their set goals. Ultimately, the external challenges and internal contradictions that youth groups grapple on regular basis end up setting limits to what they can do or achieve in the medium and long terms.

2.4.   RESILIENCE

This section presents the different ways that young people are adapting or dealing with external and internal challenges identified as hindering their contributions to peace and security in the region. They generally indicated that their resilience is somewhat also influenced by their shared common desire to be seen as active participants in addressing societal problems within their different communities, countries and the region. According to one youth respondent, "[The] only thing that could be unanimously accepted is our common desire to live together in peace. Thus, we shall cultivate unity and solidarity every time and everywhere. Where unity prevails, it is possible to achieve wonderful things."[97] The major resilience amongst youth within the region are those around institutional and technical capacities; resource mobilization; and human resources capacities.

Firstly, youth themselves recognise that they run groups or networks that routinely face severe constraints due to their limited technical capacities, especially to forge win-win partnership and collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental institutions. Secondly, majority of youth-led groups in the region carry out their activities with or without minimal external financial and material support. While the lack of or limited access to resources is a recurrent challenge to many youth groups and a potential hindrance to their efficiency in the delivery of innovative peace and security initiatives, youth-led groups are using different means to overcome the challenges. Increasingly, youth organizations are recognising the need to embrace several methods and tools to address recurrent funding challenges and to embrace prudence in spending whatever little is at their disposal. In order

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[97] Regional Consultation, 2019.

words, even when they are self-funded, as one youth leader from Chad had insisted during an interview, it is also possible to achieve a lot. According to her:

'In spite of the limited resources at the disposal of our organization, we have trained 30 Peace Ambassadors in only 6 months between January and June 2019, and also sensitised over 5,000 young people in 28 schools across the country with the message of peace and social cohesion. In addition, we have been able to form partnership and connect with significant networks of other youth organizations within Chad and across the continent. Imagine what we would do when we will have more money'[98].

In the light of this, a growing number of youth groups are finding more innovative ways to raise money by collecting annual membership fees, crowd funding, making funding applications to international agencies, or by soliciting in-kind technical support from collaborations with better resourced peer institutions.

The third resilience factor is borne out of growing recognition that many of the youth-led groups have bright ideas but lack the necessary human resources to translate them to successful and impactful interventions. During the regional consultations, for instance, several participants identified some of the measures they are considering or already employing to close the human resource gap, including approaching those individuals and institutions with the requisite skills, expertise and competences required to consider rendering voluntary and pro-bono services. They are recognising that there is a large pool of youth across different fields and profession that are finding new meaning and fulfilment engaging in social advocacy and volunteerism beyond their regular paid employment. Furthermore, they are creating alliances and networks with other youth-led groups in their immediate localities and countries, as well as those in Africa and other parts of the world. In so doing, youth groups working in the peace and security sector in the Central African region, as their counterparts in other parts of the continent, are acquainted themselves with and taking full advantage of new and plural media landscape to scale-up and disseminate their activities.

2.5.   **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the foregoing, it is obvious that youth groups in the Central Africa region are committed towards the promotion of sustainable peace and security as evident in their engagements to foster social cohesion and inter-faith reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction and development in their communities. However, the level of youth involvement is limited, as they prefer to work more in local spaces where they do not have to directly contend with the state or the myriad administrative bottlenecks stifling their active participation in society. The common trend in the region regarding youth engagement in peace and security shows that

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[98] Regional consultation, 2019.

there is a gap between youth groups, governments and other stakeholders, due to lack of trust.

Another major finding from the study is that youth groups in the Central Africa region are confronted with major internal challenges, notably organizational and human capacity gaps, limited access to funding, technical, logistical and operational capacities as well as limited peer-to-peer collaboration. Despite the environmental, organisational and financial constraints they face, young people want to do more than what they actually do to promote sustainable peace in their various localities, countries and the region. As such, they need financial and technical support and most importantly recognition as peace agents and support from their communities, the state and partners.

The following recommendations are made to enhance their contributions to peace and security in the region:

To Youth Groups:

- Devise multiple and creative streams of fundraising strategies, including identifying and working with their peers that already have considerable experiences in resource mobilization, to raise funds for activities;
- Focus on building and enhancing internal capacities including on development of project proposal, program design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure innovative as well as institutional and programme sustainability;
- Recognize, join and participate actively in existing as well as emerging regional, continental and international youth networks, including those that focus on coaching, mentoring, knowledge-sharing and international exchange programmes;
- Promote accountability and transparency in programme delivery and interventions, and document experiences and lessons learned for replication where necessary;
- Take advantage of and utilise ICT to promote peace and cohesion;
- Forge collaboration and cooperation between and among youth groups working in the same context or pursuing common goals.

To Member States:

- Adopt, domesticate and implement policies and programmes of ECCAS and the AU aimed at fostering youth inclusion and effective participation in peace and security, this includes the development and or review of national youth policies;
- Create and facilitate safe communication spaces for youth, and between youth and policy makers to foster intergenerational learning and mentorship as well as ensure that youth express and engage on concerns and grievances that affect them;

- Establish and institutionalize quota of leadership positions for young people to facilitate a more inclusive and representative involvement at different decision-making levels;
- Provide more financial, technical and material support to youth-led groups working in the peace and security sector;

To ECCAS:

- Establish and adequately resource regional and continental platforms for meaningful youth participation in all spectrums of peace and security;
- Increase communication and social visibility strategies to enable youth across the region better understand and relate with the regional institution;
- Select and appoint Youth Ambassadors for Peace at regional level and capacitate them with requisite skills needed to promote youth participation and amplification of their voices to mobilize/support for their efforts;
- Involve youth in the conceptualization and implementation of key peace and security-related projects in order to facilitate their active participation and ownership.

CHAPTER 3: East Africa

3.1.   <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

East Africa has experienced intermittent conflicts and also climate change-induced environmental challenges that have created perennial waves of forced displacements and migrations as well as complex humanitarian crises in many parts of the region. Any substantive analysis of the peace and security threats in East Africa cannot miss the frequent episodes of: the politicization of grievances, tension and impunity; social trauma caused by previous incidences of violence that have not been adequately addressed, and the desire for revenge; mistrust between and among some ethnic groups, and against the state; unemployment, poverty, inequality and feelings of exclusion/marginalization, and increased inflammatory rhetoric, propaganda and hate speech targeting particular individuals, groups and government.

In varying degrees, these episodes define East Africa's peace and security landscape as well as put a considerable toll on ongoing efforts to achieve stability and recovery in different parts of the region. Several key institutions have highlighted some of the pressing challenges facing young people as well as remarkable progress made by young people towards building peace in the region.[99] Regardless of their status and location, some of the concerns expressed by East African youth is the presence of several formidable barriers to their quest to contribute meaningfully towards peace and security in the face of growing incidences of ethnic and tribal frictions, political and religious intolerance, structural inequalities, public sector corruption and un-democratic constitutional amendments. There is also a pervasive feeling of fatigue among citizens, especially young people, whose recollections of very personal stories, experiences and testimonies are documented in this chapter.

The chapter is derived from the outcomes of regional consultations with youth representatives held in Asmara, Eritrea; study visits to Madagascar, South Sudan and Uganda; and online conversations with young people using the social media platform set up to facilitate further engagements on their roles and contributions to peace and security in the

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[99] Filmer, Deon and Louise Fox, Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa Washington DC.: The World Bank, 2014. See also, AfDB, Ending Conflict and Building Peace in Africa: A Call for Action- Report of the High-Level Panel on Fragile States. etrieved from   https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Ending_Conflict_and_Building_Peace_in_Africa-_A_Call_to_Action.pdf(13 November 2019).

region. In all, the goal is to understand the multiple ways that young people are working to promote peace and security against the backdrop of the multiple challenges that confront them on daily basis.

3.2.   ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY

The evidence in this chapter showcases the phenomenal growth and proliferation of youth-led groups across East Africa, and also provides insights into what they are doing in the peace and security sphere in their various communities and countries. The stories that young people themselves share provide a deeper, and more nuanced, narrative of how their diverse experiences are shaping how they perceive the options but also the choices ahead of them. For example, when was asked if he believes that lack of better education is the reason for prolonged civil war in South Sudan, a youth leader in his sober response opined that "education means nothing if doctors, professors are the one advancing the military and killing agendas, just because of power."[100]

In the same way, there are several East African youths that are expressing deep reservations- and exasperation regarding the deplorable conditions or situations they find themselves, be that in poor urban centres, in desolate rural communities, or in refugee camps. A youth respondent in South Sudan pondered on how leaders enjoy the good life while the societies they run are afflicted by sufferings and deaths due to decades of injustices, poverty and wars. Another youth, concerned about the plight of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, was apprehensive that "dialogue and peace agreements mean nothing as long as violent conflicts and human sufferings remain the same."[101]A female youth leader, who is also a poet and author, puts a different spin to the concerns of young people when she insisted during an interview that *"we as youth cannot create peace or participate inclusively in any peace process if we ourselves don't have or aren't at peace... We can give peace when we have it and live with it. When we dwell in it and practice it."* She also lamented the general misconstruction of youth activities thus: *"when we try to get involved, it is rebellion. How, then, is it possible to ensure youth inclusion and participation when this is the dominant mind-set among adults*?"[102]

What comes out strongly, as this chapter shows, is that large numbers of young East Africans are finding themselves at difficult crossroads: one in which a handful of them are embracing radical, extremist and violent orientations while most others are finding peaceful ways to transcend their current despair and desperations. The fascinating twist is that the same situations or conditions that the region is experiencing are also paradoxically opening up new and dynamic spaces for youth-led groups and networks to emerge and flourish as they explore innovative ways to contribute to peace and stability in their immediate communities and countries. In examining their diverse roles and contributions to peace and security, it is

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[100] Field visit, 2019
[101] Regional consultation, 2019
[102] Field visit, 2019

also important to do so against the backdrop of the difficult and seemingly insurmountable challenges that young people are facing on daily basis in East Africa. In the subsequent sections of the chapter, the formidable roles of youth in various aspects of peacebuilding are examined and documented.

3.2.1 <u>Conflict Prevention</u>

What is obvious from the contrasting perspectives of youth regarding their roles and contributions to peace and security in East Africa is that there is no one-size-fits-all account: some have understandably indicted the society for the apathy and disdain towards youth issues while others see young people themselves as the cause of their own dilemma. Over the past decade, the region has witnessed the proliferation of active youth-led groups working across different communities and contexts, often in difficult circumstances, to prevent a wide range of conflicts. What they do is determined very much by the peculiarities of the situation such youth groups are finding themselves as much as by what they perceive as the drivers of conflict peculiar to the region. The myriad problems the groups face are not only contributing to the erosion of young people's confidence in themselves and in their governments but also undermining state legitimacy and the writ of governance.

Several of the conflict prevention works undertaken by young East Africans are in response to the region's multiple peace and security challenges. With regards to peaceful coexistence between communities, *the Batwa Development Organization* works to promote peaceful coexistence between the Bakiga and Batwa communities in Uganda through capacity building and sensitization activities around reconciliation, forgiveness and the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms to transform conflicts. The group actively engages security agencies by providing them early warning information on potential- or existing-threats in order to curb violence, and also settle disputes by working with peacebuilders committees at the grassroots. Communities that have felt the impact of the group's efforts towards the restoration of peace and harmony have openly commended their activities on radio and through several media outlets.

A major factor that is increasingly destabilizing societal relations emanate from the activities of violent extremist groups across East Africa. A recent study showed that not only have new organisations with radical jihadist orientation emerged but also that the older ones are turning more violent across the region and throughout around Africa.[103] Either out of choice or simply to 'escape' from the harsh daily realities confronting them, a number of young people are embracing radical jihadist ideologies and violence. However, new youth groups are establishing themselves with the aim of preventing and countering such spread. Youth organizations aim to achieve this by using diverse approaches, including arts and music, to dissuade youth involvement in violent extremism and to generally promote peace. The Agents of Peace in Kenya, for instance, provide several platforms for frank and open discussions on

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[103] StigJarle Hansen, Horn, Sahel and Rift: Fault Lines of the African Jihad. London: Hurst and Company, 2019.

the drivers of radical ideologies and incentives for youth engagement in violent extremism, and also organizes massive street campaigns on non-violent actions to promote unity and tolerance. In South Sudan, youth groups such as the Resilience Organisation in South Sudan (ROSS), South Sudan Youth for Peace, Development Organisation (SSYPADO) and Ana Taban are also actively involved in initiatives such as girls' empowerment, education, food security, community reconciliations and peacebuilding.

One of the unique features of a youth group like SSYPADO, that is also common to several others in the region, is that they are formed out of personal experiences: the founders of the group had at one time or the other, been victims of violent circumstances or actually participated in them. A former combatant who described himself as one of the youngest military generals in Africa is now actively leading a group of youth to foster community peacebuilding and reconciliation in South Sudan. According to him:

I still feel uneasy and very ambivalent, I painfully try to makes sense of my actions and I have not found any justifications. It is true that I was angry, I had lost my family members due to war and in our school, we would attend our primary school classes and military training concurrently. But I still have no good reasons to say my decision to fight helped or worsened the situation.[104]

The remarkable stories of struggle against many adversities and life-threatening odds are the reason often given by leaders of youth groups for what they do. It is also the reason they are located and operate at the grassroots level, especially in hard-to-reach communities where the presence of the state is often- and grossly- limited. The founder of ROSS, summarizes what typically prompted the emergence of youth groups as follows:

I have been a refugee throughout my childhood growing up and studied in Uganda. But am back home to promote peace, and I can promise that we are determined to promote peace during war and during peace. It hurts to see that in the community where I am working, there are youth groups that started with intention to promote peace, but due to lack of support towards their initiative they ended up becoming gang groups. We know them, they know us and, in my heart, these are people who are acting violent because of anger due to lack of support by the government and donors. It is my wish that my children will never become refugees and that is why am so deeply involved in conflict prevention.[105]

East African youth groups frequently complain about lack of resources and public recognition of their struggles and sacrifices. There is also a question over the long-term sustainability of their struggle for peace even as they continue to experiment with innovative community peacebuilding efforts. One important lesson from interrogating them is the wide range of conflict prevention and resolutions resources they are constantly mobilizing and deploying. There is ample evidence to suggest that the fact that they do not always have all the resources

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[104] Field visit, 2019
[105] Interview with the head of ROSS.

they require has not diminished or trumped their ability to identify and engage in smaller and creative (but no less impactful) conflict prevention interventions in urban and rural areas across the region. There are just so many genuine efforts and success stories by youth groups taking bold steps to carry out peacebuilding initiatives at the grassroots levels.

In countries where violent conflicts occur in specific locations, rather than become widespread, systemic and protracted across a country or region, the conflict prevention activities of youth groups tend to focus on skills acquisition and development programmes as well as behavioural change interventions to wean society and youth from pursuing violent options. In northern Uganda, for instance, the African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET) focuses on peace education, leadership development and providing medical support in conflict-affected communities. It is also currently building the African Peace Academy to serve as a one-stop leadership and peace training institution to prepare youth to play greater parts in early warning and early action, expose them to income generation skills, and promote the use of the arts and sports as tools for trust-building, harmony and reconciliation. The work of AYINET has become so popular that it is receiving the attention and support of the government and major external donors. According to an official of the organization,

Our initiative to promote peace and prevent war started out of anger, because we were tired of suffering. We wanted to treat those wounded in war; stop the frustrated and angry youth from voluntarily joining war; and support the reintegration of former child soldiers and those orphans due to war. It was an angry start, but it finally became the motivation and somehow, along the way, we found exactly why we chose to advocate for non-violence even though we were facing daily violence.[106]

3.2.2 Conflict Management and Resolution

Youth groups in the region are also active in managing and resolving conflicts, again mostly at the community level. In Uganda, the African Youth Action Network (AYAN) is working to promote reconciliation among South Sudanese refugee populations living in Uganda. The work of AYAN is similar to that of the Youth-adult Empowerment Initiative (YEi), which seeks to promote peace and social cohesion by disrupting and overcoming traditional barriers to peaceful coexistence among refugees, as well as between them and their host communities through initiatives such as intercultural dialogues and sports for peace. YEi's interventions have contributed to greater tolerance and understanding amongst refugees vis-à-vis host communities. A youth group, *Dit ni Tek* in Ethiopia, also works to foster peace between refugees and host communities. *Dit ni Tek* promoted peace between two factions of refugees and their host communities due to violence that erupted in the aftermath of the destruction of properties at Tharpam Kebele Itang Woreda in Gambella region of Ethiopia. Upon approval by the Gambella Regional Authorities, the group initiated dialogue and confidence building measures to prime stakeholders. This culminated in the consensus building on core issues

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[106] Field visit, 2019

that eventually led to the restoration of peace. A major impact of the activities of both groups is the overall evidence of tolerance and cooperation amongst refugees vis-à-vis host communities such as Kiryandongo and Bidi Settlements despite occasional skirmishes.

Another youth organisation, the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre in Rwanda, actively mobilizes communities against hate speeches and genocidal ideologies by documenting and telling stories of the devastating consequences of the 1994 genocide. According to a youth member, "Our work has been instrumental in training local youth mediators, conflict preventers and we have been facilitating inter-generational and cross community dialogues. We provide platforms for local dispute resolutions, at the same time using story telling as teaching and healing processes."[107] Further, the Centre for Youth Empowerment (CYE) in Somalia seeks to promote the participation of youth, especially young women, in decision-making with the aim of addressing systemic and cultural constraints in Burao region of Togdheer in Northern Somalia. Following initial concerns that the activities of the group was a threat to patriarchy authority, CYE has successfully advocated and lobbied traditional and religious authorities to allocate seats to youth and women in community decision-making processes.

It was most auspicious that the East African regional consultation took place in Asmara, Eritrea; affording an opportunity for Eritrean youth to share their experiences in terms of how they are contributing to peace and security. With a membership put at over 300,000 youth, the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students is a nationwide youth association that organises political training and national youth service. Its overall aim is to promote a common sense of identity, unity and patriotism against tribalism; disseminate information in seven out of the nine languages across the country; establish vocational and entrepreneurial skills development initiatives to improve livelihoods and employment opportunities for youth; and to drastically reduce youth vulnerabilities to criminal and violent activities. Similarly, as part of efforts to promote economic empowerment of women, the Union of Eritrean Women also provides vocational skills and financial support to women to start their own business.

3.2.3   Peace Support Operations

The proliferation of armed groups, and their brutal exploits, is widely known to constitute a grave threat to peace and instability in East Africa, extending to the Great Lakes. At the close of 2019, the region alone accounted for about 10 out of 25 PSOs in Africa that are either solely mandated by the UN, the AU and by regional mechanisms, or any combination of the three.[108] Those mandated by the UN in East Africa, for instance, are the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central Africa Republic (MINUSCA); the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO); United Nations Assistance Mission in

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[107] Field visit, 2019

[108] This threat is showcased by the large numbers of PSOs currently taking place across Africa vis-a-vis the rest of the world in terms of their sizes, personnel and cost. See, Zif Centre for International Peace Operations, Peace Operations 2018/2019. Retrieved from www.zif-berlin.org (18 September 2019).

Somalia (UNSOM); UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and UN Interim Security Force for Anyei (UNISFA) responsible for patrolling the disputed border area between Sudan and South Sudan. The AU authorised the Observer Mission in Burundi (AMIB); the Regional Task Force of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA); the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and, in conjunction with the United Nations, manages the UN-AU Hybrid Operations in Darfur (UNAMID). Whereas, most of these PSOs have substantive participation of youth in either the military or police components, autonomous youth participation within the civilian component in them is considerably limited.

Perhaps due to the highly militarised nature of such operations, one of the recurrent complaints expressed by youth in the context of this study is that existing PSOs are not proactive enough in terms of engaging and mainstreaming youth in their activities. Most youth groups also complain about limited engagements, and worry that young people are only considered as passive rather than active players in PSOs. Many youth organisations in the countries where fieldwork was conducted expressed disappointment over the absence of any structured trauma-sensitive approach to assist young people affected by war to heal quickly and contribute to society. Former child soldiers, for instance, confess that there were many substantive promises made to them during the phase of disarmament that have virtually faded into oblivion. They claim this has forced many of their peer to either become complacent or join armed youth gangs simply because such peace operations never really paid enough attention to alternative livelihood options and their full rehabilitation. Finally, they warn that for as long as PSOs continues to sideline the youth and their concerns, the quest for long term and sustainable peace would be difficult to achieve.

3.2.4   Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development

Despite visibly signs of weariness as a direct result of prolonged armed conflicts and civil wars, vast majority of youth in East Africa still desire to live together, work towards the improvement of their livelihoods, and generally contribute to the reconstruction of their societies. A female youth at the East African regional consultation in Asmara stated 'I don't think there is anyone in South Sudan who wants to continue to fight, we are tired and weary.[109]' While a considerable number of them have placed their hearts and minds in the delicate equilibrium of hope and despair, an even larger number continues to assist their communities to pick back together the pieces of their broken lives and livelihoods in the aftermath of prolonged armed conflicts and civil wars.

Different categories of young people are also beneficiaries of a variety of interventions that seek to reduce the risk of their recruitment into radical religious and armed groups due to lack of or limited education, skills and opportunities to find and retain gainfully employment. Their inability to do this, in turn, undermine the exercise of credible and independent agency

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[109] Field visit, 2019

as full-fledged members of society. According to one former camp leader at the Barlonyo IDP camp in Lira district of northern Uganda:

> I do feel that if society cares, the most important effort in rebuilding post conflict communities is to rebuild the lives and livelihoods of young people affected by conflict. They have the energy and enhancing their livelihood is the biggest insurance to the future of peace and sustainable development. Youth must be mobilised and empowered to lead in rebuilding their broken societies.[110]

Another youth leader from Tanzania who comes from a refugee-hosting community stated,

> We are broken families, but we are now desperate to bounce-back, and that is why we are promoting our roles as peacebuilders. It's a nervous journey, and with whatever we have at hand, we will mediate, negotiate and keep on with dialogue until our problems are solved.[111]

Similarly, a testimony from a youth leader from the same community above reiterates the determination by youth to nurture a more tolerant society, despite the daunting challenges they face on a daily basis. In sharing his personal experience, he stated:

> I lost my parents to war when I was too young, and was taken to orphanage: I was never told which of the major two competing ethnic tribes I belong, and suddenly I look like both of them. It's possible I was born out of a relationship between the two. In several fights between these two tribes, I was always targeted by both of them. I feel I don't belong and never found the reason why I should join any fight. I am committed and working to heal my society and it's my wishes that we shall rebuild a much better society than what we inherited. [112]

Another key finding is that there has been considerable improvement in the inclusion of minority groups; not just on the basis of ethnicity but also those with disabilities such as Albinos in Tanzania, when it comes to building resilience in post-conflict contexts. Indeed, evidence indicates that some of the most peaceful communities in the region are also those that have substantial 'minority' population that are fully accommodated and respected. During interviews with young people in Batwa community that spread between Uganda and Burundi, for instance, several of them reported that they have been receiving favourable interventions from government. One youth respondent, who is also the Secretary General of the Batwa ethnic group, had stated that:

> We are a small population, and the spirit of community defines our tradition. I have never chosen to join any conflict or war because I belong to the minority group in this country, and we exist across the East African region. I was

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[110] Field visit, 2019
[111] Field visit, 2019
[112] Field visit, 2019

personally attacked for not supporting rebellion… You will find that the most peaceful community is where minority people live, as they co-exist despite being marginalised by other societies. We have no records of violence despite facing continuous land grabbing by other ethnic groups. I hope every peacebuilding event will start including Batwa population too.[113]

3.2.5 SSR/DDR

Several countries in East Africa are currently undertaking key security sector reforms (SSR) as well as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) interventions, with several of those initiated or managed by intergovernmental institutions such as the UN, AU, and the Intergovernmental Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). One of the recurrent concerns of East African youth is the lack of engagement and consultation with youth during the design and implementation of DDR programmes envisaged to benefit them. Further, they are also concerned that most of promises and pledges during DDR processes are often not implemented. An additional concern they expressed is that SSR and DDR programs typically lacks the right amount of community buy-in and support required for them to succeed. They are also heavily politicised, top-down in view of how they are conceived and implemented and generally tend to exclude trauma-sensitive components beneficial to young people and other segments of society. What all of these implies is that many of those that should benefit from such programs, especially the youth, risk returning to the same old ways that had initially undermined public order and safety.

Although the imperative for SSR and DDR is often urgent and acute, youth contributions to them are diminished or undermined by the widespread perception of the roles that a handful of them played in the outbreak and prolongation of hostilities. The memory of such past roles invariably makes it difficult for communities affected by their actions to forgive, or for law enforcement or security services to see them as crucial partners in the delivery of SSR and DDR. According to a youth who is yet to be fully reintegrated back into his community:

> I am done being treated like shit. Not anymore, not by my government and not by anyone anymore. The police are too brutal to listen to me, education is too expensive to afford, healthcare has failed me as am sick from Monday to Monday, I lost our family land because the courts are too corrupt to even just save our land. What else can I do?[114]

Even if youth groups are not fully involved, several locally embedded SSR/DDR initiatives are attracting civil society and women's groups, religious leaders, traditional and political leaders. The African Youth Initiative Network in Uganda have been running dedicated trauma-sensitive regional youth, peace and solidarity programs for many years, and also supports the establishment of several youth-friendly mediation programmes in South Sudan. They are of

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[113] Field visit, 2019
[114] Field visit, 2019

the opinion that SSR and DDR processes that are not designed and implemented in an inclusive manner risk instigating new situations of violence and instability. When asked why they fight in the first place, and if they would fight again, the responses that the young people give are aligned to either a positive or negative change in present socio-economic situation or status.

Rightly so, there is widespread anxiety over the declining socio-economic status of young people, with large - and growing – numbers of them virtually unable to secure employment and having to live at the margins of their societies. Although the immediate and long-term security implications of their fragile livelihoods is frequently acknowledged, those have not fully translated into concrete and sustainable public policy interventions capable of ameliorating them. Ultimately, any reform agenda in post-conflict context across East Africa must begin with understanding the concerns and aspirations of the youth; help them to explore, establish and pursue alternative livelihoods; and generally facilitate their full reintegration back into society in ways that improve their access to justice as well as give them effective voice and agency to contribute to society.

Most urban-based Malagasy youth, for instance, shun the social practices embedded in and sustaining gerontocracy and value visible youth representation in leadership positions. According to one youth leader, "we do not only take to the streets in Antananarivo to ensure we have the right people in government, we do it to have the right young people, or those with our interests at heart, in power" [115]

3.2.6 Cross-cutting issues

Regardless of the visibly empowering possibilities of youth involvement in peacebuilding, there are several crosscutting peace and security issues that are either country-specific or overlap across the entire East Africa. Although by no means exhaustive, this section briefly discusses the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security across (a) migration and cross-border threats; (b) gender equality; and (c) social responsibilities.

3.2.6.1. Migration and cross-border threats to peace and security

According to a recent report by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation aptly titled 'African youth: jobs or migration' published in 2019, the total number of African migrants in 2017 is 36.3 million representing only about 14% of the global migrant population; much less than Asian and European shares put at 41% and 24%, respectively. The report further showed that an estimated 70% of sub-Saharan African migrants stay within the continent; in most cases, within their immediate or proximate regions, mostly in search of better economic prospects (80%) while the remaining 20% are refugees.[116] During the field visits to and interactions with

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[115] Field visit, 2019

[116] Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 'Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration? Demography, Economic Prosperity and Mobility', 2019 Ibrahim Forum Report. Retrieved from https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019_Forum_Report_0.pdf (10 November 2019).

youth groups in East Africa, they expressed concern and fear over the rising labour migration from the region to the Middle East, due to what they describe as persisting hardships and dwindling opportunities in their different countries. Another major finding in this study is that due to incessant tensions and conflicts between and among neighbouring countries in the region, perceptions abound over some level of apprehensive by Member States that their 'enemy' is either lurking around or is receiving support from across the border.

This has created a palpable sense of fear and insecurity among young people, given especially the history of mass atrocities in the region. In Rwanda, several youth groups are working with their counterparts in Uganda to support border communities on both sides to manage and address incessant border tensions and skirmishes. In Uganda, for instance, COBURWAS International Youth Organisation to Transform Africa (CIYOTA) was established in 2005 in the Kyangwali refugee settlement by refugee youth from the DRC, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Sudan (from where the group took its acronym (COBURWAS). As a youth-led initiative, CIYOTA is a non-profit organisation that operates its own primary schools within the camp, a leadership education initiative, *Pamoja Kwa Maendeleo* (Together for Development) as well as run microfinance and livelihoods programmes targeting women and girls.

3.2.6.2. Gender equality

Young East Africans are involved in promoting gender equality through advocacy for increased acknowledgement and appreciation of the roles of women as positive influencers and change actors in peacebuilding. Their focus is mostly around promoting the legal rights of women, conducting educational programs for girls; sensitization of men on gender rights issues; and economic and political empowerment through strategic mainstreaming of women into elective, political and decision-making processes. Despite the prevalence of gender empowerment policies and programmes, some men perceive gender as a predominantly 'women' affair. Partly as an effort to change this perception, a youth group in Rwanda conducts sensitization programmes targeting men, including establishing 52 boys4change clubs in secondary schools where sexual and reproductive rights and the prevention of SGBV, are taught and promoted.

Further, as part of efforts to prevent GBV and promote women's rights, Mama's Hope Organization for Legal Assistance (MHOLA) in Tanzania conducts sensitization and awareness campaigns on the threats and ills of SGBV; advocates adherence to and respect for the rights of women, particularly to own land and properties, as enshrined in the constitution; and provides free legal aid to marginalized groups to cover court representation, mediation and drafting of documents. The group's interventions have also facilitated the establishment of anti-GBV regional networks comprising of different CSOs across East Africa.

3.2.6.3. Societal responsibilities

Youth in the region are becoming actively involved in contributing to the restoration of social values that they recognise as the bedrock of rebuilding many of their societies and in relation

to peace and security. Across East Africa, there has been an alarming proliferation of youth-led gangs involved in activities that range from extorting of money from random or targeted victims to unleashing mayhem in different neighbourhoods or entire communities.[117] A 2018 report by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission in Kenya had reported the existence of more than 100 criminal youth gangs nationwide despite the official ban imposed on such groups in 2016.[118] Most community attributed the proliferation of youth gangs to scarce socioeconomic opportunities and employment, especially in many urban settlements. In Torit region of South Sudan, there are dozens of youth-led gang groups that have become vicious and brutal in their activities. Because, the circumstances that sometimes lure young people into criminal gang and violence tend to be linked to lack of jobs and the foreclosure of livelihoods opportunities, turning them into positive members of the society is often not as difficult as it might seem.

One example that illustrates this is the remarkable transformation of the slums of Korogocho, especially the People's Park that was notorious for garbage, mugging and violence. Today, the place has become an eco-friendly green zone that is now considered safe for the use of the community. It took a mostly youth volunteer group, Komb Green Solutions, or Muchina, of about 70 former gang members working over two years to clean up and restore the area.[119] Related to this are the activities of the Centre for Youth Empowerment (CYE) in Somali that engages its members and a wider constituency of young people in Mogadishu, in promoting peacebuilding, preventing violent extremism and mobilizing dozens of artists working on divergent media to re-tell the stories of the country with a view to changing the narrative that everything is about terrorism and tribal violence. With regards to Media engagement, young women in Madagascar, under the auspices of *Coalition des radios pour la Paix à Madagascar* (Radio Coalitions for Peace), lead an initiative to utilize radio as a conflict prevention and peacebuilding tool. This female youth-led group run drama and talk shows on radio to instil a culture of peace. There is growing awareness that it is only when editors and reporters make choices – of what to report, and how to report it – that society begins to consider and value nonviolent options to conflict. The peace journalism model therefore provides practical solutions for young journalists to report on conflicts and the experiences of communities caught in the vicious cycle of conflict and instability.

Additionally, CYE also mobilizes medical practitioners to conduct free medical outreaches and care; as well as teaches basic hygiene, including eye testing and treatment. Despite some challenges in the execution of their mandate, the group's leader opines that:

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[117] See, for instance, J.M. Mwambi, 'Experiential manifestation of Youth Violence in Tanzania: a Case Study of Commando Yosso Notorious Youth Gangs.' Retrieved from https;/www.ajol.info/index.php/huria/article/viewFile/152731/142320(12 November 2019).

[118] See Mohammed Ahmed, 'Kenya: armed and ready to kill- Inside the deadly gangs of Mombasa', Nairobi News, 11 August 2019. Retrieved from www.allafrica.com/stories/201908120062.html(14 November 2019).

[119] See, 'Gangs to gardens: Kenyan youth shun crime to create green spaces', The East African, 10 May 2019.

No major intervention ever succeeds in one attempt. For him, three major steps are critical and required: identifying the key issues and the spaces where certain issues are important and relevant; build and expand youth network around the issue; and begin to engage in a process of dialogue and learning with the target constituency in mind.[120]

To some youth in the region, corruption is a structural cause of violence and as such, some groups are committed to eradicating all forms of corruption in their society. For instance, Malagasy youth are concerned about the urgent need to fight corruption and also instil moral and social values to stem it in their society. A youth group, *Jeune du Monde a Venir,* is working across four regions of the island to help them 'make the best choice in society.' Each year, the group conducts two camps that attracts between 200 and 500 participants from across the island. Each camp meeting encourages the youth to "live the life they want, which is peaceful and free of conflict and corruption."[121]

3.3.   CHALLENGES AND GAPS

East Africa youth consulted for this study identified some factors that they consider to be militating against their effective contributions to peace and security. These were broadly categorized into internal and external factors. The internal challenges include limited motivation, gender inequality, age difference and limited technical capacities and skills. With regards limited motivation, although many young people get involved in activism purposefully, they tend to become manipulated by politicians and tribal/ethnic leaders, especially when their activities have gained them enough level of public recognition and influence. Invariably, their sense of purpose becomes diluted as they become more politicised and politically oriented. This reason was highlighted as a critical factor in explaining why many youth groups are dissolved due to excessive politicisation.

Issues of gender inequality hinder organizations cohesion, growth and sustainability. While memberships of most groups are male-oriented, ascension of female counterparts in youth organizations tends to be greeted with suspicion, jealousy and mistrust. Some female members of youth groups testified that when a female officer is promoted in the organization, jealously starts building up and accusations of sexual relationship/affairs become rampant, especially from the male group members. Such internal dynamics do not augur well for the sustainability of youth organisations. With regards to age difference, the majority of youth in the region's conflict-affected areas suffered setbacks in education and social life to the extent that most of them end up attaining their diplomas in their late 20s and only gain university degrees much later during their late 30s when they are already out of the youth age bracket. Lastly, youth groups consulted identified their limited capacities and skills in peacebuilding as

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[120] Regional consultation, 2019
[121] Field visit, 2019

an impediment to the programmatic design of impactful and sustainable peace and security interventions but also access to financial support from donor agencies.

The common external challenges youth groups in East Africa identify relate to the lack of critical positive momentum; the ever-changing nature and focus of normative frameworks or institutional policies; limited involvement of youth in mediation process and the excessive politicization of the same process; and growing mistrust between the state and youth, especially by those who consider youth interventions as threats to their supremacy; excessive fixation with 'celebrity' peace advocacy; the existence of a plethora of 'youth brokers' without any clear constituency they represent; youth apathy in advocacy process; competition over limited resources; the paucity of trauma-sensitive components in ongoing interventions; tribal profiling and targeting of youth; resistance by stakeholders especially national/community authorities and disputing parties; limited outreach to targeted population etc.

The lack of critical positive momentum manifest in what youth groups describe as the limited or outright lack of political and financial interventions by government on issues that directly concern young people. Many youth initiatives in East Africa are not only low-keyed in terms of their budget and spread but they also take place far apart because of funding constraints and limited political buy-in from government and other critical stakeholders in the region. This invariably makes youth groups to function below optimum level and also diminish their exposure to the kind of transformative leadership opportunities they require to contribute meaningfully to society. The absence of such opportunities is also partly responsible for how young people are less inclined to join peace and solidarity movements than they would join street gangs and engage in riot and demonstrations that threaten law and order.

Although, most African countries have national youth policies and are signatories to key regional, continental and global frameworks/instruments on youth, East African youth engaged during the regional consultations and field visits complained that they were not adequately consulted in their conception and implementation. Many of the youth consulted expressed concern that despite the availability of several youth empowerment initiatives running concurrently in many countries, the language of engagements as well as the nature of power relations that shape them largely tend to marginalise and exclude young people. They are also of the view that with power dynamics still predominantly in the hands of the adult population, the prospect of full-fledged involvement of the younger generation in activities that promote sustainable peace and security may be limited.

It is important to note, however, that the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security seems to have a greater chance of blossoming in the sphere of mediation, especially at the community level where youth groups are mostly concentrated. The challenge however, is that youth groups at the community level are more often than not poorly resourced and lack human and intellectual capacities to deliver meaningful and sustainable change in such

domains. By far, the most visible and formal engagement of non-armed youth in peace process on the continent is in the context of the implementation of South Sudan's Revitalized Peace Agreement which specifically provided for the broaden of spaces for more youth participation at all tracks of dialogue and mediation. The Agreement recognises the need to expose them to technical skills and capacities to contribute to peace processes, but also to involve them more often in formal peace processes.

Another challenge is the impact of stereotypes, which are fuelling mistrust against youth and youth-led groups in the region. There are several levels of such mistrust: between youth groups and government; between youth groups and development actors, including intergovernmental organizations; and between youth and national or international CSOs/NGOs. By the very nature of their mandate, youth groups working on human rights, accountability and democracy are particularly vulnerable to the authoritarian excesses of the state and state institutions since they tend to engage in activities that call out or put governments on the spot. This partly explains why government sometimes labels them as collaborators or traitors if they work with certain NGOs accused of working or spying for foreign governments. Either way, the dilemma is that certain youth groups have to navigate- and are constrained by complex relationships with government and non-governmental development actors that are central in delivering a wide range of services such as humanitarian assistances.

Closely linked to the above is mistrust that exist within the rank-and-file of youth groups, and amongst them which are mostly fuelled by stiff competition over resources, especially funding and technical supports. As in the case with other groups especially within the civil society and NGO field, unhealthy rivalry and competition between and among youth groups could easily become a stumbling block in the quest for effective coordination and collaboration to deliver on common agenda and activities linked to peace and security. Further, young East Africans identified current gaps in the strategies for peace advocacy, one in which substantial attention and resources are incurred to engage influential stakeholders and celebrities to raise awareness on specific or broad peacebuilding issues.

For them, the approach of engaging international celebrities as peace advocates is becoming rampant and expensive, especially since doing so only brings momentary excitement for young people attending the mega concerts. They insist that local change can only come when such opportunities are created and channelled to harness and showcase the talent and creativity of local/national celebrities who are themselves popular national icons worthy of emulation by the youth, and who understand the peculiarities of their country and the region. Finally, in the same regard, the youth frown at the proliferation of 'youth brokers,' that is, people who claim to be credible interlocutors on behalf of youth but are in reality only feathering their individual -narrow and self-interests. The existence of "too many intermediaries when it comes to youth affairs", according to them, often meant that the roles and contributions of legitimate youth groups are routinely sidelined and ignored.

3.4.   RESILIENCE

Despite the fact that they experience the adverse impacts of violent conflicts, young East Africans have continued to put themselves at the forefronts of effort to promote peace and security. In retrospect, the words of a CYE leader responding to a question on how youth organizations overcome challenges to their active participation in the region's peace and security agenda captures their understanding of resilience. In their words:

> No major intervention ever succeeds in one attempt…three major steps are critical and required: identifying the key issues and the spaces where certain issues are important and relevant; build and expand youth network around the issue; and begin to engage in a process of dialogue and learning with the target constituency in mind.[122]

Their engagements of youth in the region in peacebuilding resonate with the key aspirations contained in the AYC and Agenda 2063, UNSCR 2250 and 2419 specifically recognising the roles that youth and youth-led groups could play in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Overall, such key documents offer concrete and far-reaching prescriptions on how to change the narrative about the roles of youth in violent conflict and civil wars; promote alternatives opportunities and livelihoods options for young people in fragile situations; and generally start to envision new pathways to increase youth involvement in peace and security.

While evidence of youth resilience is considerable, it is obvious from discussions with them how difficult it is to measure the consequences or positive impacts of their engagements in peace and security. The first point to bear in mind regarding resilience is therefore that the experiences of East African youth have salient aspects that are unique to them and others that resonate with youth in other parts of the continent and around the world that face multiple circumstances; as perpetrators, targets, victims and beneficiaries of violent conflicts. Understanding resilience from the point of view of East African youth therefore requires an acknowledgement of how they are grounding their activities within the framework of transitional justice. In doing this, they are embracing tolerance, harmony and reconciliation while also supporting the creation of institutions capable of advancing justice for survivors as the first step towards bringing peace. Secondly, their resilience is linked to the growing awareness that tackling the myriad peace and security challenges that their societies and countries face also requires them taking up more daunting and systemic tasks linked to wider issues of nation-building and development. The requisite knowledge, cultural sensitivity and credibility that are required by youth are often also available in the same places where the problem emanated.

To overcome specific challenges, youth in the region have employed diverse strategies including dialogue as well as providing financial and educational support. For instance, the initial challenges encountered by the Batwa Development Organization in their attempts to

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[122] Field visit, 2019

promote peace between the Bakiga and Batwa communities were addressed through continuous dialogues with key stakeholders. According to one of the group's leader: "peacebuilding is a continuous process that needs patience and commitment. At first, when we faced hostility and unfavourable environment, we were almost giving up, but later we became patient; and now, the people we feared became soft and we cooperated."[123]

Whereas, public perceptions and mistrust against youth interventions are real, young people are finding creative ways of confronting, navigating and overcoming them. According to a youth participant, "Traditional leaders initially rejected my ideas and saw me as a big threat to their authority and supremacy. But overtime, I proved to them that youth can participate and make sustainable solution to peace and security. I have learnt that we the youth can change the narrative of 'you are too young to lead' after working with the same traditional leaders that initially rejected my ideas."[124]

In the face of social and economic hardships, a number of youth groups are placing emphases on economic empowerment and alternative livelihoods through establishing local saving schemes such as the Village Loans and Savings Association (VSLA). This was seen as a means to make funding readily available and easily accessible for small businesses owned by youth. Further, a number of youth have sought the support of political leadership even in communities considered to be opposition strongholds. This is evident among the Batwa population who sought and gained support from Burundi for youth representation in the parliament in Uganda, a development that is contributing to dissolving age-long tribal fault lines. On the educational front, several youth who dropped out of school are engaging in volunteer activities to teach primary school children in Eastern Equatoria in South Sudan (Torit). They also serve local community vigilantes to beef up security in their communities the same way as their counterparts in Uganda and Kenya.

3.5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several pertinent conclusions to be drawn from the extensive interactions with youth and youth groups in East Africa. By far the most important conclusion is that East African youth continue to engage in a wide range of peacebuilding activities despite the fact that only a few of them are directly implicated in the kinds of violence that are undermining peace and security in the region. It is also evident from the study that young people continue to carry out tremendously positive work, at least within their immediate communities, despite the limited (or lack of) political and financial supports they attract from government and other stakeholders within and outside the region. What they generally experience is a mix of public apathy, aspersion and stereotypes that end up diminishing their contributions to peace and security in the medium and long terms. Regardless of the stereotypes towards youth by the society and government, young people are the real unsung heroes of peacebuilding efforts in East Africa. All they are asking for is for society and government to

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[123] Field visit, 2019
[124] Field visit, 2019

recognise and support their legitimate and positive contributions rather than disparage and ignore them. In this context, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen their efforts in peacebuilding:

To Youth Groups:

- Continue to engage in public advocacy and interventions in peacebuilding and refrain from violent options that create tension and undermine public law, order and safety;
- Identify and invest in inter-group activities that promote synergy- rather than competition and conflict- between and among youth groups working in the area of peace and security;
- Engage in innovation and entrepreneurship as part of efforts to build and maintain a steady stream of income capable of helping youth groups address pressing funding challenges or gaps;
- Make conscious effort to learn and understand how to work with governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental institutions including familiarization with relevant policies and programmes as the first critical step towards effective engagement with them on issues important to youth involvement in peace and security.

To Member States:

- Incorporate top-down and bottom-up mechanisms/approaches that leave no one behind, by putting citizens first as critical stakeholders, especially youth, in political, governance and decision-making processes including among others, the design and implementation of peace and security interventions;
- Identify and address the myriad challenges that different category of youth face than to implement one-size-fits-all policies that may not necessarily empower and mainstream youth in peace and security;
- Scale-up investment in formal and informal education, including vocational and entrepreneurial skills acquisition, for the teeming youth population as a veritable entry point for conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution;
- Support the implementation of legislations and policies that support the creation of enabling environment for youth and youth-led groups working on peacebuilding to thrive through appropriate legal, institutional and political measures;
- Embark on accelerated initiatives towards massive job creation and employment opportunities for youth to enhance their welfare and livelihood opportunities and serve as a disincentive to youth engagement in violent actions;

To EAC/IGAD/EASF:

- Develop and implement youth-friendly and youth-led policies and initiatives in peace and security; by promoting active youth participation in mediation and peace processes as well as supporting the provision of socioeconomic alternatives to violent conflicts;
- Engage, on periodic basis, with youth groups within the region to explore measures to address challenges hindering their positive interventions;
- Demonstrate visibly commitment towards closing the current gap in public perceptions of youth vis-à-vis Member States and regional institutions;
- Support cross-regional security and stabilization measures by encouraging and mainstreaming youth-led conflict prevention and recovery measures at the grassroots level.

CHAPTER 4: North Africa

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The prospects of democratic consolidation, peace and security in North Africa is threatened by major challenges linked to the foreclosure of access to subsidized socio-economic opportunities for a growing number of citizens, internal political strife, and concerns over the spread of terrorism. [125] The peace and security landscape in the region, by extension, offers youth an opportunity to play important- and constructive- roles; not only in view of their demographic preponderance but also due to their capacity for innovative solutions to the intractable problems their societies face.

The crucial role of North African youth in peace and security is particularly evident in succession of popular uprisings associated with the demands for constitutional, institutional and political reforms. Whether or not those momentous events, popularly described as the Arab Spring, have actually brought about the desirable, profound and lasting changes in the region, particularly in terms of state-society relations and as it affects peace and security, is still open to debate.

The pace at which reforms are being implemented understandably differ from one country to the other.[126] However, there is no dispute that political change in the region is now a major spur to the opening up of the space for CSOs- especially those partially or solely nurtured by the youth- to mushroom and blossom. Even though the triggers and circumstances may differ from those of other parts of Africa, the reforms are beginning to encourage citizens to organize and engage more in civil, political and associational life in unprecedented ways only matched by the fervour and experiences of the period immediately before and soon after independence. The general concern today across the region is whether or not the on-going reforms are capable of closing the wide expectation gap between citizens and the state or bring about the exact opposite: diminish the capacity of the state to satisfy the new appetite for reform and social change.

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[125] Jorg Gertel and Ralf Hexel, Coping with Uncertainty in the Middle East and North Africa, Friedrich Ebert 2018

[126] Arab Human Development Report 2016Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality, Published for the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Arab States, Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/report/AHDR%20Reports/AHDR%202016/AHDR%20Final%202016/AHDR2016En.pdf. (18 September 2019).

The chapter draws from engagements with youth during the regional consultation in Tunisia in August 2019, field visits as well as online and offline discussions with them. All of these avenues provided rare opportunities and space for North African youth to share their hopes and fears about the evolving nature of state-society relations in their different countries, and also the expectations they have towards their governments, regional organizations and the AU in peace and security.

4.2. ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY

In varying degrees, the plethora of economic, political, social and security challenges confronting North Africa offer a useful context within which the contrasting roles of young people in peace and security could be understood and explained.[127] It is evident that the emergence and proliferation of youth groups is a direct response to the general or specific challenges their societies and countries face. Either working alone or in conjunction with broader CSOs, or even in partnership with government and external actors, youth groups recognise and are concerned about the urgent imperative to tackle the multiple threats to peace and security. Even if they do not necessarily follow the conventional demarcation of conflict cycles from CMPR, PSOs and PCRD, young people in North Africa are navigating complex relationships among themselves; between themselves and the society they reside; and between them, society and the state. For the purpose of this section, the role and contributions of youth to peace and security would be examined along those broad demarcations while acknowledging the limitations they impose on youth.

4.2.1 Conflict Prevention

Interactions with youth groups for this study revealed that they were mostly involved in conflict prevention activities. There are several reasons for this tendency, not the least because of how the nature and spectrum of issues that fall within the scope of conflict prevention are broad enough and closest to the kind of issues young people are more familiar with. Such issues are also considered by youth groups in view of the fact that they only require limited capacity or resources to implement. They include those aimed at promoting dialogue between and among different social groups, bridging inter-generational gaps and differences, playing the role of anticorruption watchdog, setting up elections monitoring observatory, embarking on advocacy activities on topical social issues and using social media for civil engagement, to name a few. Specific examples of what North African youth are doing to help maintain and reinforce peace focus on promoting the culture of peace, dialogue and acceptance of differences as well as those addressing specific issues that affect young people such as youth empowerment, employment, civic and political participation.

The Islamic Scouts Association in Bouira, for instance, uses dialogue among young people as the model to diagnose and find solutions to the current spates of peaceful demonstrations.

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[127] 'Arab Youth Issues, The State of the Art on Arab Youth Research,' Annual Report by the Population Policies and Migration Department, League of Arab States, 2005.

Through local youth advisory councils established by the Association, young people assemble to interrogate the major factors responsible for the diverse challenges they are facing and explore measures aimed at finding appropriate local solutions. In addition to seeking practical youth-based solutions to issues affecting society, the process also serves as an incubator to develop leadership and decision-making skills among youth by building their capacities and competences around issues of local governance, active citizenship; effective communication as well as project design and management. The skills training also expose them to essential skillsets including identifying and preparing for job opportunities; the art of writing and public speaking and how to become good citizens in their communities.

North African youth recognize the importance of using multiple art forms to promote peace and security. According to them, multiple art forms provide a relaxing atmosphere to discuss issues of peace and security in ways that make them more accessible and understandable to youth. There are several youth organizations exploring the arts to promote active youth engagement in peace and security matters. In Algeria, for instance, "Stories from Algeria" is a youth group that conduct workshops to train young people in storytelling with a view to helping them interrogate the causes and dynamics - but most importantly, come up with innovative strategies - to deal with cultural and identity issues in the country. The *Tafat Cultural Media Foundation* uses the media- both print and new social media- to sensitize and promote the culture of peace including through the dissemination of important information and conducting public enlightenment on issues of major concern.

In Tunisia, the *Mashehad Association* operates mainly in Gafsa, an area located in the southwestern part of the country that hosts the biggest mineral company in the region. The association has contributed to quelling tensions in the relations between the company and community by promoting art as a medium for alternative youth expression, social engagements and socio-economic empowerment while also contributing to cultural restoration. It has provided technical and cultural training in different artistic fields such as music, cinema and plastic arts benefitting over 100 young women. The organization also holds workshops on cultural management for young people as well as supporting the production and distribution of artistic products made by youth.

Youth empowerment is considered a major factor in preventing young persons' involvement in activities that trigger or exacerbate conflict and insecurity.[128] Several youths insisted that the absence of- or insufficient opportunities to pursue- sustainable means of livelihoods and income generation were the primary drivers for the recruitment of young people into various activities that destabilize societies including violent extremism, banditry and cultism as well as illegal migration and drug trafficking, amongst others. Consequently, youth groups in the region are also taking up the responsibility to encourage economic empowerment and

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[128] *Talia Hagerty,* Data for Youth, Peace and Security: A summary of research findings from the Institute for Economics & Peace, Institute for Economics and Peace and Youth Peace and Security. September 2017. Retrieved from https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/16.%20TP_Youth%20affected%20by%20violent%20conflict_IEP.pdf (12 August 2019).

independence of young people. In Morocco, the Youth Forum for Democracy and Citizenship (YFDC) empowers young people to be economically self-reliant by creating and incubating business idea[129]as to address the problem of unemployment and idleness.

The group operates from the premise that the best way to promote meaningful democracy and citizenship capable of stemming the tide of anomie and violence among youth is to enhance their chances of economic independence through gainful employment and exposure to livelihood opportunities. In 2013, the group established a think-tank to analyse the youth situation in Morocco and following several months of deliberations, created 'The Spot', a youth friendly co-working and community space that provides free skills training and an ideas incubation centre mostly patronised by youth people. The Spot has attracted local and international attention and support, and several requests to expand its activities throughout Morocco.

The role of women in peace and security is also considered an important issue with several youth associations dedicated to the cause. One of such groups is the Tunisian League of Women Electors (Ligue des électrices Tunisiennes - LET) engaged in advocacy, capacity building, research and documentation on women issues and political participation. Particularly, LET encourages women to be politically conscious and active – both as candidates and as voters during electioneering processes. During the 2011 elections for instance, they conducted massive sensitization against electoral violence and advocated for greater and more meaningful participation of rural women by encouraging them to register to vote and obtain the necessary identification card that would allow them participate in the constituency elections held that year.

Youth in North Africa are responding to the threat posed by violent extremism.[130]Youth without Borders in Tunisia is one of such youth groups with activities, like the Sharekna programme aimed towards preventing and countering the violent extremism. The group operates in Dawar Hicher, a city known for frequent and contentious relations between youth and government officials, and the potential risk of violent extremism. To stem the propensity of youth to embrace radical ideologies leading to violent extremism, the association embarks on diverse activities to enhance community resilience, and where applicable provide support to alleviate them. Particularly, it engages different local stakeholders to identify economic, social and political difficulties and thereafter provides support to youth and community empowerment efforts to overcome them.[131] The group also encourages youth participation

[129] Reyes, Rebecca and Malana Rogers-Bursen, '10 Ways to overcome Barriers to Youth Engagement, Everyday Democracy', Retrieved from https://www.everyday-democracy.org/tips/5-ways-overcome-barriers-you(22 September 2019).

[130] Cox, Aubrey, Melissa Nozell and ImranaAlhajiBuba, 'Implementing UNSCR 2250 Youth and Religious Actors Engaging for Peace', Special Report 406 June 2017. Retrieved from https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/06/implementing-unscr-2250 (25 September 2019).

[131] Mouelhi, Abdessattar and Hassen Ghodhbani, Guide de la société civile, Pour un socle de protection sociale en Tunisie, Freidrich Ebert Siftung, 2019.

in local governance as a logical step towards strengthening participatory community development.

The role of education in conflict prevention was identified by youth as a factor that is often not highlighted. The Tunisian League of Education is an organization that addresses violence and conflict drivers in schools, strives to strengthen the capacity of teachers to improve on the methodology of school charter in educational institutions across the country, and prepare students to tackle different forms of violence. The group has also created a trainer's guide to education on citizenship and living together to enhance dialogue and peace culture. Its programmes of the group are not only geared towards the common objective of creating a generation of young peacebuilders, but also to train youth on better alternatives for peaceful expression and demonstration of dissent.

4.2.2   Conflict Management and Resolution

The space and opportunities for conflict management and resolution have grown across North Africa with youth groups, as a visible segment of the wider civil society sector, playing more active roles at different levels. In general, youth have a preference for advocacy as the primary tool to engage in conflict management and resolution.[132] Even if they fall short of achieving the overarching goal of transforming an existing dispute, they use advocacy to promote peaceful and meaningful dialogue that come with lesser risks of increasing violent outcomes.

In Libya, for example, the Organization Momken[133] promotes awareness and information initiatives in 12 cities that are considered crucial in the resolution of the country's ongoing civil war. It investigates the underlying causes of conflict, identifies key stakeholders and offer strategic recommendations for their resolution. The Institute Farhat Hached for Research and Democracy in Tunisia run seminars on youth, citizenship and justice with growing influence in Libya. As part of its support to the Libyan peace dialogue, the organization trained youth volunteers to become advocates on peacebuilding, volunteerism and in combating hate speech. The training programs also focuses on illegal migration and has contributed to youth awareness and understanding the nexus between violence and conflict dynamics in the region.

In Sahrawi Arab Republic, the *Youth Union of Sakia El Hamra and Oued Eddahab* (UJSARIO) hold workshops and carry out advocacy campaigns to sensitize youth citizens against returning to armed struggles. The group is also at the forefronts of advocating for the implementation of lasting solutions.

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132 See, for example, Amal Bourhrous and Sarah Smith, Strengthening youth engagement in post-Jasmine Revolution Tunisia, development dialogue paper, no.19 | august 2017, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Retrieved from https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/strengthening-youth-engagement-post-jasmine-revolution-tunisia/ (2 November 2019)
133 The English synonym of this word: Possible.

4.2.3 SSR/DDR

Youth-led groups are less active in SSR and DDR initiatives despite growing imperatives to focus on them across the region. Nonetheless, there are a few groups engaged in this field including the Peace Vision Awareness Organization based in Libya, for example. The organization conducts workshops and campaigns to create awareness on the dangers of the acquisition, circulation and use of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW), especially of storing them inside homes. The group in collaboration with local authorities also campaigns for complete disarmament and demobilization of youth involved in violent conflicts as part of concerted efforts to promote reintegration and achieve social peace at community levels. Being in direct confrontation with better resourced armed militia groups that lure youth into violent activities, the organization faces the real challenge to achieve tangible results on the ground. A representative of the group noted that co-opting mothers, families and primary school children and school authorities could contribute to advancing their cause thus: "we still have a lot to do, but we could gain many mothers to our cause as well as primary school children. Involving families and schools in their work could help reach our goals."[134]

4.2.4 Post conflict reconstruction and development

PCRD initiatives and activities are also minimal in North Africa because most of the countries in the region have not experienced protracted armed conflict and civil wars where the urgency to implement such program is higher. Across the region, only youth groups in Libya expressed some familiarity with PCRD and what it entails and went as far as situating their activities within its thematic scope. However, this is not to suggest that North African youth are completely unaware of what it entails and/or unengaged. Rather, it highlights the limitations of youth participation in PCRD in the region when compared with some of the other thematic areas.

One of the youth groups that identified with working in the PCRD sector is the Amraja Organization for Youth and Social Development in Libya. The organization, among other activities, engages in the promotion of strategies to resolve armed conflicts by creating the right atmosphere for the tasks of reconstruction and development to take place. The group supported the reconciliation efforts between Tuareg and Tabu[135] during the peak of armed conflict in Ubari. It relied, in that instance, on the convening power and influences of respected elders and sheikhs to resolve the disputes between the two parties that led to the outbreak of violent conflict. Furthermore, the organization undertakes cleaning activities in the most adversely affected areas and seek to restore community infrastructure, especially electricity, in war-torn areas. Its focus on the provision of electricity, according to the group, is borne out of the conviction that it is central to virtually all of the socio-economic activities central to PCRD. In providing this service, the organization is not only promoting the

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[134] Online interview, 2019.
[135] The Libyan society is composed of four major groups in Lybia Arabs, Tabu, Tuareg and Amazigh.

resurrection of economic life but also promoting an atmosphere conducive to the return to pre-conflict normalcy.

Also, in Libya, the Bawader Youth Development Institution runs a cultural salon to promote much-needed dialogue and exchanges among youth vis-à-vis the wider society. The group is proactive in addressing issues of *so*cial disintegration and bridging the communication gap between Tabu and Tuareg Arabs; a couple of the root causes of tribal and ideological conflicts that eventually escalated into full-blown armed confrontations. According to a leader of the group, the belief is that "*focusing on similarities- and ignoring differences- between the Libyan tribes will effectively contribute in achieving peace."[136]*It is worthy of note that the youth group organizes several youth-centric activities such as talent competitions, discussion forum, and entrepreneurship workshops in order to find appropriate common grounds for youth from different parts of the country to interact. While these activities are attractive to youths, they also serve the dual purpose of passing the message and imperatives of peace and security to the young people that will otherwise pay less attention to issues of 'hard security.'

The *Sirte Peace Partnership* is another youth organization that works with stakeholders in post conflict situations. It works in close collaboration with the UNDP to organize training and capacity building workshops to educate communities on the imperatives for development as well as the role of the Sirte Municipal Council in local development. The organization promotes citizenship participation in the social, civic and political life as evident in the multiple ways that it contributed to set the stage for dialogue following the liberation of Sirte from ISIS after May 2017. All of these have, in turn, had major impacts on the ongoing stabilisation efforts while opening up new opportunities for community cohesion and peace.

4.2.5   Crosscutting Issues

Crosscutting issues may not necessarily fall within the mainstream peace and security spheres as outlined in previous section but could nevertheless cause disruptions if they are not properly managed. North African youths that participated in various stages of this study identified three crosscutting issues around gender, social vulnerability and humanitarian activities. In general, youth groups in the region see the urgent need to prioritise addressing the three crosscutting issues given the substantive ways they are capable of undermining regional peace and security agenda.

4.2.5.1 Gender Equality

Recognizing and optimizing the role of women to promote peace and security is a priority for many youth organizations working in North Africa. They contend that women must be encouraged to actively participate in promoting and maintaining peace and security in their societies. Social stereotyping of women as persons whose voices should not be heard in

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[136] Regional consultation, 2019.

decision-making processes makes the work more difficult; albeit necessary. In Egypt, the Young Egyptian Feminists League (YEFL) promotes gender perspectives in conflict prevention and mediation in the country and across the MENA region, primarily through research and training. YEFL has held a series of training and capacity building events with significant outcomes. In 2017, the League trained 21 female activists during a workshop held in Alexandria supported by the UNESCO Beirut regional office and NETMED Youth Lebanon. The event resulted in the preparation of a comprehensive report on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping across the MENA region due for publication in late 2019. Significantly, the organization promotes knowledge transfer as beneficiaries of its workshop embark on peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and dissemination across local communities using the skills and toolkits produced at the training. YEFL is currently proposing to establish an independent centre to conduct research on gender mainstreaming across the MENA region around the theme of 2030 SDGs and the AU Agenda 2063.

The *Tunisia Be Nsaha Association* (or "Tunisia has reliable women") is actively engaged in activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of women, particularly young women, to participate more and effectively in decision-making in order to promote the goal of gender equality. Apart from conducting workshops, the group has set up a mentorship program that pair aspiring young female politicians and leaders with their older and more experienced counterparts who provide useful advice on how to navigate the complex political space especially prior to and during elections. Finally, the Association of Women and Citizenship based in kef, the northwest region of Tunisia, implement various capacity building initiatives that target female youth groups and associations in promoting the culture of dialogue, tolerance and peace. The association also addresses the problems facing youth in marginalized neighbourhoods and how to integrate them back into public life as against allowing them to be lured into extremist or criminality activities.

4.2.5.2 <u>Social vulnerability</u>

The growing ranks of vulnerable groups, especially people living with disabilities (PWD) has become a major source of public policy as well as peace and security concern across North Africa. All too often, the majority of vulnerable groups tend to be youth who are either disabled, are located in marginalised or deprived communities, or are themselves on the fringes of society with limited access to subsidised socioeconomic opportunities. One youth group that stands out, particularly with regards to its activities targeting PWDs, is *Zaykom Zayna* (or "we are similar"). The broad mandate of the group is to promote inclusive and meaningful participation of PWDs in all areas of peace and security. It holds meetings and dialogue sessions involving representatives from different regions across Libya, and facilitates humanitarian assistance and support to victims of war, particularly amputees. The group also uses public advocacy to lobby for the inclusion of PWDs in electoral and governance processes by calling for the development and implementation of a national action plan.

4.2.5.3 Humanitarian Actions

There is a growing urgency to address humanitarian challenges occasioned by violent conflicts in North Africa, especially in Libya where the situation or need for it is particularly acute. While youth organizations in the region engage in pockets of humanitarian activities that reflect the specific- and changing- needs of their communities, the *Bawader Association* in Libya is singled out here for the nationwide blood donation campaigns it is successfully implementing despite the difficult context of the civil war. Alongside this blood donation initiative, the organization holds several activities aimed at spreading the values of peace and security. They reach out to those affected by the violent conflicts and also friends and family that would bring them to receive blood. A salient point worthy of note is that those that are more likely to revenge in war times are those that have either been directly affected or have close family members that are wounded or killed. In essence, the group reaches those that are most vulnerable that could easily be manipulated to pick up arms in revenge, a situation that would either escalate and/or elongate the violence.

From the mainstream and crosscutting peace and security issues that various youth groups are involved across North Africa, a number of trends could be distilled and summarized as follows. First, the composition of youth organizations in the region is unique. A considerable number of youth groups involved in peace and security have generally increased across the continent during the last decade, a unique feature of youth groups in North Africa is that a considerable number of them are either solely established and led by young women; or gender participation in them tends to involve an equal number of young male and female. Second, the interventions that they engage in point inescapably towards the capacity of youth to recognize and respond to the diversity of peace and security challenges in their communities, countries and the region, at large. They have kept up with advocacy and other activities despite the difficult and challenging environment they operate, and other institutional, financial and human resource limitations most of them face.

Third, insights on the range of activities they pursue show the determination of young people to implement activities aimed more at CMPR rather than other aspects such as DDR/SSR, PSOs and PCRD. In doing so, they recognize the need to understand and separate root causes from the symptoms and manifestations of violent conflicts. This observation is made taking into considerations the rather slow uptake and implementation of global normative instruments and decisions; for instance, the AYC and UNSCR 2250. It is important to note that awareness and implementation of such normative instruments is only beginning to gain traction among youth and civil society groups in North Africa.

The fourth common trend is that the obvious and ultimate goal of most youth interventions is to create safe spaces for themselves and their immediate communities through dialogue, effective communication and peaceful coexistence. Fifth, youth groups generally focus on initiatives that promote their autonomy, empowerment and capacity to deal with the myriad socioeconomic challenges facing youth, in particular, and their community, at large. They also

advocate as well as conduct training and research around issues of gender and women's rights, identity, social and political exclusion.

The final point to note is the relative considerable scope for the expansion of the activities of youth groups into all spheres of peace and security, including into areas that are becoming crucial such as SSR/DDR where their presence is currently scanty. The inability of youth groups in the region to become actively involved in those issues stem, in part, from the dominance of traditional approaches privileged by their governments and regional institutions with little or no reference to civil society groups, including those run by young people.

4.3. <u>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</u>

Most youth associations in North Africa face similar challenges that may be broadly categorized into internal and external challenges. The key internal challenges enumerated by youths during the study include those linked to their limited human, material and organizational capacities; poor or limited exposure to and understanding of exiting national, regional, continental and global normative frameworks on youth, peace and security; lack of coherence, coordination and collaboration between and among youth organizations; and finally, a general absence of the kind of strategic vision required to plan and implement medium- and long-term organizational processes, development and goals.

What seemed to be the most fundamental challenge is the limited internal capacity in terms of organizational, human and material resources necessary to keep their networks alive and active for any extended period of time, beyond five years. A five-year period according to them is like an incubation stage wherein their capacity to survive is mostly put to test. To them, surviving past the five-year period is an indication that the organization would pass the test of sustainability. Indeed, many of these youth organizations are formed in an ad-hoc and informal manner, without much consideration given to long-term sustainability and strategic direction including adequate long-term resourcing. The human and technical capacity element becomes most evident when young people recognise the need to set up an organization to address particular issues but lack the requisite expertise and experience to do so. Sometimes, this is not necessarily limited to deficits in expertise and experience in the substantive field but also in terms of how to manage such organization effectively and successfully. This is further complicated by the fact that youth organizations mostly start with informal and amorphous membership comprising of volunteers who give their time for little or no remuneration. This invariably means that youth organizations are typically unable to mobilize and/or recruit staff with the proper credentials; experience and capacity to enable them achieve their core mandates.

There is a rather slow uptake and implementation of global normative instruments and decisions; for instance, the UNSCRs 2250 and 2419 on YPS as well as the AYC. It is important to note that awareness and implementation of such normative instruments is only beginning to gain traction among youth and civil society groups in North Africa. The limited exposure of youth to normative frameworks is connected to the general lack of public awareness and

appreciation of international, continental and regional frameworks on youth issues generally, and YPS, in particular. While some of the youth groups interviewed during the study demonstrated some knowledge of relevant YPS instruments adopted by the UN they were less conversant with those by the AU and RECs/RMs. This means that youth groups sometimes find it difficult to determine the most suitable point of entry for themselves across the spectrum of peace and security or which areas to focus on based on the changing priorities of their government, regional and continental institutions, and development partners.

Linked to the above is the limited acknowledgement by Member States of the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in the region by Member States. With regards to normative frameworks, it is instructive that not all the countries in North Africa have signed and ratified the AYC, that should have provided the necessary impetus for active youth involvement in society, especially in the peace and security arena. For those that have signed and ratified the Charter, progress has been remarkably slow especially in terms of creating opportunities for young people and allowing them to make substantive and meaningful contributions to peace and security. Beyond token or symbolic attention, therefore, there is still a visible and wide gap in terms of fostering robust youth engagement in peace and security in the region. In addition, there is absence of strategic direction on how best to engage youth in national discourses, political and peace processes, community development as well as post-conflict reconstruction and development processes, amongst others. Without such strategic national vision or direction, it may be difficult for governments to fully mainstream youth and take advantage of their creativity and innovations in the peace and security arena.

There are few instances to showcase that youth groups are even contemplating any systematic and sustained approach to network between and among them based on the principles of coherence, coordination and collaboration. Even among youth groups within the same national jurisdiction, there is little evidence to suggest that they relate with and engage one another to foster long-term relationships. More often than not, they see themselves as competitors rather than collaborators as they jostle for limited resources and patronage opportunities. Because they are mostly small-sized, they are limited in both human and institutional capacities to think and plan big. They end up seeking relatively smaller grants and pecuniary opportunities that are grossly insufficient to implement bigger and more ambitious projects or to guarantee organizational sustainability.

One of the interesting discoveries made during the regional consultation was that for majority of the attendees were meeting themselves for the first time despite the fact that they are either from the same country or working in different countries but on the same issues. While they acknowledged the diversity of contributions that youth-led organizations are making across the region, they also recognized their own inherent limitations to take maximum advantage by building synergies between and amongst themselves. To them, the opportunities for peer-to-peer experience afforded by the regional consultation and the

entire study process exemplified the benefits of creating and nurturing intra- and inter-generational spaces or platforms to share experiences that can help to build and enhance their capacities while them providing opportunities to forge the kinds of future alliances and networks necessary to promote regional peace and security.

The external challenges that youth organizations in North Africa face are mostly related to the nature of the environment within which they operate. These include tight government supervision and control of the civil society space in ways that limit what youth groups can do. Furthermore, perceptions abound over government's poor disposition towards those working in the peace and security sphere that is traditionally considered to be exclusive state prerogative or jurisdiction. Youth groups are also constrained by the opaque nature of government on peace and security matters and the frequent foreclosure of access to government officials and institutions. Finally, they mostly have to contend with the limited political buy-in and financial support for their activities by government across different levels.

Virtually all the leaders and members of youth groups consulted during the study routinely complained the imposition of strict regulations, which makes their day-to-day operations very difficult. They frequently encounter difficulties accessing key government officials and institutions, and acknowledge how limited interactions with policy-makers has become a major hindrance to fulfilling their core objectives. For them, the foreclosure of participation in spaces for dialogue and decision-making at national, regional and continental levels invariably meant that policy documents and decisions often end up ignoring or omitting important youth issues and, by extension, diminish the sense of ownership required for the successful implementation of government policies and priorities on youth, peace and security.

The inadequacy of synergies between youth and state institutions were highlighted with respect to the ongoing development of a regional youth strategy for Maghreb Arab Union (UMA). According to a participant during the regional consultation, "*it is highly recommended to involve youth in conceptualizing and drafting strategies and policies to help address related youth issues and to serve as a framework for a better connection between AU/RECs and the grassroot level.*" Youth organizations generally felt that their participation in the design and implementation of key policies and strategies is often grossly insufficient, making them question the role of youth in the processes leading up to their adoption. They insist that for youth to have ownership of frameworks developed for their benefit, they must be actively involved at every stage; from policy formulation and decision-making to implementation rather than simply inviting a few young people to meetings just to validate what has been done. The essence of 'youth ownership' of policy documents like national youth policies, regional youth strategies and the AYC, according to them, is that young people and other stakeholders are able to identify with them in the course of their implementation.

Related to this is the challenge of limited platforms and opportunities for inter-generational dialogues to foster the necessary interactions between young people and the adult

population. A salient point frequently made throughout the study is related to the lack of recognition of youth abilities and capacities, which, in turn, lead to their marginalisation and exclusion from key political and decision-making processes as well as in peace, and security matters at local and national levels. For them, one of the repercussions of many years of youth marginalisation and exclusion triggered the outbreak of the Arab Spring across the region since 2010, and a major reason for the openly hostile relationship between youth and the state since then. It might also explain why young people are becoming reluctant to participate in political and electoral processes, and prefer to 'escape' into informal and parochial spaces where their activities sometimes undermine the state and public order.

Several of the challenges linked to socio-economic factors, cultural practices and the often-haphazard access to political and financial resources have become systemic in terms of the far-reaching ways they undermine effective and meaningful youth participation in society and state in North Africa. Most youth respondents insisted that such factors have made young people more vulnerable to radicalization and other criminal acts such as political thuggery and trafficking in arms, drugs and persons. They noted that inadequate policies and institutions to promote youth access to viable and multiple sources of employment, including youth start-ups and entrepreneurship schemes that promote their financial autonomy underlie their restiveness and exposure to anti-social behaviours.

Furthermore, youth identified a wide range of social values, beliefs and practices that hamper youth role and contributions to peace and security, especially advocacy on gender equality, simply because they contradict existing religious and patriarchal cultures or practices. According to them, the pervasiveness of patriarchal culture reinforces social and religious practices make it difficult to involve women, particularly young women, in politics and in peace and security issues. While these arenas are considered to be the exclusive preserve of older men whose knowledge of gender-related issues tend to be skewed or limited, the work of youth organizations in this area is made even more difficult by high rates of illiteracy (especially in rural communities).

Finally, widespread societal perceptions of youth as troublemakers create mistrust between their organizations and the state, with government officials often failing to come to terms with the reality that young people can also make positive and constructive contributions to peace and security. The perception that youth constitute a social problem to be solved makes it hard to integrate them into planning for and delivery of peace and security initiatives. This is compounded by the obvious fact that many youth organizations hardly deem it necessary to properly document evidence of their positive contributions to peace and security, and to society at large.

4.4.   RESILIENCE

The section focuses on the resilience of youth groups in the face of the myriad internal and external challenges highlighted above. The two factors that seemed to underlie the resilience of youth organizations in the region are partnerships and social media. Youth respondents repeated these two elements as important in addition to their sheer will, desire and dedication to contribute positively to the promotion of peace and security in their communities. Majority of the respondents posited that the continued existence of youth organizations itself is testament to the resilience that young people have been able to build in the face of internal constraints and external adversities. They allude to the sense of responsibility among the youth demographic that is highlighted by the fact that most of them are volunteers who become involved in advocacy and public activities on the basis of a growing awareness of the role they should be playing in society.

Forging of partnerships, according to youth respondents, enables their organizations overcome challenges relating to funding, technical capacity, logistics, operations and societal restrictions. Youth organizations are increasingly recognizing the advantages of collaborating with other civil society stakeholders to achieve their set objectives especially in the absence of sustainable funding streams to pay for their programs and activities, and also meet personnel costs and other essentials. Even in the face of widespread criticisms that governments are not very supportive of youth organizations and their initiatives, youth organisations still look up to government agencies as principal collaborators that could help them achieve their goals. When they look beyond the state, it is mostly to forge partnerships between and among themselves.

A respondent with the Islamic Scouts Association in Bouira, for instance spoke of the "usual silence" of officials towards the organization in the face of widespread misunderstanding of their intentions and their roles as well as the nature of their work in the region. It was against this backdrop that the association decided to set up Local Advisory Councils to bridge the gap with and better engage local authorities. Eventually, the youth organization succeeded in partnering with several government agencies focusing on youth issues that paved the way for the Scout Association to execute many successful programs nationwide. It was also in the same manner that the *Bawader Association* managed to establish partnership with the Libyan government to pave way for it to attract equipment and technicians required to successfully implement the blood donation campaigns.

Youth organizations also collaborate with development partners to overcome challenges, as was the case with the Sirte Peace Partnership Organization in Libya that collaborated with the UNDP on PCRD initiatives in the country. In Tunisia, the collaboration between the Tunisian Women Voters League and the Ministry of Interior and the Electoral Administration enabled the former to optimize the benefits of its extensive public awareness campaigns on electoral issues including encouraging rural women to obtain national identity cards required to cast their votes ahead of the election. The League successfully persuaded the ministry responsible

to extend the deadlines for obtaining the necessary documents that enabled women to fulfil their electoral duty.

Partnerships have also been exploited to overcome the cultural and religious sensitivities that frequently hinder youth interventions especially as they pertain to women and gender issues. Such a successful partnership arrangement enabled the Young Egyptian Feminists League (YFEL) to establish links with similar organizations in Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan and Libya to implement women and gender issues with considerable high impacts. Such transnational networking and collaborations also have the added advantages of extending the scope of operations, impacts as well as lead to experience-sharing opportunities that youth organizations require to survive and succeed.

Youth groups recognise and acknowledge that experience-sharing with peer organisations within and outside Africa could potentially save them time, money and efforts as it provides an avenue to discuss what works, why, and how rather than starting from scratch at all times. According to one youth respondent, "we expect real and effective partnership with youth groups in sub-Saharan Africa, we can learn a lot from each other."[137] In their views, despite the different characteristics and peculiarities of each of the five regions in Africa, the overarching issues that youth organizations face are similar across board.

Finally, the extensive use of the social media by youth groups was identified as a resilience tool. To most, if not all the youth that shared their opinions, the extensive use of social media has considerably extended the scope and coverage of their advocacy and helped them to overcome several challenges including financial, geographic reach, outreach and publication, amongst others. They noted that access to multiple social media platforms has made it possible to reach diverse stakeholders within and across borders. They highlighted how they could do things that promoted their existence from an internet-enabled smartphone including application for funding, posting of pictures and statements on their activities, sharing events as they occur, communication with partners and collaborators, amongst others. A youth respondent captured the importance and potency of social media as a tool for youth mobilization and organizations by nothing that: *"This is our weapon that could defeat security forces during the revolution, now we use it to help raise good citizens."*[138] They however also express worry as to how governments are clamping down on the social media by arresting users and denying them regular and limited access, especially during periods of major national issues such as protests and security threats.

4.5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This concluding section highlights some of the opportunities that North African youth identified as crucial for them to play more visible, concrete and sustainable roles in the peace and security arena in the region. They also underscored the importance of the platform

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[137] Regional consultation, 2019
[138] Regional consultation, 2019

provided by the AU's Y4P Program and the imperative to have a corresponding platform or program in North Africa.

Regarding the role of the AU Y4P Program, the youth acknowledged that the regional consultation and field visits are concrete evidence of the importance of the agency of youth in the study, and in promoting peace and security. For them, the activities covered under the study did not only provide a first-time opportunity for a network of young people to come together but also created safe spaces for them to share their contributions, experiences as well as draw lessons and best practices. According to them, this represents a major step towards the achievement of the broad aspirations contained in Agenda 2063 with respect to the actualization of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. It also provided them the opportunity to gain knowledge and new insights on the mandate and programmes of the AU, especially with regards to peace and security issues. Many were exposed to continental and regional normative frameworks related to youth, and peace and security issues for the first time. It became clear that youth groups in the region were more aware of UN frameworks than those put in place by continental and regional institutions of direct relevance to their mandates. The realization that these normative frameworks not only underlie their past and current efforts but also create opportunities to do even more in the future was lauded.

To Youth*:*

- Focus on building and harnessing the internal capacities of youth and youth groups in terms of human, institutional and financial resources;
- Develop and maintain adequate knowledge and understanding of existing, emerging and future normative frameworks on youth and also on peace and security;
- Be conversant with the activities of regional, continental and global institutions, and explore possible areas or entry points for collaboration and engagement with them;
- Intensify advocacy, mobilization and meaningful participation of youth groups in the current effort towards the development of the UMA regional youth strategy, including the monitoring and evaluation of key implementation priorities;
- Forge, maintain and consolidate ties between and among youth groups within different countries and across the region, through the creation of regional networks or platforms for knowledge production, exchange and dissemination;
- Create and maintain robust online as well as grassroots presence with a view to bridge the current divide among youth, including those in rural areas and across the different regions in Africa.

To Member States:

- Design youth-centred programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing people-to-people exchange and travels, especially among youth;

- Implement robust national action plans to mainstream youth in peace and security processes at the local, sub-national and national levels;
- Provide necessary financial and technical support to youth organizations to enable them contribute to the implementation of priority programmes that promote national peace and security;
- Review existing laws and practices that impede the full participation and operations of youth and civil society groups in order to guarantee greater freedom of expression and association;
- Take concrete measures, including substantial investment in education and employment opportunities to reduce youth vulnerability and susceptibility to activities that threaten peace and security; and
- Use youth-friendly and ICT-based methods to communicate with and disseminate information that promotes the culture of peace.

To UMA:

- Establish and maintain a regional training institution to provide leadership and technical skills on peace and security to youth;
- Create and support initiatives that enhance collaboration, communication and exchange programs for youth across North Africa, with active implementation and oversight roles to be played by UMA;
- Foster effective engagement and inclusion of youth in policy as well as program design and implementation, especially with regards to the ongoing development of a the UMA Youth Strategy;
- Set aside a percentage of funding on annual basis for regional-wide youth initiatives in peace and security;
- Report on annual basis on the status of youth in North Africa, and encourage member states to invest more in youth initiatives and priorities.

CHAPTER 5: Southern Africa

5.1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The Southern Africa [139] region contributes to the huge numbers that makes up the youth bulge in Africa, with over 40% of that region's population made up of young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years old. The potential that youth hold for social change, against this backdrop, is understandably the subject of policy and dialogue at several levels particularly in the wake of recent protests, xenophobic attacks, race violence, and other social upheavals in different parts of the region. For the most part, however, young people are marginalized in discussions about peace and security in ways that diminish or distort their crucial contributions in that sphere. This is contrary to conventional wisdom, which shows that youth at different levels and in the different spaces that they are located are playing very positive- even if understated- roles in promoting regional peace and security.

This chapter highlights the major roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in the Southern African region and the context that it should be understood and explained. It is situated around the premise that the nature of state-society relations in different countries in the region offers opportunities, but also set limitations, to the quest by young people, either acting alone or in groups/networks, to contribute to peace and security. Quite often, adults and society make assumptions- and draw conclusions- about youth that may not necessarily and meaningfully represent how young people see or interpret their multiple roles in the public sphere. The insights from this chapter are distilled from the rich and diverse perspectives of youth and youth groups across the region particularly those that participated in the regional consultations held in Gaborone, Botswana; field visits[140] as well as during fieldwork and online conversations with them.

To fully capture youth-society-state relations and its myriad implications for peace and security in Southern Africa, it is important to acknowledge the context and peculiarities of the region. After all, the region has unique social, political, governance and security features that may seem to bear striking resemblance to those in other parts of Africa yet are qualitatively different from them. The peculiar context in the region, for instance, requires paying closer

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[139] Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
[140] Youth groups were interviewed in Mozambique and South Africa.

attention to issues of corruption, weak economies, racial and gender inequalities and fragile governance systems and also the various ways that they undermine peace and security. Although a wave of relatively peaceful democratic transitions across the region have helped to decompress and decrease the likelihood of large-scale civil war and cross-border conflict common elsewhere, the threat or use of violence as a political strategy prior to and after elections has increased.

The region is heterogeneous in terms of democratic practice and governance. For instance, it comprises six of the ten best-governed countries in Africa[141] and has relatively higher levels of human development.[142] However, income inequalities within individual countries in the region are relatively high,[143] contributing in no small measure to undermining livelihoods and vulnerabilities and fanning structural causes of conflicts. While young people are increasingly playing a key role in preventing, managing, and mitigating potential conflict resulting from political competition, social cohesion and abuse of human rights, these efforts are yet to be adequately captured. The following section highlights their roles and contributions towards peace and security in Southern Africa.

5.2.   ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY

The relative absence of any full-fledged conflict or civil war defines the regional outlook in terms of youth involvement in peace and security issues in Southern Africa. During fieldwork and consultations, most youth respondents where either not conversant with or could fully comprehend the key peace and security priorities of the AU and the Southern African Development Commission (SADC), the key regional organization. There was also less knowledge of, or familiarity with concepts of PSOs and PCRD.

What this outlook implies is that the absence of full-scale wars may not necessarily diminish citizens perception of threat to peace and security but they certainly give it an entirely different perspective and meaning. To illustrate this point, a participant during the regional consultation described the excitement by residents of Gaborone when they sighted a bomb within the premises of the National Assembly. Indeed, in other parts of the continent, especially where there are raging conflicts, the sighting of the bomb would have evoked a different reaction. Because the region had not witnessed any full-scale armed conflict or civil war, the tendency is for citizens to lapse into "the dangers of security apathy, one that creates a drift between the world where a gun is security for one group while for another it is a feared symbol of generational and systematic oppression and savagery" [144]

[141] 2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Retrieved from https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/africa/2363-2018-ibrahim-index-of-african-governance-index-report/file.html (11 October 2019).
[142] 2019 Human Development Index. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf (11 October 2019).
[143] Income Inequality Trends In Sub-Saharan Africa: Divergence, Determinants and Consequences.UNDP.2017. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/Overview-Income%20inequality%20Trends%20SSA-EN-web.pdf (11 October 2019).
[144] Regional Consultations, 2019.

While majority of the youth that participated in the study acknowledge the absence of protracted armed conflicts and civil wars, they are also not oblivious that this outlook does not imply that peace and tranquillity is prevalent. Indeed, varying degrees of threats linked to governance are the root causes of growing discontent among citizens. They identified common triggers of conflict to include: (1) lack of recognition of the autonomous agency of youth; (2) ethnic and racial divides; (3) rampant corruption; (4) misunderstanding between youth and law enforcement agents, and infringement on fundamental rights; (5) electoral violence; (6) perpetual cycles of drug abuse and gang violence; and (7) the crises of migration and urbanization.

5.2.1   Conflict Prevention

A recurrent theme in virtually all the interactive sessions held with youth, either individually or in group, a recurrent theme is always the concern that the agency of young people in society, in general, and in conflict prevention, in particular, is understated, undermined, and at the very best under-utilized. The question of agency is very important as young people generally feel that the adult and society think and act as if they are inconsequential, irrelevant or non-existent. According to them, such public mindset is the reason why "we are not consulted, yet we are the most affected"[145] by key decisions supposedly taken on our behalf. However, they also insist that since youth represent a major demographic and, by extension, political constituency, what they do, or otherwise, is crucial in shaping the content and direction of conflict in the medium and long terms. In particular, this feeling is widespread among youth that have actively participated in various kinds of collective action such as peaceful protests, urban riot and violent demonstrations that sometimes also end up bringing little or no change in the circumstances that drew them towards such actions in the first place.

A corollary to this is the widespread belief among youth interviewed is that the modest recognition they receive from the adults and society is underpinned by the deeply entrenched culture of gerontocracy in the region. This belief also resonates with the grievances by the regional SADC Youth Network, that brings together youth from all SADC member states to ensure that recognition is achieved. Feedback from the fieldwork revealed, for instance, that dependency, exclusion and marginalization of youth have become prominent sources of conflict when and where gerontocracy is the entrenched social norm. Although they vary in texture and intensity, the dynamics, challenges and opportunities that gerontocracy imposes tend to differ across the Southern African region, even in the two country case studies: Mozambique and South Africa. Mozambican youth continue to struggle with the lack of youth in leadership positions nationwide whilst their counterparts in South Africa are battling to ensure that the few young people that have acquired competences and leadership sit at the table and further the youth agenda. Despite the prevalence of gerontocratic system,

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[145] Regional Consultation, 2019.

however, majority of young people that participated in the study acknowledge the key guidance and mentorship role they expect adults in leadership positions to play.

Young people want to be instrumental in the prevention of violent escalations of misunderstandings between themselves and the adult population. Indeed, constant dialogue has become a preferred entry point for young people to contribute to conflict prevention in Southern Africa. A unique approach to dialogue in which young people contribute to conflict prevention that is common happens in the context of interfaith dialogue. In South Africa, for instance, the Hindu Youth Movement coordinates interfaith dialogue to counter and prevent gender violence, femicide and xenophobia violence. Typically, the sessions and activities organised by the group brings together community and religious leaders of the Muslim, Hindu and Christian faiths. According to the group, this is vital in order to instil values of unity and cooperation amongst our people regardless of sex or religious affiliation[146]

Most interactions with youth groups during regional consultations revealed that young people are becoming leading conveners of dialogue for conflict prevention. For instance, the SADC Youth Network convenes youth meetings on the margins of annual SADC Summits. Most recently, the network held a roundtable discussion on the role of youth and women in peace and security in Namibia that was attended by policy makers, youth groups and senior government officials from Member States. The youth widely acknowledged that such engagements ultimately contribute towards enhancing their capacities and confidence to effectively contribute to conflict prevention. According to one participant at the regional consultation: what the youth lack is confidence and the right information to push their agenda forward.

Understandably, issues of governance often dominated dialogue initiatives inspired or organised by youth groups in the region precisely because it is considered both as a trigger of conflict and as a means to promoting peaceful co-existence. In their bid to ensure peace and prosperity for their communities, youth groups also participate in governance-related activities. Many of the groups interacted with focus on fighting corruption and ensuring the conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections. They recognise that corruption is both directly and indirectly becoming a major trigger for conflict given its myriad negative effects on economic, political and social development. In specific terms, corruption is capable of fuelling discontentment and violence especially when there is the illegitimate diversion or use of public resources for private ends deny citizens access to basic amenities and public good. It can also undermine peace and stability by weakening the legitimacy as well as effectiveness of public institutions to intervene as and when the need arises to prevent or manage conflicts.

Ultimately, the prevalence of corruption across Southern Africa has meant that the youth are not only victims- but also perpetrators- of corruption. Youth organizations recognize that if they were proactive and always alert to advocate for good governance practices their

[146] Field Visit, 2019.

countries would be free from corruption. One of the core mandates of Accountability Lab-South Africa is to ensure that the youth can recognize and report on the subtle or often opaque intricacies of corruption, and also refrain from participating in them. Most of those who subscribe to and participate in the activities of the group are advocacy and social change experts who have deep understand of their communities and the dynamics that positively or otherwise shape governance and developmental outcomes. The group also support committed youth and individuals who know best how to positively transform the norms, structures and practices. In Zimbabwe, Zero Tolerance – Wise Youth Trust brought 16 popular and young musicians together to record an educational album titled *Together Against Corruption Vol 1*. According to the group, the aim was, "to educate citizens about the hazards of corruption and to encourage citizens and stakeholders to unite in the fight against corruption"[147] Such innovation is welcome in a region that has a youth population that is heavily influenced by popular culture such as those often portrayed in the music, film and entertainment industry.

Elections and electoral processes are fast becoming a major source of contentious inter-group relations, political instability as well as threat to peace and security across Southern Africa. An increasing number of these elections cycles have been marred by violence with young people often implicated in their outcomes. In South Africa, for instance, youth groups interviewed revealed that they would rather take to the streets to voice their discontent than do so through the ballot. In Zambia, youth groups either take to the streets or utilize petitions to advocate for peaceful elections. A participant during the regional consultations had summed up youth orientation towards elections and protests by insisting that: *"we need to take to the streets to march or initiate activities such as street dramas to garner support from the youth community for peaceful elections, not just ahead of elections but all the time to increase education and awareness."*[148]

Conversations with youth in Mozambique echoed the same sentiment, while young people may be the biggest voting constituency during elections; they are also becoming one of the greatest threats to free, fair and credible elections in the region. This is not just in view of the pervasive apathy they demonstrate during elections by not exercising their voting rights but also how they are manipulated into partaking in violent actions during such periods. The risk that Southern African youth face, similar to those of their peers in other parts of Africa, is that they have not been able to fully translate their demographic clout to substantive electoral or political capital. When Southern African youth claim they would rather fight digitally on social media, they are expressing a sentiment widely shared by youth across the region and the continent that spending long hours on the social media is far less stressful and far more rewarding than standing for long hours to vote. Voting patterns in the region have shown that young people are voting in lesser numbers than those before them.

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[147] Regional Consultations, 2019.
[148] Regional Consultations, 2019.

Social media is a tool, amongst others, for the dissemination of information that is critical towards young people's role in preventing violent incidences during election cycles in the region. A youth led group in Mozambique, *Olho do Cidadão*, relies on the use of social media to monitor and report on the country's governance processes i.e. elections. The group has a large youth following on social media, making it easier for them to disseminate and receive feedback on relevant discourse. They have also created a mobile application, *Txeka App* (Txeka is Mozambican slang for 'check it') a Portuguese-language web-based application that empowers ordinary citizens to use their smartphones to report on election irregularities in the lead-up to elections.

Access to socio-economic opportunities is also considered a viable means to prevent young men and women from engaging in acts that constitute threats to peace and security. In Zambia, a youth-led organization, *Mooto Cashew Supplies Limited* promotes food security and conflict prevention through the distribution and planting of cashew seedlings, the most productive cash crops in the region. They have succeeded in creating thousands of jobs as well as provided staple food to local communities as part of efforts to prevent and mitigate conflicts arising from food insecurity. According to the young man behind this initiative, "not only do we provide young people with jobs, but we also make sure they are too busy to take part in petty criminal activities.[149]

The role of the mainstream traditional media is also recognized as fundamental to forestall threats to peace and security. The International Peace Youth Group (IPYG) based in South Africa runs peace journalism workshops in SADC countries, so far in Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In 2018, the group organised a weeklong Peace Journalism Fellowship program that attracted reporters from all over Africa. Through the program, IPYG trained 20 journalists mostly drawn from the region[150] on reporting in conflict and war zones, including those that are linked to religion. At the end of the fellowship training, the young reporters committed themselves to work together to promote peace journalism by contributing monthly reports on peaceful elections in 2019.

5.2.2 Peace Support Operations

The majority of youth groups consulted during the study showed very limited knowledge of PSOs on the continent, with one respondent from Mozambique noting *"we have come across this thematic area on the AU or UN website but not in our daily operations or interaction"*[151] While the reason for this visible knowledge gap among youth may not be far from the scanty number of PSOs in the Southern African region compared with other parts of Africa, this situation cast a doubt on the ability of youth groups in that region to leverage the growing number of opportunities that are available to them. During the regional consultation, only a handful of participants were aware of the repeated calls by the SADC for qualified personnel

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[149] Regional consultation, 2019.
[150] Countries represented at the PJF program were South Africa, Namibia, Madagascar, Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho, Seychelles, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.
[151] Field Visit, 2019.

to be rostered as part of the civilian components of the very sparse peace support efforts in the region, or even the more established rostering process by the AU.

5.2.3 SSR/DDR

At the heart of SSR, if less so DDR, concerns in Southern Africa is the contentious relationship between youth and law enforcement institutions in most countries. Law enforcement agents in the region are generally considered to overly rely on the use brute force when engaging youth and the society during public protests. Indeed, young people interviewed identify human rights abuses by state security agents as a major threat to peace and security not the least because they consider the youth to be radical and troublesome. There is obviously a sensitization gap that is crying to be filled in order to improve the relationship between law enforcement agents and youth groups, as the current mutual suspicious they harbour towards each other does not augur well for state-society relations. According to young people that participated in the study, a shared understanding of police-community relations would result in less strained and contentious relationship, and the consequent violence. One youth leader with considerable background in police-community relations went as far as insisting that young people's advocacy on the need for improved relationship with the police and other law enforcement is in ultimately in the best interest of the society at large.[152]

The notion of DDR is hardly brought up by youth groups in the region. But, more instructively, for them, it is a term that was linked to discussions on scenarios for the region immediately after decolonization. Because they had not gone through the process in the past, and there is little or no compelling need for it today, the present generation of Southern African youth are far less concerned about DDR.

5.2.4 Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development

Fieldwork and consultations in the regions revealed that young people understood the notion and imperatives behind PCRD. However, the absence of a country that is currently emerging from a situation of protracted armed conflict or civil war that require PCRD perhaps account for the limited interest in the issue. At best, only a handful of youth see PCRD in terms of *post facto* intervention after conflict. According to one youth leader, "*We hope the work we do for peace and development is so successful that we will never be classified as a PCRD state by the AU*".[153]

5.2.5   Cross-cutting issues

Youth groups in the region work on a variety of issues relating to gender equality and equity; racial divisions and disparities; migration and urbanization; drug abuse and gang violence:

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[152] Field visit, 2019.
[153] Field visit, 2019.

violent extremism and terrorism, amongst others. Some of their roles and contributions in respect of those key issues are highlighted and described below:

5.2.5.1 Gender Equality

Either alone or under the auspices of larger civil society coalitions, various youth groups in the regions are advocating for gender equality and equity in the context of shrinking political spaces and opportunities for women generally. One such group in the heart of Maputo, *Olho do Cidadão*, mentors young women from tertiary institutions that aspire to take up civic and political leadership duties. With limited resources, members of the group that comprise mostly of young women use the social media to call for the participation of women in various campaigns geared at fighting corruption and ensuring efficient voter education amongst women, etc. They occasionally organize peaceful protests to ensure that policy makers recognize and respond to their calls for action.

In Zambia, young women make use of existing CSOs such as Gender Links to launch a media initiative to advocate for gender equality. Gender Links is a non-governmental organization actively involved in advocacy, lobbying and partnership management activities on gender, development and related issues in the region. It utilizes radio and the Internet, to speak out and raise public awareness on a wide range of issues affecting women including the discourse surrounding abortion to domestic violence against women.

5.2.5.2 Racial divides and disparities

The reinforcement and replication of racial divisions and disparities is widely acknowledged by youth as a major driver of threats to peace and security in Southern Africa. Racial division, as they understood it, is the existence of social advantages and opportunities that permit access for some while denying others the same on the basis of racial affiliations. This seems to be particularly evident in post-apartheid South Africa but it is also widespread in other countries across the region. In South Africa where the youth age is between 14 and 35 years; representing 36% of the population[154] this number comprises mostly of black youth who face insurmountable social, economic, political and structural barriers in trying to gain access to public institutions and resources, particularly employment.[155]

Youth groups continue to advocate for bridging racial inequality gaps that also increasingly underlie conflict in the society. One respondent puts the implication of that divide in perspective by noting how "some races remain more privileged than others, that should be addressed otherwise those drowning in poverty will steal, hijack and cheat their way up."[156]

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[154] South Africa's Mid-Year Population Estimates 2019, Retrieved from http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022019.pdf (11 October 2019).
[155]Although the unemployment rate sits at 29%, one of the lowest in the region, it is the highest recorded in the country since 2008. Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 3:2019, Stats SA. Retrieved from http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02113rdQuarter2019.pdf (11 October 2019).
[156] Field visit, 2019.

Youth groups partner with local police services to combat high rates of crimes related to racial inequalities. For example, some groups like Youth-led, Africa Unite, based in South Africa, prefer to fight crime by organizing awareness programmes for crime vulnerable youth. They do not only aim to minimize incidences of crime among youth but also, "teach young people how to complement the work of the police to create safer spaces for themselves."[157]

5.2.5.3 <u>Migration and urbanization</u>

Young people are not only the demographic majority in Southern Africa but also the critical mass at the epicentre of two unprecedented developments directly linked to shifting demographic trends: migration and urbanization. There are several dimensions to the migration trend within the region, as follows: rural-urban migration, in which young people leave their villages for towns and cities in search of socio-economic opportunities, especially better educational and employment opportunities; involuntary or forced migration, which are due to natural or man-made disasters such as prolonged violent conflict and insecurity; and the waves of in-country and intra-regional labour migration in which people work on seasonal basis in plantations and mines.

Regardless of the motivation, migration ends up emptying rural communities of able-bodied youth while allowing poverty and fierce competition for already scarce resources and municipal facilities to fester in major towns and cities. The Mayor of Johannesburg who estimated that three million people relocate into the city every month in search of non-existent jobs thereby putting a lot of pressure on the city recently presented a graphic illustration of this trend. Some leaders of various youth groups engaged during the study also revealed that they too came to the city from rural areas to look for better opportunities.

With regards to displacement or forced migration in Southern Africa, a distinction should be made between those induced by conflicts or by natural disasters, although the line between them is blurred in real life. A few months before the commencement of the study, for instance, Southern Africa had been severely hit by *Cyclone Idai,* which affected several villages and towns leading to millions of deaths and displacements in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Homes, schools, business, crops, bridges, and roads were destroyed and billions of dollars are still needed to rehabilitate and reconstruct communities. Young people constitute large numbers of the worst affected, with youth groups notably in Mozambique such as the Youth Development Centre played a major role in fund raising and the mobilization of relief materials using the social media. Consultations with youth from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, revealed their perceptions that governments in the most affected countries and across the region were too slow in responding to the disaster. Further, the youth engaged, contended that the plights of young people were not prioritized, just as

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[157] Ibid

their contributions as key partners in disaster response and mitigation efforts were not recognized.

Finally, labour migration driven by economic inequalities and seeking employment, or both, have become rampant across the region. Along with youth bulge in virtually all countries in the region, the additional impacts of economic, political and environmental crises are contributing to rising labour migration and the pressure associated with unemployment. In this context, South Africa's *Ikamva Youth* aspires to enable disadvantaged youth to pull themselves and each other out of poverty and into tertiary education or employment. They have recorded significant impact in their 16 years of existence. About 85% of those they have supported gain access to post-secondary school opportunities including jobs. They have exposed their work to up to 5000 learners on 30 low-income townships across the country.

When disaggregated in gender terms, labour-related migrations involving women have become a major cause of insecurity associated with SGBV. During the regional consultation, a young female participant expressed the view: *"as young African women, we are not safe in our country and continent, we are prone because we are constantly on the move, making us targets of all sorts."* At least five youth activists interviewed in South Africa expressed discontentment with the government for letting young foreigners benefit from their economy much more than the citizens. It is instructive that they see this situation as a key driver and recurrent- factor in the recent upsurge in xenophobia-induced violence in the country.

5.2.5.4 Drug abuse and gang violence

Drug abuse and gang violence often occur together and their growing incidences have become a serious source of public policy nightmare for government and society across Southern Africa. Drugs and substances abuse contribute to negative social problems such as family disintegration, proliferation of drugs in schools, colleges and universities, and slowing economic growth.[158]Drug networks continue to acquire and trade in a variety of psychotropic drugs such as ecstasy and marijuana within and across national borders while prescription drugs such as cough mixtures are abused, mostly by unemployed youth. Youth consulted during the study linked drug abuse to the growing number of depression and attempted suicide amongst young people as well as the proliferation of violent youth gangs across the region. The *IPYG* working on the nexus between drug abuse and gang violence in Cape Town, South Africa stated that,

… this is quite a serious matter that is still not receiving the attention it deserves from policy makers. Things like drug abuse and gangsterism are no different to child trafficking as it robs a person of life and freedom, and eventually drives the person away from their family and loved ones. It is something that all sectors of society must collaborate in dealing with,

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[158] Statement by the SADC Executive Secretary, H.E. Dr.Stergomena Lawrence Tax on the commemoration of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. 26 June 2019 Retrieved from https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/statement-sadc-executive-secretary-he-dr-stergomena-lawrence-tax-commemoration-international-day-against-drug-abuse-and-illicit/ (11 October 2019).

including us as youth, we must take up the responsibility of motivating and inspiring our peers to believe that there is so much more that life has to offer and how valuable their lives are.[159]

5.2.5.5 **Violent Extremism and Terrorism**

Fieldwork revealed that violent extremism is a new phenomenon to youth groups in the Southern Africa region and, one that is only beginning to creep into popular consciousness, debate and public policy. Until recently, the region has been free from the kinds of violent extremisms and terrorist activities experienced in other parts of the continent. The emergence of Ansar al-Sunna, a local religious organisation claiming affiliation with the Al-Qaeda group in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, has become a real and potent threat to peace and security in the region. Underscored by inaccurate religious values and orientations, as well as by poverty, unemployment and marginalization, youth radicalisation and related violence have become more intermittent since 2018. Notably, the Cabo Delgado province is the hub for petroleum and mining activities in the country, a situation that makes it more susceptible to violent conflicts that may also be connected to resource-related disputes. The prospect of similar threats in other countries across the region was widely acknowledged by young people during the regional consultations and field visits.

Youth groups are beginning to respond to the creeping threat of radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremisms, and making the connection between them and broader issues of governance, peace and security. While they believe that national security institutions should be at the forefront of the fight against violent extremism, youth groups see a major role for themselves in preventing and countering violent extremisms. As noted by a youth representative from the Youth Development Centre in Beira: "with secured funding, the right partners and human resources plus protection from law enforcement, we can venture into the north of Mozambique to advocate for the need for youth involvement in preventing and countering violent extremism."[160] This signifies the tenacity of young people to venture into issues and territories generally considered high-risk, even by the State.

5.3.   CHALLENGES AND GAPS

Even if the context and their experiences vary, the most casual conversation with youth across Southern Africa typically begins with them sharing a list of challenges and gaps capable of hindering the full realization of their aspirations to contribute meaningfully to society. For them, some of the challenges are internal; that is, inherent in the capacity gaps that youth groups themselves face, while others are external or linked to the socioeconomic and political environment in which they operate.

Internal challenges and gaps tend to be linked to lack of sufficient resources in terms of staffing, logistic and institutional infrastructure to pursue mandates. Membership of most

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[159] Field visit, 2019.
[160] Field visit, 2019.

youth groups is made up of volunteers, especially, recent college graduates, who are seeking for employment. Since ad-hoc or volunteer members come and go depending on the spare time and the specific issues they are interested in, it makes it difficult to ensure consistency in terms of planning and implementation of activities. There are cases where individual participation overlaps across different youth groups, raising questions around loyalty to group aspirations and mandate. The ad-hoc nature of the groups also impacts on the capacity of memberships, as it is inherently difficult to get long-term commitments of a team with the right mix of qualifications, skills and competences.

Nonetheless, rather than create formalized institutions for their activities, youth groups feel more comfortable with the fluid or dynamic nature of their groups. The leadership of these groups they contend should however not reside permanently with the initiator of the group but evolve on the basis of consensus, acceptability and capacity to deliver, hence the imperative of succession plans within respective youth organizations. In this regard, it was opined by a few that formal education, though important in terms of leadership qualities and capacity, should not be a prerequisite especially for groups that are located or operating in rural areas. Youth groups consulted also indicated that funding is a major and perennial issue that significantly hampers their work.

External challenges and gaps relate mostly to the nature of the environment in which youth groups are currently operating, and how they interpret the opportunities and constraints they are facing. This is evidenced by their limited knowledge of the normative frameworks that exist at the national, regional and continental levels. They find themselves unable to key into and maximise the opportunities that such normative and legal frameworks offer. Indeed, youth organizations hardly referred to the frameworks and other relevant documents in the course of their work. They tend to blame this knowledge gap on poor dissemination of information on and about the frameworks on governments and key intergovernmental institutions such as SADC and the AU.

What is perhaps striking is that Southern African youth and youth groups demonstrate more knowledge of the decisions and resolutions of the UN on YPS than those of the regional bloc, SADC, and the African Union, on the same agenda. Despite growing attention to AU's YPS agenda, for instance, several youth groups especially from Island states feel disconnected entirely from the work of the continental and regional institutions, and also from the rest of the continent. They expressed the view that they would like to forge partnerships and maintain networks with similar youth organizations on the 'mainland,' as they describe the other parts of Africa. Related to this, is the poor knowledge and exposure of youth groups in the region to critical peace and security debates at the regional and continental levels, including those linked to thematic issues such as CMPR, PSO, SSR/DDR and PCRD.

There are several implications from these internal and external challenges and gaps. The limited knowledge and awareness, for instance, makes it very hard for youth to locate niche areas within the broader field of peace and security where they might have comparative advantage to make meaningfully contributions. Even if they have all the resources they need,

they can only take on so much at any given point without unduly stretching themselves to a breaking point. Secondly, their limited knowledge of major peace and security issues logically implies that youth groups in Southern Africa have the tendency to drift from one issue to another in ways that make it difficult for them to develop adequate competencies in their engagement with government and non-governmental institutions. Thirdly, and by extension, it becomes difficult for government and intergovernmental institutions to identify 'fit-for-purpose' youth groups to partner with.

The issue of funding overlaps the internal and external factors that constrain youth groups that work in the peace and security spheres. Majority of respondents identified poor or lack of secured and regular funding as the biggest challenge their organizations face. It was only until they were asked to reflect on non-financial problems that they came up with several other constraints, and also began to realize that solution may not come entirely from closing funding gaps. It explains why some respondents see the part they play in youth groups merely as a "stop-gap" or interim work in lieu of full-time employment. Finally, donor funding has helped in resourcing and sustaining many youth groups but they sometimes come with agenda and priorities that are sometimes not aligned with those of the youth. In some cases, dependence on donor funding could make them focus on themes suggested by their donors.

Outside of internal and external factors, young people identify several harmful cultural practices such as gender discrimination and early/forced marriages as recurrent challenges preventing them from successfully carrying out their works. They were clear on their role in mitigating several challenges, including employing lobby and advocacy tools to reach government institutions responsible for issues that are of interest to them. They identified strategies to help them overcome these challenges, including the use of social media campaigns, civic education and intergenerational dialogues. Lastly, youth groups in the region recognize the existence of disconnect between policy makers and citizens. According to them, the remedy to this is to create multiple avenues for upfront and inclusive consultations at all levels.

5.4.   RESILIENCE
Resilience in the context of Southern Africa refers to how young people continue to pursue their goals and aspirations, especially around issues of peace and security, despite the many challenges they face. There are at least five major strands of youth resilience in the region: (1) push for the creation of multiple platforms for youth engagement; (2) quest to address the capacity deficits that youth groups are facing; (3) unrelenting push for government recognition and partnership; (4) innovations in youth advocacies and interventions, including championing new issues; and (5) advocacy for intergenerational dialogue and social cohesion. The ability of youth groups to cope with these stresses in the face of socio-economic and political pressures must be acknowledged and commended.

Youth resilience has led to the creation of multiple platforms for youth engagement in issues of national and regional importance in the spheres of governance, security and peacebuilding. This is evident in the multiple platforms youth groups are creating, especially at community levels, where the numbers of community-based and youth-led groups have visibly increase in response to pressing social problems like drug abuse and gang violence but also bigger issues of police brutality, state infringement on human rights, governance deficits and government accountability at the national and regional levels. There is virtually no country in the region without a national youth council; even if appointment into such umbrella institutions or their activities, in varying degrees, maybe subject to considerable government influence and manipulation. Indeed, some youth councils portray the history of the post-independence state in the region: with their formations becoming popular following the role that young people played during the struggle for liberation from colonialism and apartheid.

In some other places, they take on the mandates to push for the inclusion and participation of young people in the socio-economic and political affairs of their countries. In Mozambique, where a youth parliament has never existed, a group of young people came together to create one. *Parlarmento Juvenil* has since become the leading platform for ensuring youth presence and voice in the country. In other countries, young people are invited to meetings in national parliament to discuss their grievances while in other instances, their existence and activities may not necessarily guarantee that they would be in a position to exercise any considerable political influence or change. Inadequate funding and lack of institutional support from the government have led to a situation, where donors mostly influence the mandates of some youth groups and the policies imposed by them. However, they remain a beacon of hope for young people who wish to align to the state whilst serving their communities.

The second pillar of youth resilience is linked to the identification and implementation of important initiatives to address the internal capacity deficits of some youth organizations in terms of human resource, expertise, process management, and resource mobilization. By the very informal nature of how they emerge as acknowledged earlier, youth groups in the region, as elsewhere in many parts of Africa, to some extent do not consider administrative and capacity issues as crucial at the stages of formation, a development that eventually limits their capacity to focus on and achieve specific goals. By the time they begin to realize the need to address most of the institutional deficits they face as they tag along, the chances of growth become more daunting.

The daily issues that youth groups face in the region invariably also imply that they cannot run away from paying critical attention to their respective internal capacity gaps and challenges in the medium and long terms. Consultations with youth from the region revealed that they also recognize the urgency of ensuring that young people understand the nature of conflict in their communities and that they monitor, analyse and do what is required to end and prevent future incidences. Irrespective of their location or places of operation, the youth groups complain of been neglected by government in terms of job opportunities and critical

developmental interventions. They also play the role of public interlocutors by becoming the voice of the citizenry.

Evidence from the field point to how youth groups are now taking advantage of the work of major non-governmental institutions that exposes them to new ways and methodologies of fund raising and institution building. Finally, young people are not only recipients of capacity building and skills training by nongovernmental agencies but also embracing volunteer initiatives to attract educated and experienced youth to assist them achieve key goals. According to a youth leader in Maputo, "we partner with larger groups who have the funds but no implementation capacity. We implement projects for them. That way we continue doing the work we love doing without fears of a lack of funding.[161]

The third resilience factor is borne out of the growing recognition by youth groups that very little can be achieved by them without establishing and forging partnerships with government. Although they have been unrelenting in pushing for government recognition and partnership, they tend to achieve a lot more at the local and municipal levels where issues are less politicized, where they can readily leverage local contacts and networks, and where some of the issues they take on resonate with wider local constituencies. For instance, when a youth group takes on the issue of inadequate or collapsing municipal services or neighbourhood security watch as are becoming common, it is not difficult for them to quickly gain public support, and eventually, government attention and recognition. Another important reason they see government as indispensable is that recognition and partnership eases the perennial problem associated with paucity of funding. One youth leader in Johannesburg perceptibly noted in reference to youth-government relationship that: "they have the money and wider platform, we definitely need them as a stepping stone for our success."[162]

Finally, youth are pushing the boundaries of innovation in youth advocacies and interventions by championing new peace and security issues. Some of these issues may not have mainstreamed but could nonetheless constitute potential threats to peace and security in the near future. In this regard, youth groups are fast embracing innovative ways to get their points across to wider constituencies within and beyond their countries. Some respondents have, for instance, initiated crowd petition writing using the internet to communicate their grievances to policy makers, or simply to organize peaceful marches to parliament or government institutions to drum up support on their key issues of advocacy. According to one youth leader, "social media is a veritable tool to call out policy makers, and reach a larger community of youth. It is the biggest advantage that our generation, unlike those who came before us, have."[163]

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[161] Field visit, 2019.
[162] Field Visit, 2019.
[163] Field Visit, 2019.

5.5.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The absence of any full-blown armed conflict in Southern Africa does not mean that young people in the region are not engaging in activities that promote sustainable peace. The perspectives in this chapter have shown that they are very eager to participate in governance, peace and security as a means to contribute to the creation of safer communities they feel they deserve and expect to live in. They see themselves as advocates for marginalized groups such as young women and the disabled youth.

It is rather unfortunate that internal challenges related to financial and human resources continue to stall the emergence of active and full-fledged youth-led organizations in the region. This, along with limitations imposed by external circumstances relating to socio-political and economic conditions, shape the overall impact of their work. Despite these challenges, young people are determined to advocate and champion for the establishment of inclusive platforms for their participation in governance, peace and security processes. They are determined to network and forge partnerships between and among themselves at the national and regional levels, and also with governments and intergovernmental organizations, for maximum impact.

Youth groups:

- Create intra and cross-border youth networks to collaborate and exploit available opportunities to grow and contribute to the promotion of peace and security in Southern Africa;
- Identify champions in national parliaments to support and help youth groups achieve their goals through strategic legislative decisions/acts to facilitate their intervention;
- Strive to reach youth in hard to reach areas such as rural communities for more effective and efficient advocacy and interventions in the area of peace and security; and,
- Avoid the pressure to establish and run on the basis of organized and institutionalised groups, when all what they require is to operate as coalition movements on issues that are important to them.

Member States:

- Support the creation of national youth councils and youth groups to conceive and develop national youth policies and national action plans on YPS to elaborate issues concerning youth roles and contributions to peace and security;

- Provide financial and technical support as well as promote public-private partnerships for the benefit of youth, peace and security projects at a local community level;
- Introduce peace education into all levels of national basic and vocational education curriculums.

RECs/RMs:

- Become more visible in and actively engage youth groups in Island states where less is known about the work of SADC, and the AU, in the promotion of peace and security;
- Support and promote youth events at the regional level, and also their active participation in major meetings organised by SADC (and COMESA) at the Summit level;
- Create a youth division within SADC and COMESA secretariats dedicated to youth issues including the urgent development of a regional youth, peace and security strategy.

CHAPTER SIX: West Africa

6.1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

During their first two decades of independence, West African countries maintained steady economic growth encouraged by a boom in global commodity prices as well as a relatively stable political environment. In quick successions however, the multiparty systems that ushered them into independence were replaced by military regimes or one-party civilian rule that compounded political and security situations in the region. From the mid-1980s, especially following the adoption of neo-liberal economic reform agendas in the form of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the economic and political fortunes of the region started to decline as several countries began to experience protracted political conflicts and civil wars. While the political outlook in the region currently indicates that more countries have returned to multiparty systems, and are holding elections at regular intervals, the extent that they have been able to deliver substantive developmental promises to their citizens is doubtful.

The peace and security sector has undoubtedly evolved over the past two decades. In that period, the region experienced civil wars, armed insurrections, intermittent secessionist agitations, as well as violence associated with elections and political transitions. In more recent times, it is witnessing an upsurge in the activities of transnational insurgency and terrorist movements across the Sahel-Sahara belt linked to the Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State franchise, with numerous non-state armed groups engaging in activities that undermine human and state security. While much of the region may be considered relatively safer and quieter, these intermittent threats to peace and security as well as those linked to the erosion of livelihoods due to man-made and natural disasters continues to create occasional setbacks.

It is within the layers of socioeconomic, political and security dynamics in the region, as well as broader continental and global changes witnessed since the 1990s, that the reflections in this chapter on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in West Africa are drawn. Beyond how conventional wisdom tries to explain or justify them, the complex roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in West Africa is a reflection of two emerging

realities, or challenges: first, is the continuing impact of state-society relations; and second, the dwindling capacity of the state to exercise effective writ of governance and deliver the dividends of development to a growing number of citizens, especially the youth. This chapter is based on the triangulation of extensive feedbacks from the regional consultation held in Abuja, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with youth groups during field visit in Guinea Bissau, Mali and Nigeria, and extensive online discussions with youth.

The chapter showcases the remarkable ways that West African youth are reimagining their societies and contemplating solutions to everyday governance, security and developmental challenges in ways often overlooked or underreported. Young people are at the forefront of contesting unlawful constitutional changes and perceived authoritarian excesses of the state and generally taking on citizenship responsibilities during elections. Although progress may have been slow and sometimes painstaking, as the chapter indicates, young people are making their ways into critical decision-making space, especially at community and subnational levels, where they had previously been ignored, disenfranchised and excluded.

6.2. THE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH TO PEACE AND SECURITY

The youth landscape is far more diverse and complex than popular narratives used to describe them would acknowledge and justify. By and large, it is shaped by the nature and diversity of threats to peace and security in West Africa. Understanding their roles and contributions require taking a cue from what young people perceive as the key threats they face and their response strategies. Between 1950 and 2015, the population of West Africa grew from approximately 73 to 369 million – about five-fold.[164] With estimates that Africa's population will at least double by 2050 with at least 50% expected to be under 25 years old,[165] the implications for West Africa in view of the limited socio-economic and political opportunities available to young people to pursue and fulfil their potentials is potent.

Even if a handful of youth are perpetrators of violent conflicts, this can no longer be used to make a sweeping and one-size-fits-all generalisation given the diversity of youth engagements in different contexts and locations across West Africa. Similarly, what underlies youth propensity to engage in violent conflicts can no longer be solely blamed on their exclusion or marginalization. Other common factors that condition and raise the propensity for youth violence include the sudden resurgence of transnational organized criminal networks; the spread of hate speech; radicalization and violent extremism; the adverse impact of climate

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[164] CILSS, Landscapes of West Africa- A window on a changing world, U.S. Geological Survey EROS, 2016. Retrieved from https://eros.usgs.gov/westafrica/sites/default/files/ebook-English/index.html#p=12 (13 November 2019).
[165] ONE, The African Century, 2017 Retrieved from https://s3.amazonaws.com/one.org/pdfs/ENG-Brief-TheAfricanCentury.pdf (13 November 2019).

change; and rising incidences of armed banditry. Among a growing number of youth, these challenges are creating a mix of apathy and disillusionment towards state and society.

An understanding of what makes West African youth resilience require a major shift in current public and policymakers' mindset. Unfortunately, neither the enormous burden they bear nor their remarkable roles and contributions to peace and security feature in any visible and substantive manner in public policy. To attach negative labels to youth in the way societies and governments have done not only dent their reputation as a generation but also partly explains why options to ameliorate them have not achieve positive and lasting results. This situation partly explains why the common perception of youth in policy circles is often about their *'potential'-* rather than *actual-* contribution to peace, security and development.

When young people across the different youth age brackets adopted by different countries in West Africa are lumped together, a conservative estimate is that they would account for about 55% of the region's entire population. Yet, majority of them are working against several odds as they navigate society to find meaning and relevance. Whether they are pursuing specific or broad agendas for change, young people are occupying spaces where they are not only able to fraternize among themselves but also to incubate new and multiple forms of associational networks in the face of widespread evidence that their governments is either unwilling or lack the capacity to act in good faith. They are also converging in informal, semi-formal and semi-autonomous spaces that are exclusive to them, distant from the state. One of the unique features of the youth space in the region that is discernible is in how much the vibrant youth associational today is gradually blossoming into a more formidable and resilient youth culture that provide occasional escape for young West Africans.

West African youth repeatedly complain about how the current space for any form of active political engagement is becoming limited, inaccessible and irrelevant. In large numbers, therefore, they are 'escaping' into other spaces where they could find new meaning and satisfaction; for instance, becoming more prominent on social media yet less inclined to play an active part during electoral processes, particularly voting during elections. A press statement by the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement, YIAGA Africa, which analysed youth candidates during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, acknowledged the rising trend of youth political involvements and how this could easily become a veritable conflict prevention tool in West Africa. By lowering the constitutional age to contest for elective positions across the country, the signing into law of the 'Not Too Young to Run Bill' by the Nigerian government in May 2018 could be the veritable game-changer to encourage more young people to join politics and contest for elective positions. Even if this constitutional impediment is no longer there, young politicians would continue to face myriad structural and financial constraints.[166]

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[166] YIAGA Africa, Press Statement 2019. Retrieved from https://www.yiaga.org/youth-candidacy-in-the-2019-general-elections/ (22 September 2019)

From the rich insights presented in subsequent sections of this chapter, it is obvious that a wide range of issues are attracting the attention of youth and the groups or networks they run across the peace and security spectrum. They are involved, for instance, in activities aimed at promoting access to education, sexual and reproductive health; fight against cultism and drug abuse; preventing electoral violence; and generally improving the exercise of youth voice, agency and representation. In the next section, the different ways that young people see or construct their roles and contributions in the areas of CMPR, PCRD and crosscutting conflict issues, are examined.

6.2.1 Conflict Prevention

The activities of youth groups operating in the peace and security sphere in West Africa fits neatly and mostly into the genre of conflict prevention. Since the conflict prevention options required in different contexts and circumstances vary from one country to another, the range of activities that West African youth involved in conflict prevention undertake is also fairly diverse. Increasingly acknowledged as a major conflict prevention technique, youth political activism and participation, especially at the community level, has blossomed across the region. Youth groups are, for instance, contributing to voters' mobilization, encouraging more women involvement in politics, to become active political actors and the day-to-day running of political parties, and generally mobilizing more women to become active political actors.[167] In other places, they play a major role in averting electoral violence using radio broadcasts, mobile phones and the social media.[168] Such initiatives also promote the culture of non-violence among youth and make them become more involved in early warning activities by choice.

Youth groups involved in conflict prevention recognise the importance of information dissemination using mass media platforms such as community radio. Under its Civic Engagement & Education Radio Talk show that aired between 2017 and 2018, for instance, the National Youth Parliament (NYP) of The Gambia used the radio to create local awareness about civic rights, promote young people's participation in politics and national development, and provide an accountability platform for public officials to openly give account of their stewardship to the people. The community radio project covered the entire country and was credited for increasing youth involvement in politics, including encouraging more young people to run for parliamentary and councillorship elections, promote transparency, reduce corruption among public officials, and the emergence of new rights advocacy movements.

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[167] MireilleAffa'a-Mindzie, Building Peace and Development in the Sahel: Enhancing the Political Participation of Women and Youth. International Peace Institute, 3 February 2015. Retrieved from https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/IPI-Rpt-Building-Peace.pdf(25 October 2019); See also, Celina Del Felice and Helene Ruud, Annotated bibliography- The role of youth in peacebuilding. United Network of Youth Peacebuilders (UNOY), 20 November 2016. Retrieved from https://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/Annotated-Bibliography-Youth-and-Peacebuilding-November-2016.docx-2.pdf (25 October 2019).
[168] Hal A. Lawson, Young People, Social Media and Health, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.oapen.org/ (25 August 2019).

The Young Peace Brigades (YPB) in Ghana has developed a vibrant community engagement strategy to reach out to and win the confidence of key stakeholders to resolve the dispute in Obuasi area of Ashanti region in Ghana. The intervention by the group showcases how young persons, with the right mediation and leadership skills, can successfully bring belligerent parties together to create a space for dialogue. With over 3,000 members in Bamako and other administrative regions, the Muslim Scouts of Mali (MSM) focuses on actions around education, public sensitization, and interfaith dialogue for peace. In 2018, MSM organised a major inter-faith conference at *The School of Peacekeeping Alioune Blondin Beye* (EMPABB) that attracted youth of different religious denominations. Through self-financing, Muslim Scouts Mali continues to play a major role in mediating the Dogon-Fulani crisis.

Young people are also beginning to see the power in creating wider networks and movement, especially when successful grassroots mobilization culminate in major change of government after many years of censorship, civil and human right abuses, and in some cases, authoritarian rule. Youth-led groups such as Making Our Visions and Aspirations a Reality (MOVAAR) and the National Youth Parliament of The Gambia, for instance, were active in the bipartisan initiative that eventually dislodged former President Yahya Jammeh from power in December 2016 after 22 years.

Finally, young people are responding to challenges of unemployment that are becoming recurrent causes of conflict. They are establishing start-up businesses and ideas laboratory that keep them busy and gainfully employed in diverse sectors such as mobile telephony and communications, music, film, fashion and the arts. Business Incubation and Development Centre (CIDE) is a youth-led business incubation and acceleration initiative supporting youth to create a serious, healthy and supportive business in ecosystems in Guinea Bissau, with particular emphases on economy, agribusiness, ICT, small-scale industry and crafts, and tourism. Created in April 2019, CIDE is already incubating 50 business ideas whose respective companies were legalized free of charge by the Guinea Bissau government through the State Secretaries of Regional Planning and Integration and the Secretariat of State at the request of the Incubator, the first time in the country. The ultimate plan is to support up to 100 innovative business ideas per year and create 300 direct jobs during the same period. A major constraint however is the initiative's reliance entirely on financial, material and logistics self-help from members that considerably slows down key implementation plans.

6.2.2 Conflict Management and Resolution

The civil society space in West Africa is expanding, despite occasional constraints imposed by government policies and actions. This development is, in turn, making it more permissible for youth groups to work on diverse issues like the promotion and protection of citizens' rights, inter-party dialogue and civic engagement. With support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for instance, the Inter-Parties Peacebuilding through Dialogues has become a flagship project of NYP-Gambia; with the broad objective to promote peace and security among political parties through their youth representatives. The project currently covers

three regions notably Upper River, Lower River and the North Bank with two major goals: (i) to reduce political violence and (ii) to promote tolerance amongst different political parties. In the build-up to the 2016 presidential elections, NYP-Gambia organized Democracy & Good Governance sensitization campaigns between 2016 and 2017 to create awareness among people regarding the values of democracy, encourage them to come out and vote, and to foster youth engagement in decision processes. Its intervention added to the momentum that subsequently contributed to the large voter turnout.[169]

Youth in the region are active politically in their countries, despite the hardship that the volatile nature of politics imposes on them. In Senegal, *Groupe de Travail Femmes, Jeunes, Paix, Sécurité en Afrique de l'Ouestet du Sahel/Sénégal* was instrumental in dispelling the political tension among political parties in the build-up to general elections in February 2019. With support from the UN *and Le Centre de Genre et de Développement*, the youth group deployed 25 youth and 25 women as observers across the 14 regions of the country during the election. In Mali, the *Fédération des Jeunes pour la Paix Mondiale* intervened to settle the violent leadership and succession crises that engulfed the National Youth Council (NYC) in November 2016, which, sadly, led to several deaths and fatal injuries among belligerents. The leadership conducted shuttle mediation with the protagonists before making proposal for peaceful solutions. By January 2016, the Federation had also trained 50 young persons in conflict management, including representatives of the key political parties. With the support of opposition candidates, the Federation successfully convinced the government to postpone the elections to allow for more bipartisan consultations in a less belligerent political atmosphere. The Federation does not depend on direct government subvention for its programs and day-to-day activities but on monthly contributions by members as well as grant from the International Bureau of Displacement.

Another youth-led group, Open Mali, intervened at critical moments to address knotty political situations in the country. In 2012, the group organised meetings and workshops to interrogate the political and security situations in Mali, and also brokered a major political stalemate between youth and government that eventually led to an open commitment by the latter to hold general elections in 2018. The government openly acknowledged the success of the workshops in offering a roadmap for transition and a platform for national dialogue on contentious issues relating to citizenship, governance, human rights as well as the impacts of adverse climate change on peace and security. While such direct and visible political interventions by youth groups such as the Federation and Open Mali invariably contributes to peaceful resolution of disputes and protracted political conflicts, there is always the inherent danger that they could become embroiled in undue partisanship and accusations of political bias capable of undermining the voice and agency of such groups.

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[169] Funding support towards this initiative came from the International Republic Institute (IRI). Regional consultation, Abuja, 2019.

Finally, young Malians have been insistent that dialogue rather than military action is the only route to tackling insurgency in Central Mali. For them, any plan by the government to hold a constitutional referendum without adequate and inclusive dialogue would not succeed. It was on the basis of this that they thwarted an attempt by the government to submit a new constitution to a referendum in 2017. In their view, the process lacked inclusion and communication. Even though it was widely adjudged to be "a good document," [170] the leadership of Open Mali insisted that the draft was solely produced by the government without the required consultations and buy-in from the public. The government eventually retraced its steps by appointing a troika of influential public figures to organize a major political dialogue and national conference, and eventually supported the establishment of a ministry with oversight on constitutional matters.

6.2.3 Peace Support Operations

Since the late 1990s, PSOs have gained international visibility with the fusion of traditional peacekeeping roles typically performed by the military and police with a wider range of peacebuilding interventions that touch on conflict prevention, the conduct of peaceful elections, political missions, peacemaking and humanitarian action. Several PSOs have taken place in West Africa, and they vary in terms of the mandating authority, scope of operation and coverage.[171] Despite this, the contributions of youth groups to PSOs in the region (or even across Africa) are probably the least obvious partly because of their overly militarized nature and external dimensions.

Either as service providers, targets or beneficiaries of different activities that fall under the rubric of PSO, there is no question that there is a mismatch between what youth can contribute and what they are actually invited to contribute. For instance, they could support critical civilian inputs during PSOs, especially those that are channelled through civil society institutions or that require continuous citizens oversight. They are also capable of contributing practically and meaningfully to improving security sector governance in countries hosting such operations. The ability of youth groups to make positive contributions would however depend on their competences and capacity to conduct background research, risk analysis, documentation, and advocacy on key issues. During major peace talks and in the early stages of PSOs, youth groups are in a position to facilitate dialogue between and among conflict parties, even if they do so informally and on the side-line. They are also able to

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[170] Field visit, 2019.

[171] These include the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) mandated by the UN. Under the AU is MISHAEL in Mali and the Sahel - while ECOWAS maintains two, in the Gambia and Guinea Bissau. Finally, there are two multinational task forces: The Joint Forces of the G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task covering Boko Haram affected areas around the Lake Chad. Zif Centre for International Peace Operations, Peace Operations 2018/2019. Retrieved from https://www.zif-berlin.org/ (14 October 2019).

pressurise hardliners to soften or shift positions, and serve as back-channel interlocutors when peace talks seemed to be stalling or conflict parties are unwilling to yield grounds.[172]

It is not always the case that youth groups would be in a position to effectively play all these roles and achieve all the desirable results. Even with the best intention, they sometimes hit a brick wall trying to become active participants in PSOs as past and current experiences in West Africa and elsewhere across Africa have shown. This explains, in part, why youth groups have mostly tilted towards advocacy activities than become involved in more complex and tasking aspects of PSOs. In 2016, Search for Common Ground, Nigeria in conjunction with the North East Regional Initiative and USAID organized a regional Youth Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel Region.[173] Over 7,000 young people from five countries (including Nigeria, Niger and Mali) were trained and mentored as advocates of the UNSCR 2250, a watershed resolution that urges state parties to involve youth in peacebuilding processes, based on five pillars: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration. One of the outcomes of that regional event was the decision by the youth to establish a working group on 'Youth, Peace and Security in Nigeria.' This bold step vividly shows that with the right opportunity and exposure, young people are capable of actively engaging and contributing to policy processes, and perhaps even own the process and put their stamp on its success.

There is no doubt that the nature and impact of PSOs have changed considerably in recent times, especially in the context of new and vicious threats imposed by the activities of transnational insurgency and terrorist organizations linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. In West Africa, the operations of such non-state armed groups are clustered around Mali and her Sahel neighbours, on the one hand, and in the North East of Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin where Boko Haram operates. Although it may not strictly qualify as a youth group like others described in this study, membership of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is predominantly composed of young people who have recognised the urgent imperative to protect themselves and their communities from Boko Haram alongside playing a very crucial role in preventing and countering violent extremisms in Northeast Nigeria. As a complement to the efforts of the Military Joint Task Force (MJTF) in tackling insurgency and protecting lives and properties, the CJTF has helped to recover towns and villages from Boko Haram, rescued women and children, and fished out members of the group shielded by some local people.[174] Their interventions have greatly contributed to counter terrorist operations, and also aided the arrest and prosecution of many Boko Haram members.

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[172] Limo, Irene, 'Mediation in Africa: Is there Space for the Youth?', Accord Conflict Trends, 2017/2. Retrieved from https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/mediation-in-africa/ (18 October 2019).

[173] Regional consultation, Abuja, 2019.

[174] David Joseph Dan-Azumi and AdemolaAzeez (2018), 'The intervention of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the War against Boko Haram in North East Nigeria- A Theoretical Approach' Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences, 6, 5: 40-48. Retrieved from http://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/papers/vol6-issue5/I06054048.pdf(15th November 2019).

6.2.4 Security Sector Reforms/Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

In different parts of West Africa, the most common issues that impact adversely on both SSR and DDR initiatives are the limited capacity of security institutions, limited local participation and ownership of reform efforts, limited allocation of funding and resources, and poor coordination of external donors/partners in terms of goals and service delivery.[175] There is a growing acknowledgement, backed by empirical evidence, that the inclusion of the civil society groups in SSR and DDR is capable of positively changing the overall impression and direction of such processes as the experience of several countries in West Africa have demonstrated.

At the centre of SSR is the relationship between law enforcement agencies and communities, especially with youth, in promoting cordial and peaceful relationships. The National Platform of Young People in Peace, Development and Social Wellbeing was founded as a not-for-profit youth association in Guinea Bissau in June 2013. The core objective of the groups is social and economic development of youth, with particular focus on *Nhacra*, a prefecture that is notorious for armed robbery and killings. According to the group's leadership, the key factors responsible for the threats are youth delinquency, excessive exposure to alcohol and drugs, poor education and literacy, and incessant ethnic fighting over land. The group organises sporting and social events to draw youth closer and sensitise them towards peaceful coexistence, and also forges healthier police-community relations that is necessary for intelligence gathering and sharing to forestall threats to peace and security.

In relation to DDR, the lead advocate and coordinator of the World Youth Centre (WYC) opined that the major challenge revolves round the collection of weapons and firearms from former combatants such as the one in the oil-rich but volatile Niger Delta region of Nigeria.[176] Under the terms of the Presidential Amnesty Program announced by the Nigerian government under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, an estimated 30,000 militant youths were granted unconditional amnesty following their decision to give up armed insurgency and enter into a rehabilitation program. To sustain this momentum, the WYC played a major role in implementing economic empowerment and civic participation programs that exposed many of the militants to vocational skills and artisanal trade that contributed significantly to the restoration of peace and stability in the troubled region.[177] This example showcases youth's roles in conception and implementation of programs to address the root causes of violence, which, in this case, includes unaddressed feelings of frustration and anger over the negative effects of oil production and unfair distribution of resources.

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[175] Sendra, Mark, Security Sector Reform in Conflict-Affected Countries: The Evolution of a Model. London. Taylor and Francis, 2010.

[176]Ukeje, Charles, 'State Responses to the Relapse of Insurgent Violence in Nigeria's Delta Region', APN Briefing Note No 8, December 2016.

[177] Ako, Rhuks and Ohio Omiunu, 'Amnesty in the Niger Delta: Vertical movement towards self-determination or lateral policy shift?', in Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy, 8(1), 2013: 43-70.

Another youth-led DDR initiatives in the region relates to ongoing efforts to transform the living conditions of inmates in Kumasi prisons in the Ashanti region where an estimated 70% of the inmates are under the age of 35 years. Working under the auspices of the John Kufuor Foundation, a youth-oriented organization in Ghana is implementing what it described as the 'Cell Not Hell' initiative which aims to provide educational materials to facilitate teaching and learning process, and to refurbish and stock prison libraries.[178] The intervention has not only enhanced the quality and delivery of education services but also significantly boosted the academic performance of prison inmates in major external examinations such as the secondary schools leaving certificate examinations. Evidence also shows that inmates that have benefited from the program are in a better position to reintegrate back into normal life after servicing their term.

6.2.5   Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development

Civil wars and protracted armed conflicts generally tend to reverse the miniscule progress made, including those relating to the mainstreaming of youth into active social, civic, economic and political life. In post-conflict contexts, young people are crowded into the informal sector where they are mostly opaque and anonymous to policymakers. After a prolonged period of conflict, there is always a generation of young Africans for whom development mean very little without access to food, housing, education and other subsidized opportunities. In the post-conflict contexts where SSR and DDR are critical components of PCRD, youth contribution is diminished or clouded by perceptions of the roles they had played during conflicts. In other words, the war-time roles played by a handful of youth makes it difficult for communities adversely affected by their actions to forgive, or for law enforcement personnel to see them as key partners in the task of post-conflict reconstruction. Invariably, countries that have gone thorough civil wars or political violence face the challenge of diminishing capacity to deliver public goods, including the protection of vulnerable social groups.

Given its broad ramifications and implications, it is essential that planning for and implementing PCRD should start with getting the buy-in of key stakeholders, including youth. Evidence has shown that some of the most innovative PCRD initiatives are those that derive their key priorities from adequate interactions with target community in a manner that is organic and bottom-up rather than externally conceived, imposed and implemented. Whatever the situation of circumstances they face, youth groups in post-conflict societies recognize the need for them to become actively involved in PCRD efforts, even if governments and implementing agencies sometimes overlook or ignore the multiple roles they are capable of playing. In Mali, for instance, the Organization for the World Peace (Africa) was established in response to food insecurity and other humanitarian challenges facing IDPs but also to

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[178]Regional consultation, 2019.

respond to broad issues around conflict prevention, peacebuilding and humanitarian activities. Further, the 'Right to Learn' project provide young people in three IDP camps in Borno State, Nigeria, with affordable learning materials in order to promote learning and literacy culture, create awareness of rights and duties of IDPs, and generally expose them to entrepreneurial and vocational skills. With support from Borno State Community and Social Development Agency (BOSCDA) and Dangote Foundation, the project delivers the training programs three times a week for eight months while the sensitization component of the training focuses on peaceful co-existence with the host community via ADR mechanisms.[179]

Since it establishment in 2008,Messengers for Peace (MOP) Liberia has provided more than 1000 youth the opportunity to volunteer for peace. In the build-up to the 2017 general elections in Liberia, widespread public concern about the fragile state of peace and security prompted several youth groups to show keen interest in post-conflict recovery efforts. The group was prominent in campaigns that drew attention to the importance of violence-free electioneering process and placing premium on youth leadership in election observation and mediation. The group was able to achieve the feat partly because of the leverage and partnership support from UNDP and the UN Peacebuilding Fund. In 2019, the group launched the 'Technology for Peace Boot Camp' to improve computer literacy in rural Liberia; encouraged young people to harness the vast and positive potentials of the internet; network, build brands, access opportunities and spread messages of peace; stimulate the interest of youth in internet peacebuilding activities; and generally monitor youth participation in community development and peacebuilding. Its free three-month long training program enabled over 50 young persons predominantly in rural Lower Margibi County to gain computer literacy. Following this, MOP received the National Peace Prize Award in 2018, which was bestowed by H.E President George Manneh Weah to commemorate 15 years since the Accra Peace Accord that ended the Liberian civil war.

The G5 Sahel Youth (G5SY), is based in Bamako, Mali, but works across the five countries of the G5 Sahel: namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. For G5SY, due to the persistent insurgency in the region, the youth question is at the intersection of the myriad problems facing the Sahel region in view of the fact that about 60% of the population in each of the countries are youth. They countries also face similar challenges linked to the poor capacity of their governments to tackle long-drawn crises in the educational sector and tame rising unemployment; both with serious socioeconomic and political consequences. One of the first key steps taken by G5SY was to draw up an Integrated Strategy for Youth that was subsequently validated in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in May 2019. A key highlight of the Strategy was the proposal for Member States of the region to set aside 3% of their national budget to youth ministries while 1% of that allocation should go directly towards the implementation of the strategy.

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[179] Regional consultation, 2019.

At the time of fieldwork in Bamako, the group was already completing another strategic document on the theme "fight against extremism and radicalization of youth," which seeks to elaborate on the prospective roles that AU/MISHAEL and G5 Sahel should play in harnessing the youth dividend. [180] The strategy document reviewed the national youth policies of the G5 Sahel countries with a view to determine what should be kept or removed; collates key priorities and highlight key recommendations to the government. It further recognizes that youth should be conscious of their roles in peacemaking and consolidation as well as underscores the imperatives of investment in development and livelihood opportunities to improve living conditions as prerequisites for sustained peace and security. Finally, the group recognizes that there are variations in youth perceptions of the roles they should play in different countries across the Sahel region. According to the President of G5SY, "When you see young people in Bamako, they have passed the minimum livelihood threshold unlike the youth in the north fighting for everything- including access to well water."[181]

From the foregoing contributions of G5SY, it is imperative to translate the two blueprints into concrete and actionable policies, with the buy-in of their respective governments and external partners towards the implementation of its key recommendations. The proposal by G5SY in this regard seeks to identify champions for each of the strategy's four pillars, namely: governance and democracy, SSR, climate change, and P/CVE. The leadership of G5SY however recognizes potential constraints capable of undermining the successful implementation of the key recommendations. This includes what they describe as the "questionable capacity" of the governments of the five countries to play the role of "first responders." Secondly, they recognize the current limitation that the G5 Sahel faces as an institution of states rather than that of the people, and how the primacy of politics and political considerations might hinder the attainment of the four pillars of G5SY strategy. Thirdly, is the question of how to fund the key priorities of the strategy. Although each of the five-member state of the G5 Sahel committed to mandatorily give CFA 400 million per annum to the Secretariat in Nouakchott, Mauritania, it is entirely for salaries and upkeep of staff rather than programs and projects that will contribute to alleviate the plight of their citizens and promote preventive actions against youth radicalization and violent extremism.

6.2.6   Cross-cutting issues

6.2.6.1 Education and citizenship

"The foundation of every state is the education of its youth"[182]

This inscription on a makeshift banner during the fees-must-fall campaign in South Africa in 2015 aptly sums up the imperative on the government to invest substantially and

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[180] Field visit, 2019.
[181] Field visit, 2019.
[182] See, Edward Webster, 'Why every generation of students must find, fulfil or betray its mission", The Conversation, 5 April 2017.

continuously in the educational sector. Paradoxically, also, it underscores the direct linkage between many years of poor funding and attention to the educational sector vis-à-vis the festering crisis of youth in several countries across Africa. It is instructive, for instance, that none of the countries in the region spend as much on the educational sector as they spend on maintaining their security services. It does not require much contemplation to see that the public educational system is teetering on the brinks of total collapse in most African countries. Discussions with youth across the continent revealed the stark realities they face in relation to the multiple crises in the educational sector. They opine that the relative deterioration of public education across the primary, secondary and tertiary levels contributes to the increasing involvement of youth in the collapse of public order.

In the three West African countries where field visits held- Guinea Bissau, Mali and Nigeria, respondents easily made the link between the absence of peace and the limited or poor quality of educational opportunities. According to a youth in Bamako, *"when there is no good education, there is a problem, people will engage in violence and criminal activities…everything is linked to education and lack of it."*[183]Another respondent in Bissau captured the nexus between the collapse of educational systems and its adverse effects on social norms in ways that eventually threatens peace and security. According to her: when you do not have good educational opportunities you would not respect the norms of society. It will therefore be difficult to be at peace with yourself and with others.

It would now require much more than money, but also the right political will and determination to reverse the rot in the educational sector facing most countries in the region. There are several other big issues that young people identify as short-changing their ability to participate meaningfully in society. For them, the crises in the educational sector is not only evident in dwindling budgetary allocation but also in the mismatch between the quality and relevance of the educational curriculum they are exposed to vis-à-vis the changing requirements of the labour market in the 21st Century. Most countries in the region continue to face serious challenges due to the paucity of teaching and learning resources, overstretching of available infrastructure and the incessant closure of schools due to strikes by teachers' union over poor salary and conditions of service. In one instance, the closure of schools lasted 10 months and it only took a major protest by students and the occupation of the ministry of education by protesters over several days before the government agreed to meet some of the demands of the striking teachers.

In the face of the double jeopardy of poor education and shrinking access to gainful employment they are contending with; it could be overwhelming for most youth groups to put up any bold and spirited effort to address or ameliorate the challenges thrown at them. Their intervention can only, at the very best, amount to a mere scratch on the surface of what has become a much deeper, multifaceted and systemic problem. Working with a consortium of peer youth groups in Bamako, for instance, *Actions Jeunes et Femmes pour le Development*

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[183]Field visit, 2019.

Durable (AJFDD) started a project in 2017 aimed at "character education and sensitization" of young people on the adverse impacts of drugs and violence in schools. The initiative has continued to receive political and technical support from the education ministry and the office of the Mayor indicating that it fills an important niche. Notably, in the early phase, over 1,000 youth benefited across communes in Bamako and Koulikoro. As such, there are ongoing efforts to extend the project to other parts of the country, particularly Kayes, Segou, Sikasso and Mopti, subject to the availability of funding and the goodwill of provisional governments in those places.

Project TChintchor, a youth-led organization established in 2013 supports young people to find educational solutions, improve citizenship and social innovation and opportunities. Under this initiative, more than 150 students from Guinea Bissau are pursuing advanced training in different fields in Portugal. According to the project leader, "a lot of people want to go out due to the poor quality of education; with destinations such as Brazil, Senegal, Morocco, and Portugal. We are focusing on Portugal because of recognition of credentials, quality, and exposure, quality to learn better Portuguese."[184] The concern expressed by other youth is not only that this type of intervention is too minuscule but also that it ends up providing a tiny circle of privileged youth an escape route from existential social challenges that leave them with very few options to a better life.

In the final analysis, young people acknowledge that only the declaration of a state of emergency in the educational sector (and investing heavily and substantially in revamping its lost glory) would stem the trend of further decline. As a youth respondent in Bissau, puts it in sober perspective, it is in the educational and employment sectors that "the sheer hypocrisy that African youth are the future of the continent come into stark relief."[185]

6.2.6.2 Drug Abuse

The danger of illicit drug use alongside the care for and recovery of victims is now a major public concern across West Africa. The nexus between drug abuse, social vices, violence (by gang and cultist groups) and insecurity is increasingly gaining recognition and attention across the region. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), clearly shows that drug abuse is as much a threat to public health as it is to governance, development as well as peace and security in the region. The inaugural report of the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use, which covered the period between 2014 and 2017 presented frightening empirical evidence of the vulnerabilities that a growing number of citizens in the region, particularly young people, face as they become hooked on a wide range of drugs such as oxycodone, codeine, morphine, hydrocodone, all of which are legally available by prescription, but also heroin, cocaine, cannabis, opioids and amphetamine that are banned substances.[186]

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[184] Field visit, 2019.
[185] Field visit, 2019.
[186] See UNDOC, West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use: Statistics and Trends on Illicit Drug Use and Supply 2014-

The urgency to respond to the menace of hard drug and substances abuse by youth has led to the proliferation of several youth-led groups seeking to curb the menace. In Nigeria, the Sanctuary of Hope Charity Foundation (SHC-F), established in 2017 focuses on sensitization against drug abuse as well as the rehabilitation and mainstreaming of those that have given up the illicit use of drugs. To date, the Foundation has worked in 20 (out of the 36) states, mostly reaching out to the under-privileged and students; and has so far facilitated the reintegration of over 49 victims of drug abuse. In October 2019, SHC-F held anti-substance abuse awareness and sensitization training that attracted over 4,000 students in three different government secondary schools in Abuja, the capital city and in Takushara, a remote community in neighbouring Nassarawa State. This sensitization training led to the discovery of another set of 78 student victims from the three schools in Abuja and eight (8) from Nassarawa State respectively.[187]

Similarly, the Open Leadership Foundation set up in 2018 targets young people mostly within 15 and 28 years who converge at graveyards and nightclubs engaging in drug use and other social vices. Working with peer youth-led groups such as Drug Abuse Don't Use Don't Encourage (DADUDE Kaduna), YALI Network Kaduna, Drug Free Arewa Kaduna, Youth for Peace and Security Initiative, Youth With A Purpose (YWAP), and Open Leadership Foundation have been very active in the fight against drug abuse through advocacy and public sensitization, including lobbying government agencies to take serious actions to engage youth in vocational and entrepreneurial activities that will on the long-run take them away from the streets.

6.2.6.3 Gender-based violence (GBV)

GBV is recognized as "one of the most serious threats to the health and safety of women and girls worldwide."[188] GBV ranges from spousal abuses to the abduction of young schoolgirls by non-state armed groups as 'war trophies,' as well as sexual assault and rape in the context of prolonged violent conflicts and civil wars where teachers and pupils, doctors and health workers have become targets.[189]

In West Africa, women run most of the youth groups that focus on GBV. In Guinea Bissau, the *Associacao Cabo Vediena de Luta Contra Violencia Baseada no Genso*was created in response to increasing wave of spousal abuses and violence, including those involving unmarried individuals, in the absence of legal protection and follow-up therapy.[190] Also, in Nigeria, the *Beat Drums Not Women* organization established by team of 30 members works to educate

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2017. Retrieved from https://www.undoc.org/document/westandcentral (20 October 2019).

[187] UNDOC, West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use: Statistics and Trends on Illicit Drug Use and Supply 2014-2017. Retrieved from https://www.undoc.org/document/westandcentral (20 October 2019).

[188] See, UNFPA, Nigeria: Gender Based Violence Sub-Sector Quarterly Bulletin, January-March 2018, Issue 08, 15th May 2018.

[189] According to UNICEF, since the start of the Boko Haram insurgency in over 2,295 teachers have been killed and 19,000 displace, and almost 1,400 schools destroyed. See Marie-Pierre Poirier, 'Statement on Attack against Bursari Government Girls Secondary School in Northern Nigeria,' UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Director. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/wca/press-release (23 February 2018)

[190] Field visit, 2019.

youth about the importance of women in the society and as entry point to advocate against GBV. [191] It was borne out of the growing cases of molestation, abuse, depression, and stigmatization of women in the Niger Delta region and across Nigeria. The group reaches out to victims of GBV across communities and in tertiary institutions. It also recognizes the important roles of women in peacebuilding and as such advocates for the involvement and participation of more women in the peace and security sphere.

Another group, G-Insight, established by a female undergraduate of Kogi State University in North-Central Nigeria in 2018, currently has over 50 volunteers working around themes such as sexual harassment and molestation, depression and suicide, education and enlightenment, campaigning against cultism, and youth sensitization on the effects of drug abuse. In Togo, *Action Chretienne Pour le Developpment integral de L'Enfance et de la JeuneFille (ACDIEF)* focuses on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in development. The youth group promotes women entrepreneurship by training and supporting 480 girls to become financially independent. Despite the public policy concern that SGV evokes, it is a source of worry that none of the three groups highlighted here receive support from government. Indeed, the first group in Guinea Bissau reported that the major challenge they face is the negative disposition of government institutions working on similar issues who tend to see them as competitors or adversaries rather than as partners in tackling a pressing social menace.

6.2.6.4 Human Right Violations

A lot of progress has been recorded during the past two decades in the political and governance sector in West Africa, even if those have not brought enough socioeconomic benefits and opportunities to vast numbers of citizens. Most West African countries have settled into the routine of regular elections and, in the occasional instances where a political stalemate happens, collective regional pressure is quickly brought to bear in resolving them. However, this positive note should not be construed to mean that human rights violations against citizens, including youth, have ceased though it has to some extent reduced. Be that as it may, the region continues to witness incessant violations that have attracted the attention of youth groups who themselves are increasingly becoming victims of extrajudicial arrests and incarceration by state security agents.

Whether they are solely established for that purpose or as an offshoot of broader community of CSOs in the sphere of governance and democratization, the number of youth-led groups involved in advocacy and action against human right abuses and violations has increased in many parts of West Africa. In terms of the range of activities it is involved and evidence of innovations, one of the most successful youth groups in the human rights sector is the *Centre de Documentation et de Formation sur les Droits de l'Homme* in Togo. With funding supports from UNDP and OSIWA, the Centre has implemented several training programmes to improve

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[191] Field visit, 2019.

surveillance and documentation of cases of violations committed by the security institutions, improve knowledge on human rights among women and young people, and to embark on advocacy in favour of legal action against violations of human rights. The Centre also participated in the design of the monitoring framework set up by the government; trained young human rights defenders on how to become civil and professional; and published a manual to sensitize the public on the law governing freedom of peaceful protest in Togo. In 2018, the Centre trained 150 human rights actors that included 18 analysts and 118 observers to identify, document, report and prosecute cases of human right abuses in the country's six regions: Savannes, Kara, Sakode, Plateaux, Maritimes and Lomé, respectively.[192]

The Centre also played a major role in managing and addressing incessant violence between youth demonstrators and law enforcement agencies, especially in the context of political rivalries that lead to deaths and massive destruction of properties. It frequently organizes confidence-building meetings that bring key protagonists under the same roof to discuss and find ways to avoid or douse tension across the country. Finally, ACDIEF is committed to mainstreaming human rights education in schools. To date, it has trained more than 300 young students from secondary schools on the relevant sections of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Such interventions have, in turn, created greater awareness on how citizens should conduct themselves during protests and also successfully persuaded the government to refrain from the involvement of the military in carrying out policing duties during public protests.

6.2.6.5 <u>Local communities, vulnerabilities and social protection</u>

Youth groups do not emerge or operate in a vacuum. Since they are a product of their immediate environment, they exist for as long as the felt-need for their continued existence remain. Many youth groups respond to situations of vulnerability and social protection, including those that may not necessarily fit into mainstream peace and security sector. The Kufour Scholars Program (KSP) was set as part of the initiatives of the John Agyekum Kufour Foundation, named after the former President of Ghana, in response to the overcrowded state of Ghanaian prisons.[193] According to the Ghana Prisons Service, more than 70% of prison inmates are below the age of 35 years while the rate of inmates who reoffend after release from prison reportedly doubled from 9.2% in 1992 to 23% in 2013. Apart from advocating for prison reforms as part of contributing to peace and security, the KSP refurbished a prison library and donated educational materials to aid teaching and learning in March 2018.

In the same way, the EBAN Centre for Human Trafficking Studies in Ghana is responding to the growing incidence of domestic and international trafficking. Using the media to advocate on the issue and creating an emergency call centre for victims and the public to report cases, the Centre targets vulnerable groups, especially head porters locally known as *Kayayei*. In

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[192] Regional consultation, 2019.

[193] Regional consultation, 2019. See also, Kufuor Scholars Launch « Cell Not Hell Project » at Kumasi Central Prisons 28 April 2018. Retrieved from https://www.kufuorfoundation.org (20August 2019).

2014, the Centre contributed to the compilation of the report presented by the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection to the Parliament drawing attention to the plight of more than 6.36 million children up to the age of 15 years that are out of school and engaged in economic activities.

Accountability Lab-Mali, which is part of the international Accountability Lab franchise, is a youth dominated initiative to tackle political, institutional, security, humanitarian and sociocultural crises. The organization contributes to peace by establishing a mechanism for a better and more peaceful engagement between local communities and local government authorities. It has successfully created a Citizens Helpdesks to gather information from constituencies across the country, including in remote, inaccessible and dangerous zones, to aid quick and informed interventions. The successes achieved by the project may partly be as a result of the financial, technical, institutional and logistical support it receives from the parent body in Washington DC., but also those from United Nations Mine Action (L'UNMAS) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

In Niger, STRATCORE Plus is implementing a major intervention in 15 villages to enhance social stability and peaceful coexistence among communities in Tillaberi, one of the eight autonomous regions in the country. The intervention exposes participating communities to dialogue, mediation and conflict prevention methods to enable them resolve disputes between and among themselves without necessarily embarking on formal litigating and judicial processes that take longer time and cost more. Similarly, the International Youth Federation in Sierra Leone gained visibility in the period up to the 2018 general elections that was marked by political tension and youth restiveness, and also by alleged limited capacity of the government to address substantive security and developmental challenges.

The intervention by Shared Humanity Foundation (SHF) falls under SDG 2: to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. This is in line with the Foundation's Food Bank Initiative, which was launched in 2017 to provide raw food items to indigent families and also expose them to income generation opportunities through skills acquisition and training in sustainable agriculture. According to the Foundation, about 200 families from over 7 communities in Kaduna State have benefited from this initiative.

In 2018, Open Leadership Foundation also supported a major intervention to enable children from low-income and poor families to attend community schools without their parents having to worry about the payment of school fees and also providing them with school materials like books and writing instruments. It also rehabilitated and constructed new toilet and hostels; catered for over 1,300 orphans and less privileged; provided relief materials such as mattresses, disinfectant, bed bunks and mosquito nets; supported maternal and child health through the offer of free health care services, and prompt referral when the need arises.

The *Almajiri Child Rights Initiative* (ACRI) in Nigeria is actively involved in raising public awareness about the plight of children and youth, and also inspires evidence-based policy

change through continuous stakeholders' engagement and media campaign. It supports a community-focused social welfare system that provide for the educational and welfare needs of poor children, otherwise known as *Almajiri* across Northern Nigeria.

The activities of ACRI also touch on wider issues such as sanitation and nutrition. For instance, reports indicate that over 4,000 Almajiri children benefit from medical outreach, food and educational supports.[194] Being the arrowhead of the Child Destitution Bill currently before the National Assembly, the ACRI addressed the National Assembly on the substantive issues covered by the draft bill.[195] Consequently, the plight of Almajiris has now gained the attention of the national government and even the UN. As such, the Nigerian government has designated 25 September as the Almajiri Child Rights Day,[196] to further draw attention to the plight of the street children. In 2019, the event was marked across the 17 Northern states, with top government officials, traditional rulers, members of the diplomatic community and the media in attendance. The UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, also lent her voice to the public call for concerted action to tackle the problem.[197] If sustained, the recent build-up of public awareness and international attention is partly what the government requires to recognise the urgency of investing more in the education and welfare of millions of vulnerable children across the country.

6.3.   CHALLENGES AND GAPS

Youth groups in West Africa vary depending on factors such as their staff strength, area of coverage (local, national, regional, continental and international) or the amount of resources they are able to raise where government patronage is limited or non-existent. On the basis of these yardsticks, only a handful of youth groups would qualify to be classified as big or medium-sized in the region. Majority of them are actually small and locally embedded because they are products of specific felt-needs. There are also a number of reasons for the choice of issues they take on, some of which come out of a recognition of the limited financial, technical, human and logistical resources at their disposal. They would tend to go for 'soft' security issues that have direct and meaningful impact on the specific communities they are located rather than go for high politic issues, even if those are expressly stated in their mission mandates. In the final analysis, they are mostly constrained by a wide range of external factors outside their direct and immediate control such as legal restriction by government, the prevailing political context, and the disposition of the state towards them.

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[194] Muhammad, Rakiya, '5,000 Almajiri children in Northern Nigeria for medical outreach', Daily Trust Newspaper, March 4, 2020. Retrieved from https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/5000-almajiri-children-in-northern-nigeria-for-medical-outreach.html(3 December 2019).

[195] Regional consultation, 2019.

[196] Keana, Mohammed, 'Global Day of Impact for Almajiri Child, Almajiri Child Goals to Launch September 25', The Sight News September 22, 2019. Retrieved from http://thesightnews.com/global-day-of-impact-for-almajiri-child-almajiri-child-goals-to-launch-sept-25/(10 December 2019).

[197] UN WebTV webpage. Retrieved from http://webtv.un.org/watch/global-week-of-action-re-cap-of-actions-from-around-the-world-sdg-action-zone-during-the-high-level-week-25-september-2019/6089422821001(10 December 2019).

Nevertheless, resort to public activism betrays an inherent weakness within and among youth groups, and the limited direct access or channels to engage major institutions that can address their problems. It also speaks to their limited knowledge of the terrain of politics and opportunities to navigate existing legal and institutional frameworks in many countries. Another challenge relates to the attitude and disposition of older or adult population; and by extension, the institutions they control towards young people and what is often perceived as their 'radical' and 'infantile' ideas. It is, by far, the most important reason for the contemptuous impressions the public have towards young people and why the relationship between the youth and adult is often characterized by mutual suspicion and mistrust.

6.4. <u>RESILIENCE</u>

Although West African youth mobilise multiple resilience options, three of those are worth acknowledging in view of how they are becoming popular in many countries across the region: (1) a recourse to volunteerism; (b) the formation or joining umbrella youth coalitions for greater visibility and pressure; and (c) the use of the new media for advocacy and outreach activities. Over the last decade, the youth sector has seen a steady increase in the number of young people volunteering their time, expertise and resources in support of a wide range of social causes that have direct or indirect implications for peace and security. For some of the youth, volunteerism offers an opportunity to keep busy during holidays or the elongated 'gap' period between coming out of school and finding employment. For others, however, such participation could be a "side hustle" one that allows them to gain the additional satisfaction of civil responsibility and purpose than just the monotony of week-day jobs. Either way, they are recognising the additional prospect of including such volunteering time and activities on their resume in order to enhance future job prospects. It is noteworthy, also, that a lot of youth already in well-paying blue or white-collar jobs such as teachers, doctors, engineers are becoming active volunteers in many parts of the region.

Secondly, most youth and youth groups in West Africa have taken the conscious decision to form or join umbrella coalitions or networks that are either run entirely by their peer or those that are part of broader civil society initiatives. This trend is driven as much by the inherent limitations that most youth groups face due to their relatively smaller sizes and resource constraint vis-à-vis the recognition that joining bigger and wider coalitions is also a way of enjoying economies of scale and greater visibility. Most of the youth groups interviewed recognise the importance of participating in national and regional coalitions, they are also aware of the associated risks linked to leadership tussle, disagreement over approach, competition for limited resources, etc.

The last resilience option youth mobilise is their heavy reliance on the new media rather than the more expensive and state controlled media. With the social media, it is possible for youth to draw attention to critical social issues and to mobilise far beyond what would have been imaginable several decades ago. While the proliferation of the new media in West Africa as across the globe has its negative effects as evident, for instance, in how it has become a

conduit for spreading fake news, youth resilience is increasingly expressed through the medium as well as in various art forms such as poetry, music, visual and creative arts that capture their aspirations and concerns. It allows young people to communicate their emotions and priorities, tell compelling stories about their lived experiences, and generally showcase their perception of the society and its numerous contradictions.

6.5. <u>**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**</u>

Violence may be perceived as one of several manifestations of youth culture in West Africa but it by no means represent all that there is about them. Even the recourse to violence must be understood in terms of long-standing contradictions precipitated by the declining capacity of the state (and society) to deliver on promises to open more access and opportunities for the teeming population of youth regardless of their status or location in society. In short, youth violence is the symptom of long, systemic and inadequate attention to issues that young people consider to be important to them. Rather than vilify the youth for their multiple roles in undermining public order, it is more productive to channel efforts toward policy and programs that recognise and harness their potentials, creativity and resourcefulness. At the heart of envisioning what to do in this regard is to start by tackling the crises and gradual collapse of the educational sector in almost all countries in the region. The second is to stem the growing tide of unemployment that has created a cesspool of youth that find themselves living on the margins of society and frustrated by their inability to pursue the livelihood options they dream about and are finding it harder by the day to achieve.

The chapter has shown that the youth bulge in West Africa present challenges but most importantly opportunities for peace and security. The need to place greater premium on investing in the qualitative education and employment for youth, as against providing them with short-term palliatives often in the name of youth empowerment, has assumed acute urgency. This must be consistent with the socioeconomic and political realities in different countries, involve multiple stakeholders, and most importantly, put young people first. For as long as the values, norms, customs, practices, mindsets, structures and institutions of society are skewed against young people, their contributions to peace and order may diminish over time as they end up haunting the society that fail to protect and provide for them.

To Youth:

- Forge broader network or coalition of youth groups in order to gain visibility, recognition and access to government and institutions crucial to youth agenda;
- Focus on enhancing internal capacities in terms of human resources and expertise, and pursuing specialisation within the broader peace and security sector;
- Familiarise with existing national laws, regional, continental and international normative frameworks on peace and security, and explore entry points to engage and advance core organisational mandate and competences;

- Identify and establish institutional collaborations with peer institutions across the region, including sharing and exchange of best practices.

Member States:

- Recognise the urgent imperative to address structural causes of violence and move from short-term youth empowerment palliatives to investing in youth education and employment opportunities over an extended period of time;
- Support the revision of national youth policies in the light of new realities and challenges militating against effective youth participation in peace and security, in line with the provisions of the AYC;
- Provide requisite financial, technical and logistical support for the implementation of the national youth policies and youth, peace and security agenda;
- Mainstream youth and youth issues in national policies and across every sector, and also back them up with adequate laws and policies;
- Allow umbrella national youth council (s), to operate freely and independently, and to serve as veritable training grounds for youth civic participation and leadership without undue political interference or influence; and
- Establish an annual accountability framework to report on progress made in the youth sector.

To ECOWAS:

- Identify with and scale-up the participation of youth in peace and security, and also regional building initiatives;
- Allocate a percentage of annual budget towards activities that enhance the capacity of youth groups to contribute to achieving current priorities in peace and security;
- Establish a fully-staffed and well-resourced youth division that is capable of providing oversight on youth issues including peace and security across the region;
- Encourage member states to invest more in the youth sector and activities, as well as foster exchange programmes, lessons learned and best practices; and
- Commission and publish annual report on the status of youth in peace and security in the region.

CHAPTER 7: Regional Syntheses, Conclusions and General Recommendations

This concluding chapter presents the regional syntheses, conclusions from the study, and specific recommendations to the African Union Commission (AUC) and specialized agencies of the AU.

7.1. <u>REGIONAL SYNTHESES</u>

The five regions of Africa have a lot in common in terms of how peace and security challenges shape the youth sector, but also substantive differences in terms of the range of peace and security issues that youth are inclined to focus upon and tackle. The Report shows that the political, economic and social spaces for youth engagements in peace and security are far more limited, constricted and alienating in the Central Africa region than in others. This is shaping, for the most part, the content, level as well as the depth of youth involvements in peace and security in the region as youth groups prefer to work more "locally" and in narrower spaces where they do not have to directly contend with the state or the myriad administrative bottlenecks stifling their active participation in the society. They also end up having limited scope and opportunity to work in certain locations and on certain thematic issues that their governments consider as off-limit, or 'no-go-area,' such as DDR/SSR. Whereas, youth groups in the region are somewhat content with minimum engagement with the state and less ambitious in growing or expanding their networks, it is imperative that the spaces are broadened for their meaningful contributions to the promotion of durable peace, stability and security on the continent.

In East Africa, despite the diverse threats to human and state security, the youth are leveraging their numbers to network and generate innovative ideas as well as create platforms for public engagement and associational life. They are promoting and strengthening capacity among themselves in public advocacy and across the peacebuilding spectrum. Although the region has large presence of international humanitarian actors, youth groups remain the least supported and involved in addressing festering peace and security challenges. Very few youth groups have gained access to and received support from government and the international donor community despite the pivotal role they are playing in conflict prevention, management and resolution as well as in rebuilding and recovery programmes.

In North Africa, the proliferation of civil society organizations is an asset, not the least given how they have been at the forefronts of virtually all the recent political and constitutional changes in the region. Far more than any other region, North Africa has seen the prevalence of more women leadership and membership of youth groups. Although they could benefit more from capacity building and training in specific and broad peace and security issues, and also in forging peer-to-peer learning and institutional partnerships with similar youth or CSOs within the region and across Africa. It is a paradox that the region is made up of countries with the same language, history, religion, and traditions but regional integration (either at the

level of states or citizens) is still very scanty on the ground. Most youth leaders interviewed believe that a more successful regional integration scheme would give youth groups the impetus and momentum for cross-country institutional collaborations. While they are generally aware of the challenges that adverse climate change poses for peace and stability in the region, North African youth generally feel that they have more pressing issues 'closer home' to them such as how to navigate and transcend daily experiences of socioeconomic and political vulnerabilities. It is not surprising that one of the challenge that youth groups in the region face is the development and strengthening of relationship of mutual trust with the government, and vice versa, as they struggle to find a safe space to debate and dialogue with the state.

Despite the absence of active armed conflicts in most countries of Southern Africa, youth groups in the region are nonetheless conscious of the role they should play to sustain peace by pursuing 'other' activities linked to the structural causes of conflict. Such issues include taking up the fight against corruption, protesting the declining quality of public services, and promoting peaceful elections. In the absence of resources to fully establish and nurture associational life, youth-led groups are only left with the option of creating independent platforms for dialogue and exchanges with policy makers and law enforcement institutions. It is also significant that youth groups in the region are surviving by cherry picking; that is, they take on whatever issues that may be trending at any given point in time.

Finally, the West African region has witnessed an exponential proliferation of youth groups, encouraged by long periods of relative regional stability side-by-side with the expansion of multiparty democracy and the corresponding broadening of the civil society space. They mostly focus on "soft security" issues that directly affect local communities, especially as they relate to tackling the crises of education, citizenship and employment; drug abuse as a public health, GBV, human right violations; local communities, vulnerabilities and social protection, to name a few. Many of them take on multiple issues not necessarily because of any particular internal capacity or resource advantage they may have but based on what is trending, available opportunities, and what allows them to engage issues they consider to be of interest. There is evidence that membership of youth groups in the region tend to overlap, especially when they find themselves in closer proximity. Although they are sometimes bogged down by leadership rivalries and disagreements, the existence of umbrella youth organisations or civil society coalition in different countries has substantially raised their visibility, if less so their impacts. Finally, the existence of several national, regional and international agencies within the peace and security sector in West Africa has not significantly improved the quality of their engagement with youth groups working in the same field in the region.

7.2.   CONCLUSIONS

One of the major conclusions to draw from the preceding insights and analysis is the evidence that the youth landscape is much more diversified, vibrant and complex than is often acknowledged. Across West Africa, there are large and growing numbers of youth groups responding to diverse spectrum of peace and security challenges, even they are more predominant at the community level. The involvement of youth in peace and security in the region is partly driven and shaped by a plethora of political, economic, social, governance challenges they are experiencing on daily basis and in the different circumstances or contexts they find themselves. The study shows that although a considerable number of the youth groups engage in activities that fall squarely within the realm of conflict prevention, they do not see such multiple engagements fitting neatly into thematic clusters of CPMR or PCRD as categorized by the RECs/RMs, AU and UN.

The immediate implication of this is that youth groups and African institutions struggle to find the necessary connection critical for them to work together or to see each other as partners in promoting peace and security. This situation may partly explain why both sides either genuinely do not see or know how to engage each other, or why the engagement they have so far nurtured is still largely miniscule and weak. The study revealed further that only a small number of youth groups are fully acquainted with and able to take advantage of key normative frameworks at the regional, continental and global levels on youth, peace and security. In view of this, they are constrained by their inability to fully engage with key intergovernmental institutions such as the UN, AU and RECs/RMs whose mandates involve peace and security.

Another key conclusion from the study is that youth groups are embracing volunteerism as one of several routes to establish and advance collective goals. There is evidence that they are embracing volunteerism to attract new members and expertise, expand the scope and coverage of their activities, drastically reduce the cost associated with recruiting full-fledged staff, and tap into the benefit of economies of scale often associated with vibrant associational life in an age of information revolution. Volunteerism is also offering a growing pool of educated young Africans the opportunity to engage in advocacy and citizenship than face the drudgery of unemployment soon after graduation. It is also gaining popular appeal among those that are already gainfully employed but are finding new meaning and satisfaction engaging in public-spirited advocacy and interventions on a wide range of issue of interests, including those that touch on peace and security. A typical youth group would comprise of a variety of memberships that prefer to operate as fluid networks than have full-fledged and formal organisations. Since they mostly tend to be constrained by technical, capacity, financial and logistic limitation, operating in such fluid manner help them a great deal to cope with the dearth of political and financial supports from government.

On the basis of evidence distilled from fieldwork and regional consultations, youth networks exist and become active for a number of years before they begin to contemplate establishing

any formal institutional structure. On the average, surviving beyond five years is often the milestone or signal they need to start thinking of formalising and transforming into a full-fledged CSO with the usual paraphernalia such as official registration, offices, staff, etc. There are possible explanations for the forms they assume during their formative years, a time when they face a whole range of 'teething' problems linked to the absence of a clear and coherent vision, mission mandate and the general inability to attract funding and partnership opportunities in a sustainable manner.

For as long as policy-makers continue to portray the youth as either victims or perpetrators of violence, instead of drawing on the increasing evidence that they are also capable of becoming assets in peacebuilding, the disconnect and contentious relationship between youth and the state would continue to multiply and stoke violence. Clearly, peace education could change what is often erroneous as 'youthful exuberance' and support young people to channel their energy towards regular, genuine and meaningful dialogue or participation in society. Evidence suggest that majority of African youth are interested in peace but they are less likely to be involved in those than they would likely be involved in violent conflict. Mainstreaming them in all aspects of society is the first crucial step towards mobilizing and building consensus on the agency and ownership of youth in peace processes.[198] In view of the socio-political time bomb that the continent's youth bulge might be causing, [199] the UNDP had cautioned that the key SDGs will not be achieved without peaceful, just and inclusive societies in every country in the world.[200]

The rate at which youth groups have multiplied and spread in the last decade could partly be explained by the enthusiastic of young people to respond to the multiple circumstances they find themselves in the aftermath of abrupt and often disruptive political, social and economic developments. Such situations may result from widespread public disaffection over the collapse of municipal facilities, growing incidences of police brutality and their quest for improved governance, prolonged period of violent insurgency and terrorist activities, natural disasters and humanitarian crises, or the outbreak of civil wars. The current impetus comes from a new consciousness "to be engaged' in advocacy and association life that is becoming very popular among youth around the continent as well as recognition of how much they can contribute to the promotion of peace education and culture of peace. Because they are emerging and expanding in the context of disruptive economic, social and political transitions, youth groups end up questioning the circumstances that produce the disruptions they are experiencing rather than take them for granted.

In the final analysis, young people may be perceived as part of the problem but they are also part of the solution to many of the intractable problems in the peace and security sphere. For as long as the society and government remain fixated with seeing young people as problem

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[198] UN, The Challenge of Instituting Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN Peace-building Architecture. 29th June 2015.
[199] *UNDP Youth Strategy, 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future.*' New York, UNDP 2014: p. 1.
[200] UNDP, Partnering for Africa's Future: Japan and UNDP. TICAD Ministerial Meeting. 2018 : p. 10.

rather than solution, the continent is set to miss the opportunity of leveraging their talent and creativity to advance public good and collective security.

7.3.   GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Apart from the first chapter that provided the context, general overview and examined the factors and conditions that shape the status and outlook of African youth, the five regions-specific chapters offered specific recommendations to youth groups, Member States, RECs/RMs. In this segment, therefore, general recommendations on how the African Union Commission and its specialized agencies might contribute to enhancing the roles and contributions of African youth to peace and security are presented in no particular order of importance, as follows:

1. Expedite actions on the operationalization of the "African Youth Fund" (AYF) as directed by the Assembly of the Heads of States and Government in July 2017 to fund innovative youth groups, contribute towards the expansion of youth activities including on peace and security and wean youth groups from excessive reliance on external assistance;

2. Encourage Member States to set aside and adequately fund the activities of youth groups, especially those actively involved in implementing innovative peace and security solutions;

3. Popularise continental normative frameworks and decisions on youth, and use them as benchmark to track progress on youth issues especially on peace and security by Member States and other stakeholders on annual basis;

4. Enhance the visibility of the AU at the local/community/national level by disseminating key decisions on youth and reporting the activities of the AUC on regular basis using multiple sources;

5. Commit Member States to sign, ratify, domesticate youth policies; and to report annually progress made to mainstream youth contributions to peace and security;

6. Make adequate provisions for young people to participate in governance, and also take part in election observation and monitoring, as part of confidence-building measures that bring them into the mainstream of politics and society;

7. Encourage the introduction of new national legislations and the strengthening of existing ones to expand and consolidate youth participation in early warning and response activities;

8. Support youth groups to engage in and expand their advocacy and awareness programs, including the popularization of the AYC, the continental framework on youth, peace and security and ensure its implementation;

9. Identity and support African institutions with the requisite capacity and resources to conduct training and capacity building on peacebuilding especially on peace education to reverse the trend towards radical and violent orientations among youth;

10. Invest in evidence-based research and documentation on youth activities capable of bringing about a more balanced, appropriate and timely policy interventions on youth development;

11. Encourage Member States to improve the relationship between youth groups and law enforcement institutions; including police, army and correctional services;

12. Encourage Member States and RECs/RMs to work with civil society and private sector as key partners in interventions aimed at advancing youth advocacy and activism in the peace and security sphere;

13. Expand the scope of work of the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa program as a model of what strategic and institutional partnership on youth might look like, and also mandate the program to maintain up-to-date and easily accessible electronic database on youth groups working on peace and security.

Appendix 1
YOUTH GROUPS PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

CENTRAL AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Burundi	United Women for Peace in the Great Lakes Region
Cameroon	LifeAid International Children's Welfare Foundation (ICWF)
Chad	Global Peace Chain Association of Guides of Chad (AGT)
Congo Republic	Participate Globally Avenir NEPAD Congo
DRC	Blossoming Generation
Equatorial Guinea	J-20
Gabon	PAYNCoP Gabon
Sao Tome and Principe	PAYNCoP STP

EAST AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Botswana	Youth Representative from the Southern Africa Region
Djibouti	Peace Revolution Program
Eritrea	National Board of Education National Union of Eritrean Youth Foreign Affairs National Commission for higher education
Ethiopia	Great Minds empire DIT NI TEK
Kenya	African Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity Agents of Peace

	IPHRD
Madagascar	Radio Coalitions for Peace
Mauritius	Global Peace Chain
	Youth Circle Network of Mauritius
Rwanda	National Youth Peacebuilding Program
Somalia	Centre for youth empowerment
	Youth leader
South Sudan	Young adult Empowerment Initiative (YEI)
	Anataban Art's Initiative
Sudan	Global peace Chain
	Sudanese Organization for Nonviolence and Development (SONAD)
Tanzania	Mamas' Hope Organization for Legal Assistance
	Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)
Uganda	Batwa Development Organization (BDO)
	YVF

NORTH AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Algeria	Stories from Algeria Initiative
	Islamic Scout Algeria
Egypt	Youth Volunteer with the youth Envoy
	YEFL-Young Egyptian Feminists League
Libya	National Rally of Fezzan
	Bawader Youth Development Foundation
Morocco	CONFEJES conference
	SimSim
Tunisia	Youth Without Borders
Western Sahara	Saharawi Youth Union (UJSARIO)
	Saharawi Advocacy Campaign/Student Union

SOUTHERN AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Botswana	Great Minds Empire CYPAN/ AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub BCPI SAT UCS Democracy Works Foundation
Eswatini	Eazy Grow International Swaziland Justice and Peace institute
Lesotho	CCL Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation Lesotho.
Malawi	Gender Links Likhubula Youth Organization
Mozambique	Development Centre for Youth in Mozambique (CDJM) Global Shapers Maputo
Namibia	SADC Youth Network
South Africa	International Peace Youth Group Sekgosese Youth Empowerment WITS school of governance
Zambia	Centre for Young Leaders in Africa (CYLA) Mooto Cashew Supplies Ltd
Zimbabwe	VIVA Zimbabwe Community Solution Zimbabwe AfriPAHR (African Parliamentarians Association for Human Rights)

WEST AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Benin	EPP ONG
Burkina Faso	ABPEC Young Leaders
Cote d'Ivoire	NZARAMA Centre for Peacebuilding Red Cross Côte d'Ivoire, Yopougon Local Committee
Gambia	• Making our visions and aspirations reality (MOVAAR) • National Youth Parliament
Ghana	• John Agyeikum Kufuor Foundation • Eban Centre for Human Trafficking Studies

Guinea	• Africa Youth Network, Guinea (RAJ-GUI) • Head of Training Department at the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Handicrafts of Guinea (CCIAG)
Guinea Bissau	National Forum of Insertion for Extra-School Training and Professional (FONAIFEP-GB)
Liberia	• Messengers of Peace • Youth Network for Reform (YONER)
Mali	• Accountability Lab Mali World Youth Federation for Peace – Mali Chapter
Niger	African Program against Intolerance and Xenophobia STRAT-CORE Plus S.A.R.L
Nigeria	• Children and Young People Living for Peace Pan-African Youth Network for Culture of Peace (PAYNCoP) Sanctuary of Hope and Charity Foundation Youth for Presidency Movement Rotaract Club African Business Roundtable Conflict Free Nation Youthful and Useful International Almajiri Child Right Initiative (ACRI) Mentoring Foundation African Youth Union Commission
Senegal	Platform of Women for Peace in Casamance Women, Youth, Peace and Security Working Group in West Africa and the Sahel / Section
Sierra Leone	Movement towards Education and Youth Empowerment-Sierra Leone (MEYE-SL)
Togo	*Collective Action for the Integral Development of Children and Young Girls (ACDIEF) * Documentation and Training Center on Human Rights (CDFDH)

Appendix 2

FIELD VISIT RESPONDENTS

CENTRAL AFRICA

COUNTRY	**ORGANISATION(S)**

Burundi

1. Association Pour Une Jeunesse Africaine Progressiste (AJAP)
2. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
3. Resilience Through Education (RET)
4. Action for Peace and Governance
5. Generation Change – Burundi
6. Secretary General – Burundian Government
7. Unite for Promotion of Batwa Community

Cameroon

1. Action Care Foundation
2. Action for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainable Development (ACIREDED)
3. African Network of Young Leaders for Peace and Sustainable Development (ANYL4PSD)
4. Association For Community Awareness (ASCOA)
5. Association SWEET ART'FRIKA
6. Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA)
7. Christian Youth Fellowship Movement (CYF Molyko, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon)
8. International Children's Welfare Foundation (ICWF)
9. INTERSOS Cameroon (North West Region)
10. LifeAID
11. Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC)
12. Network of Pupils and Students Associations of the North (RAEES)
13. Rural Youth Development Council (RYDEC)
14. The Justice and Peace Commission (Archdiocese of Bamenda – Cameroon)
15. The YIESEH Foundation

16. Women for a Change Cameroon (WfaC)

17. Youth Initiative for Inclusive Dialogue (YIID)

Central Africa Republic	1. Action of Women for Progress in the Central African Republic (AFPCA) 2. Central African Relief Association (ACAS) 3. Association of Women in Solidarity 4. Youth Association Let's struggles for Peace (AJLP) 5. EYETERE NA POPOTIE Association 6. National Youth Council (CNJ) RCA 7. FOCUS RSS / YOUTH 8. RCA Social Mediators 9. Interfaith Platform for Central African Youth (PIJCA) 10. RCA Mediator Network 11. Union of Young Central African Muslims (UJMCA) 12. Vision Plus RCA

EAST AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Madagascar	1. Youth First 2. Today Movement 3. Young Civic Centre 4. Jeune Chambre International 5. Observatoire de la jeunesse 6. Fakôtory 7. Taninjanaka 8. Civilian Madagascar 9. Save Your Youth 10. Radio for Peace 11. Search for Common Ground 12. Transparency International-Initiative Madagascar
South Sudan	1. Resilience Organisation of SS (ROSS) 2. National Youth Dialogue Platform 3. Impact Actions 4. South Sudan Youth for Peace and Development Organisation (SSYPADO) 5. South Sudan National NGO Forum

	6. African Child Care Nation (ACCN)
	7. South Sudan Civil Society Network to East Africa (SSCSNEAC)
	8. Community Empowerment Programme Organisation (CEPO)
	9. UNFPA
	10. UNDP
Uganda	1. African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET)
	2. African Youth Action Network (AYAN)
	3. National Youth Council
	4. Uganda Victims Foundation (UVF)
	5. UNHCR
	6. International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)

NORTH AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Libya	1. Zaykom Zayna (we are similar) Organization for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
	2. Amraja for youth and social development.
	3. Peace Vision Awareness Organization
	4. Organization Momken (Possible) for Awareness and Information
	5. Ajyal (Generations) Libya Organization for Human Development and Awareness (ALO)
	6. Tafat Cultural Media Foundation
	7. Sirte Peace Partnership Organization
	8. H2O to support democratic transformation and activate the role of youth
	9. Al-Salam Organization Against Violence for Human Rights
	10. National Assembly in Fezzan
	11. Libyan Organization for Development
	12. Actions Without Borders to support local governance and activate the role of youth on democratic transformation
	13. Deeha Organization for development
	14. Al-Salam BaniWalid Charity Association
Tunisia	1. Mashehad (view) association
	2. Tunisian Association for Civic Education.
	3. The Tunisian League of Education
	4. Tunisia Bensaha Association (Tunisia has reliable women).
	5. Youth without borders, Tunisia.

6. The Tunisian League of Women Electors
7. Institute Farhat Hached for research and democracy
8. Association of educational Creativity
9. Association of Women and Citizenship

SOUTHERN AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Mozambique	1. Youth Parliament
	2. Formicres – Mozambican Force for the Investigation of Crimes and Social Reintegration
	3. Movefemme – Movement of Women in Mozambique
	4. Promoting Youth Protagonism
	5. Citizen's Eye / Txeka app
	6. Ntatenda – I believe
	7. Youth Association for the Development of Mozambique
	8. Study Center for Youth Development
	9. Youth Development Centre
South Africa	1. International Peace Youth Group
	2. National Youth Development Agency
	3. Accountability Lab
	4. Organization of African Youth
	5. Youth in Action
	6. Inkamva Youth
	7. Africa Unite
	8. SAIIA Youth
	9. South Africa Hindu Youth Movement
	10. #Fees Must Fall Activists

WEST AFRICA

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION(S)
Guinea-Bissau	1. Actions Jeunes et Femmes pour le Development Durable, AJFDD
	2. Business Incubation and Development Centre (BIDC)
	3. FONAIFEP-GB
	4. Carta 21
	5. Madina Cuntum Youth Movement
	6. National Network of Youth Association

	7.	NGO Tchintchor
	8.	Junior Chamber International (JCI)
	9.	National Youth Council
	10.	YALI Guiné Bissau Alumni Association
	11.	Association of Young Peacebuilders in Nhacra

Mali		
	1.	Youth Federation for Peace
	2.	Universal Peace Federation
	3.	Malian Ministry of Youth
	4.	Scout Mali
	5.	Elite West Africa
	6.	Open Mali
	7.	Move Together Mali
	8.	G5 Sahel Youth
	9.	National Youth Council
	10.	ECOWAS Youth/ Volunteers for Universal Peace

NIGERIA		
	1.	Shared Humanity Foundation (SHF)
	2.	Open Leadership
	3.	G-Insight
	4.	Scout Association of Nigeria
	5.	Nigerian Youth Parliament
	6.	Reset Rivers Group (RRG)
	7.	Beat Drums not Women
	8.	Kings Patriots
	9.	Sanctuary of Hope Charity Foundation
	10.	Ogodo Youth Association (OYA)
	11.	Urhuoka Youth Association

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