



Expert Group Meeting
“Youth, Peace and Security: Social Issues and Social Policies”
30-31 October 2017
FAO Headquarters
Rome, Italy

Draft Report

Background

From 30-31 October 2017, the Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations organized an Expert Group Meeting in Rome, Italy, under the theme **“Youth, Peace and Security: Social Issues and Social Policies”**. The meeting brought together experts from academia, representatives of Member States, United Nations entities, youth organizations and intergovernmental bodies.

The primary objective of the Expert Group Meeting was to provide innovative thinking on the role of young people in the prevention of violence and conflict, as drivers in processes aimed at building and sustaining peace at the local, national and global levels. The meeting was also an opportunity to examine current challenges regarding youth, peace and security issues and discuss ways to promote and enhance young people’s positive engagement in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

The topics discussed in the meeting were considered under the framework of the Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, as well as in the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the UN System -Wide Action Plan on Youth. The results of the meetings will contribute to the United Nations Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security mandated by the Security Council and attached to its Resolution 2250. The expert group meeting provided a forum for the exchange of ideas, experiences and substantive knowledge on issues of youth marginalization and socio-economic exclusion that contribute to their vulnerability to engage in violence, conflict and social unrest, particularly their susceptibility to radicalization and violent extremism, and offered recommendations aimed at mainstreaming youth participation in peacebuilding, strengthening the implementation of the UN youth, peace and security agenda, and more broadly, the implementation of the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development.

Report Structure

The Report of the meeting has been laid out to follow the flow of the meeting itself (see meeting agenda, Annex 1). Each section provides a synopsis of the presentations provided by the experts together with the summary of key outcomes and recommendations from the proceeding discussion. More details to the expert’s presentations, can be found in their individual technical papers submitted in preparation for the Meeting: Please see Annex 3 for individual expert papers.

Opening of the Meeting

The Expert Group Meeting was opened by **Alberto Padova-DESA/DSPD**, who gave welcoming remarks. **Oleg Serezhin-DESA/DSPD** provided an overview of housekeeping issues. The event began with **Alcinda Honwana-DESA/DSPD** giving a few remarks to frame the discussion.

A round of introduction of all experts followed. The biographies of the presenters are available at this link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1w_qrz9DFT84pBvgvdYrYorJQAr8Bj4dZIB0MKRQ11-g/edit?usp=sharing

Overview: Youth, Peace and Security: Social Issues and Social Policies

Background: Young people constitute the majority of the world's population today. In 2015, a global figure of 1.2 billion aged 15-24 accounted for one out of every six people worldwide. By 2030, the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals, the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 per cent, to nearly 1.3 billion. This is indeed the largest youth cohort the world has ever seen.

However, the majority of young people living in developing countries struggle to attain basic needs in terms of education and training, gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods, health care services, as well as civil liberties and political participation. Without access to these basic needs, young people have no means to grow, establish families, support their offspring and fully contribute to society. These social, economic and political needs are fundamental for improving young people's lives, eradicating poverty and hunger and promoting well-being and more inclusive peaceful societies. The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) clearly highlights the importance of these social issues as fundamental pillars for sound and effective youth social development. These social development issues have been repeatedly recognized and acknowledged by governments, as well as by young people and youth-led organizations, as important challenges facing the younger generations today. Therefore, peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved by tackling the social, economic and political issues affecting young people in a holistic and integrated manner.

Young people are often perceived as the main perpetrators of political violence, social unrest and violent extremism. The events surrounding the North African uprisings and the series of popular protests across the continent are often explained by the socio-economic and political marginalization of youth. Likewise, the surge in radicalisation and violent extremism in the past 15 years also tends to be associated with the political and socio-economic disaffection of young men, and increasingly young women, who join extremist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and ISIL. Likewise, youth involvement in organized violence, through gangs and protection racket groups has been associated to high unemployment rates, lack of opportunities, dysfunctional family structures and social exclusion. While young people are particularly susceptible to violence and crime, they are also disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities, and are often victims of violence, political unrest and terrorism themselves.

It is also important to acknowledge young people's positive roles as they participate in efforts to prevent conflicts, combat violence and extremism and build sustainable peace. For example, many young women and men have been opposing unlawful constitutional changes in their countries, exercising their participatory citizenship through popular protests. Many have been at the forefront of important policy and decision-making processes at local and national levels. Others have been making contributions through their everyday life participation in community groups, cultural, artistic and sports associations and the like. In reality, the role of young people in peace and security is more complex than some stereotypes may suggest, and requires a much deeper understanding.

The Security Council Resolution 2250 on *Youth, Peace and Security* is therefore a timely international framework that recognizes youth not just as perpetrators and victims of conflict, violence and extremism but also as fundamental drivers and critical partners in global efforts to prevent conflict and promote lasting peace. The resolution is indeed ground-breaking by enhancing the positive contributions young women and men towards peace and security. Furthermore, the resolution aims to broaden the opportunities for youth to participate in formal conflict prevention and peace processes by calling for the inclusion of young women and men in peace negotiations and peacebuilding efforts. It urges and encourages Member States to consider innovative ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in efforts to promote peace and security in their communities and identify effective mechanisms for conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

More broadly, resolution 2250 connects directly to an earlier Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000), which emphasizes the pivotal role of young women in conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Therefore, these resolutions recognize young women and young men's roles as key drivers in conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as well as in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, aimed at the advancement of "peaceful, just and inclusive societies" as particularly expressed in SDG 16.

Overview of the working sessions

The Expert Group Meeting included four working sessions that examined how to prevent young people's engagement in violence, conflict and violent extremism from a social development perspective. Emphasis was placed on how to address social inequalities, grievances and social economic aspirations; how to promote social inclusion and well-being. Similarly, discussions about enhancing young people's participation in peacebuilding was taken into account, especially their need to be heard, to be acknowledged and included in decision-making processes.

Working Session 1

Presenters: Cyril Obi, Federico Negro and Sharmaarke Abdullahi

The session focused on the drivers of, and prevention of young people's recruitment into organized violence such as militias/vigilantes, gangs and protection racket groups. The discussion focused on the impact of militias, gang violence and protection racket groups in the lives of young people and their communities; the types of relationships that young people in gangs and protection racket groups establish among themselves, and the rivalries they create within, and between the various groups; the role of young women in gang activity; and the transnational connections established between militias, gangs and protection racket groups. This session discussed lessons learned and more effective strategies for resourcing, and expanding existing spaces for promoting youth participation in programs and actions aimed towards preventing youth involvement in militias, gang violence and protection racket groups.

Working Session 2

Presenters (Panel 1): João Felipe Scarpelini, Lucca Russo and Francesca Dalla Valle, Layne Robinson and Noorhaidi Hasan

Presenters (Panel 2): Georges Fahmi, Séverin Yao Kouamé and Akil N. Awan

The session addressed the prevention of young people's radicalisation and recruitment into violent extremist groups as well as their involvement in terrorist activities. This session had distinct panels: Panel one looked at radicalisation processes by analysing different forms and strategies of radicalisation; and issues regarding youth aspirations, disaffection and marginalisation that might facilitate radicalisation. The use of Internet social networks for recruitment purposes was also considered. Panel two focused on the young people's roles within violent extremist groups; what these groups offer to attract youth; what kinds of relationships are established within the groups; and the

religious or other beliefs that may enhance young people's allegiance to the group. The session discussed mechanisms that can help prevent young people's involvement in radical terrorist activities at community, national and global levels.

Working Session 3

Presenters (Panel 1): Cecile Mazzacurati, Tijani Christian, Lakshitha Saji Prelis

Presenters (Panel 2): Karim Sama and Olawale Ismail

The session examined ways to promote and enhance youth citizenship participation and contribution to conflict prevention. It discussed their engagement and active participation in decision-making, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This session also included two panels: panel was on youth involvement in citizenship participation on a daily basis through youth associations at community level; and examined the impact of such engagement. Panel two focused on youth social movements, and national political protests that mobilise large numbers of young people into the streets. Both panels examined the impact of youth participation and highlighted success stories that can be replicated on a larger scale across diverse societies.

Working Session 4

Presenters: Noorhaidi Hasan and Abdul Rahman Lamin

The session focused on bringing the three thematic areas together and summing up the discussions. It focused on specific recommendations in terms of social policies and actions to be undertaken under each theme that will contribute to the UN Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security. The discussions in this Expert Group Meeting will also feed into the DSPD country projects and training workshops on youth, peace and security, and enhance the Division's overall work in this area.

Session 1: Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence

Presenters: Cyril Obi, Federico Negro and Sharmaarke Abdullahi

Background: Cyril Obi began his presentation by explaining that high levels of youth unemployment, poverty and the lack of opportunities for young people have fuelled migration either from rural to urban centers, or from poorer or conflict-affected countries to more prosperous and stable ones.

Federico Negro's presentation focused on ILO position regarding youth employment which it considers to be one of the main policy challenges of our time, with 71 million unemployed youth worldwide, while 156 million young workers live in poverty – which is a “key stress factor” on society's stability (World Bank 2011). To tackle this challenge, he concludes that efforts at the global level include the ILO's Youth Employment Programme and contribution to the **Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth** while at the country level, ILO seeks to build peace and resilience through employment-related technical cooperation projects.

Sharmaarke Abdullahi explained that in 2012, the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee was formed in the context of the Symposium “Taking Action Together: Addressing Gangs in our City”. The committee identified four key components as a focus of their efforts: healthy neighbourhood cohesion, early prevention, intervention and suppression. The committee developed and implemented 12 initiatives that addressed the problem of gangs in Ottawa and were independently evaluated on a yearly basis culminating in a detailed final evaluation published in 2016. The overall objective was to improve urban strategies, policies and practices through evidence-based approaches that promote inclusive economic development and sustainable livelihoods for young women and men in urban settings

Overview: Cyril Obi set the stage for the themes and discussions of the Expert Group Meeting by providing an overview of preventing youth engagement in organized violence. His presentation provided the current state of youth engagement in organized violence: referencing the 2017 UN Population Prospects Report which states that out of a global population of 7.6 billion, young persons aged between 15-24 years in the regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia account for about 1.1 billion (UNDESA 2017a; 10). He provided the unemployment situation of Africa, with estimates of youth unemployment ranging between 60-70 per cent. In doing so, the discussion examined the role of youth beyond the binary of “victims” or “perpetrators” and focused on the need to empower and mobilize youth to unlock and realize their huge potential as peacebuilders.

He explained that while there is a growing consensus on the need not to view youth as a homogenous “demographic” entity, there are still debates over the how best to categorize or conceptualize the group in terms of age, a social, or relational construct.

Cyril Obi further explained that some of the negative readings of youth derive from literature on gang-related urban violence in developed and developing countries, radicalization by extremist groups, vigilantism, and the activities of armed non-state groups/militias operating in the twilight zone between rebellion and criminality. He further suggested that others focus on the “push and pull” factors for radicalization of youth, seeking to draw a balance between social and political context and individual motivations often complex and difficult to map or decipher. However, he explained that there is a growing awareness that not all youth are the same or engage in criminal or violent behaviour, nor are they hapless victims without agency. Most important, is the question as to why the behaviour or actions of a relatively few youths is used to generalize and draw conclusions about threats posed by hundreds of millions of young people.

Cyril Obi maintained that there has been a clear response from regional and international organizations to the role of youth in peace and security. The Amman Youth Declaration of August 2015, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security of December 2015, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2282 on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, all underscore the recognition of the important role youth play in preventing conflict and maintaining peace and security. Also, initiatives like the 2015 UN Plan of Action Against Violent Extremism (UN General Assembly 2015) recognize the positive role young people can play in countering this source of insecurity. The resolutions of the UNSCR are complemented by the role of many UN agencies in creating and running programs targeting the empowerment of youth to effectively play a critical role in peacebuilding.

He stressed that the existence of an international policy framework is based on a new narrative that acknowledges “the positive role that youth can play in preventing and resolving conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace”. Although regional organizations have long-standing Youth Charters and policies, and some national governments have similar frameworks, they are yet to fully attain the level of the youth-peace nexus of which the UN is taking the lead.

According to Cyril Obi, two key challenge face the efforts of policy institutions to respond to the youth question in relation to preventing engagement in organized violence:

- 1) How to best work to create the political and socio-economic conditions that create structural conditions for preventing young people from engaging in organized violence, and beyond that, incentivize and mobilize their creative energies towards conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding.
- 2) The key challenge may be less about the absence of appropriate policy and institutional responses, but more around the lack of well-resourced implementation of such responses.

Federico Negro's discussion focused on tackling the root causes of violence and conflict through youth employment. He offered suggestions to help **foster** youth employment programmers' impact on peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts. He suggested that in recent years, considering the contemporary focus on prevention and resilience-building within the UN's sustaining peace agenda, the ILO reaffirmed its vital role in tackling unemployment, underemployment, lack of socio-economic participation and insufficient social dialogue around labour related issues. He further explained that these are, together with other factors, among the root causes of fragility and conflict.

He explained that in a peacebuilding context, employment programmes targeting "youth at risk" are necessarily tailored to context, yet there are three main components which are normally combined or separately covered: (1) labour-based programmes aiming to provide work immediate job opportunities, (2) skills and vocational training programmes and (3) micro, small (and medium) sized enterprises (MSME) support programmes. **Federico Negro** explained that these employment programme components are not necessarily linked to peace or resilience building. However, in fragile and violent settings employment programmes may have an impact on peace through three "theories of change". They first create economic *opportunities*, thus raising the opportunity costs of violence, second create inter-group *contact*, disproving stereotypes, and third *address grievances* and perceptions of injustice. This impact of employment programmes on peace through these three drivers could generally result from what he called an "employment effect" and a "programme effect". For instance, the ILO is implementing its integrated approach to tackle the root causes of violence through employment under its flagship programme "[Jobs for Peace and Resilience](#)". He further drew attention to the ILO's Youth Employment Programme and contribution to the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) ; and the ILO's various activities ranging from global research to knowledge sharing and the organization of high-level conferences on the subject¹ (UN General Assembly 2015: 20).

Sharmaarke Abdullahi presentation outlined preventing youth engagement in organized violence with a focus on similar gangs found in Ottawa. He referenced the Ottawa Community based intervention that formed the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee. **Sharmaarke Abdullahi** noted that through their collective effort, the committee identified four key components as a focus of their efforts: **healthy neighbourhood cohesion, early prevention, intervention and suppression**; from that, they developed a holistic, integrated framework which includes youth, families, child welfare, schools, community, social service agencies, faith groups, police, and criminal justice agencies which fostered a multi-faceted effort to prevent and reduce gangs in Ottawa. In addition, they also identified risk factors: criminality: conduct/behaviour problems, school/employment problems, anti-social friends, frequent/chronic drug use, not engaged in pro-social activities, low parental involvement, gang Involvement: prior delinquency, friends gang-involved, family member gang-involved, gangs/recruitment in neighbourhood, interest in gang membership etc.

Outcomes and key findings from the discussion:

1. High levels of youth unemployment, poverty and the lack of opportunities for young people have fueled migration either from rural to urban centers, or from poorer or conflict-affected countries to more prosperous and stable ones. Some draw a parallel between the lack of opportunities and quality education, exclusion, and the susceptibility of youth to radicalization and violence, involvement in militia/gang-related conflict and crime.
2. Two key challenge face the efforts of policy institutions to respond to the youth question in relation to preventing engagement in organized violence. 1) how to best work to create the political and socio-

¹ such as the High-Level Event on Youth Employment for Peace and Resilience, hosted jointly by UNDP and ILO in September 2017 in New York, and the Conference on Youth Employment in North Africa hosted in Geneva in the same month.

economic conditions that create structural conditions for preventing young people from engaging in organized violence, and beyond that, incentivize and mobilize their creative energies towards conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding. 2) the key challenge may be less about the absence of appropriate policy and institutional responses, but more around the lack of well-resourced implementation of such responses.

3. Youth employment programmes in fragile settings, can have an impact on each respective driver through an “employment effect” and a “programme effect”.
4. In a peacebuilding context, employment programmes targeting “youth at risk” are necessarily tailored to context, yet there are three main components which are normally combined or separately covered: (1) labour-based programmes aiming to provide work immediate job opportunities, (2) skills and vocational training programmes and (3) micro, small (and medium) sized enterprises (MSME) support programmes. These employment programme components are not necessarily linked to peace or resilience building.

Recommendations:

- ❖ The United Nations should consolidate its consultations with member States to promote conditions within which young people can better realize their full potential as equal citizens and effective peacebuilders at the grassroots, national and regional levels.
- ❖ Regional and global institutions need to undertake reforms that enhance their capacity and resource base when it comes to empowering youth as key peace and development actors. There is some need for additional funding for the real participation of young people in shaping, implementing and evaluating responses aimed at conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- ❖ Several steps are necessary for empowering youth to play a transformatory role, and dismantle the structural barriers that constrict opportunities for them to thrive, and participate fully in decision-making on issues that affect their own lives.
- ❖ More studies need to be conducted into issues related to youth and conflict to learn more about young people and what drives/motivates, or radicalizes relatively few of them, and how they envision their role/participation in a just and peaceful society. Findings based on such evidence-based and participatory research, combined with drawing upon consultations with youth-led and youth-centered civil society, faith and community-based organizations, and the use of special dissemination and youth outreach programs, should be integrated into participatory programs that accord right priority to the empowerment of youth to play a positive role in conflict prevention and countering violent extremism.
- ❖ Action should be taken to radically expand opportunities for young people to gain access to high quality and affordable purposive or developmental education.
- ❖ Youth leadership training, creativity and enterprise development should be mainstreamed into the educational curriculum, and actively supported in social institutions, the public and private sectors.
- ❖ The discourse around the security dimension of the youth-peace dialectics needs a radical rethinking beyond preventing or containing the potential threats that radicalized or criminalized violent youth may portend to human society. The starting point will be to explore how best to create, nurture and secure the socio-economic and political conditions within which all youth can positively realize their full potential to engage in peacebuilding.
- ❖ Make theories of change explicit and provide measurable indicators of change in drivers of violence
- ❖ Target recipient groups according to “risk” and “vulnerability”
- ❖ Assess and prevent unintended negative consequences of employment programmes
- ❖ Invest in further research and context analysis
- ❖ To improve urban strategies, policies and practices have to be backed up by evidence-based approaches that promote inclusive economic development and sustainable livelihoods for young women and men in urban settings.

Presenters: João Felipe Scarpelini, Lucca Russo and Francesca Dalla Valle, Layne Robinson and Noorhaidi Hasan

Background: João Felipe Scarpelini in his presentation expressed that the main challenges faced by Somali youth include limited access to education and gainful employment opportunities, and weak or non-existent opportunities to engage politically, economically or socially. Lucca Russo and Francesca Dalla Valle maintained that not only conflicts and instability have an impact on food security but food insecurity can also be a trigger of conflict. In places or contexts considered extremely fragile or fragile, there are also many who rely mostly on agriculture as a means of income. In situations of conflict and instability, young people are particularly vulnerable to radicalization due to conditions of poverty, lack of employment and livelihoods opportunities, and increased weakness of family structures. Layne Robinson explained that to tackle extremism effectively and see a change at the grass root level, there is need to work with youth workers who can deliver social, political and economic education and empowerment of young people through non-formal learning methods. Noorhaidi Hasan provided an overview of Islamist extremism which he says constitute very complex dynamics related to structural problems and youthfulness. He explained that the engagement of young people in violent extremism and jihadist activism constitutes symptom of a multi-dimensional crisis facing youth today.

Overview: João Felipe Scarpelini focused on a situation analysis of Somalia with a focus on a UN integrated youth response. According to him, exclusion creates frustration and demoralization among many youth. It also forces many young Somalis to embark on an often dangerous journey across borders, the “tahrib” in search for better lives. Joao Felipe Scarpelini also added that the main challenges faced by Somali youth include limited access to education and gainful employment opportunities, and weak or non-existent opportunities to engage politically, economically or socially. These systematic exclusions and the lack of participation ultimately create frustration and demoralization which can result in radicalization.

João Felipe Scarpelini also explained that a UN Youth Strategy (on Somailia) has been created to integrate all the different efforts, programmes and initiatives currently being implemented by the UN in Somalia. The strategy is based on 6 pillars: 1. Youth programming (the UN youth portfolio in Somalia represents 48 million dollars invested in specific youth programming. Biggest flagship is on Youth Employment - YES Programme); 2. Youth participation (provide inspiration and role models and create mechanisms for participation such as the national youth council, the national youth conference and the youth parliament); 3. Government Support (build staff capacities and develop legal frameworks); 4. Youth communications; 5. Increased coordination; 6. Somali Youth Fund (provide resources to young people to do their own programming).

Luca Russo & Francesca Dalla Valle maintained that conflict has strong and unambiguous adverse effects on hunger, nutrition and overall sustainable development. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017 (SOFI) the number of the undernourished has been on the rise since 2014, reaching 815 million people in 2016. Of those, 490 million live in countries affected by conflicts. The two presenters referenced the Global Report on Food Crises 2017 which shows that in 2016 conflict was among the main drivers of food insecurity. 108 million people around the world (in 48 countries affected by food crises in 2016) were faced with severe acute food insecurity and in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The FAO implemented projects to prevent youth radicalization and criminal activities in Tunisia; West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Nigeria and Somalia. In all cases, economic conditions were the main trigger of radicalization and high youth unemployment rates were present in the countries.

Layne Robinson presentation provided an overview of how youth work can contribute to breaking the cycle of extremism. The presentation focused on grasping the root and nature of considerations such as terrorism, extremism and organised violence, and how they are often analysed -as if they come into the world as fully formed responses, with no root cause. She maintains that this to some extent, addresses the symptom of negative social situations rather than the source. **Layne Robinson stressed** that violence and aggressive agitation do indeed appear to be endemic in the world, perhaps particularly among young people, but to take this as a sort of lightning strike, that it incarnates itself 'out of the blue' would be incorrect.

Layne Robinson explained that in order to tackle extremism effectively and see a change at the grass root level there is a need to work with youth workers who can deliver social, political and economic education and empowerment of young people through non-formal learning methods. Youth work enhances young people's self-esteem, social connectedness, productivity and employability.

Given this background, **Layne Robinson** explained how youth workers can engage young people in the contexts of disaffection and extremism without becoming one of the sources of disaffection. She explained that disaffection is a stepping stone to extremism because it is hard to see how one might jump from being satisfied to an extremist point of view.

Layne Robinson proposed 3 ways in which youth workers can address this above cycle at its very source by working with young people to:

- a. voice and examine, explain their thoughts and feelings;
- b. explore how they might address any issues, looking to themselves, their peers and society as a resource (rather than a source of blame);
- c. Consider what interests particular groups have when looking to place responsibility for personal or social problems on rivals, while directing others to take action against (scapegoat) these people.

Noorhaidi Hasan maintained that Islamist extremism constitutes a very complex dynamic which can be attributed to structural problems and youthfulness. He explained that youth's radicalism and violent activism lie at the nexus between the structure, ideology and cultural identity of youth. There are gradations in material resources available to young people of different classes to deal with globalization. He explained that this problem creates a profound and enduring tension among youth. He further explained that Indonesia has problems of transparency and accountability linked to widespread corruption and bureaucratic incompetence and the government has failed to balance supply and demand for workers-this is why opportunities for youth's upward mobility will decrease (they become the 'losers of globalization'). **Noorhaidi Hasan** also explained that the recruitment process for radical groups occurs primarily through pre-existing social networks and interpersonal bonds. Economic factors play a role in informing an individual's propensity to join to a radical organization (those most likely to join are those with the least to lose).

Outcomes and key findings from the discussion:

1. Youth in Somalia face unprecedented challenges yet 8 out of ten Somalis are younger than 35 years old, 38% of the Somali population is aged between 15 and 35 years old, representing over 4.6 million people. Avenues for youth to obtain an education and gainful employment opportunities are limited and opportunities to engage politically, economically, or socially remain weak or non-existent
2. Exclusion creates frustration and demoralization among many youth. The link between the emergence of Al-Shabaab and the challenges faced by youth in political engagement are deeply intertwined and engaging and empowering young Somalis is a requirement for the UN to deliver in its mandate

3. Not only conflicts and instability have an impact on food security but also food insecurity can be a trigger of conflict
4. Contexts considered extremely fragile or fragile are also those that rely mostly on agriculture as a means of income
5. In situations of conflict and instability, young people are particularly vulnerable to radicalization due to conditions of poverty, lack of employment and livelihoods opportunities, and increased weakness of family structures
6. Work with youth workers can deliver social, political and economic education and empowerment of young people through non-formal learning methods
7. Youth work enhances young people's self-esteem, social connectedness, productivity and employability and youth work benefits young people, but it also benefits institutions and society
8. Approach in youth work is the asset-based approach. Such an approach proceeds from the presumption that young people have, in the form of their integrity as human beings, potential, ability, influence, authority and power
9. Extremism can be understood as the wayward child of disaffection and it is at this source where youth workers can be most effective with regard to 'short-circuiting' extremism.
10. Terrorism, extremism and organised violence, are often analysed as if they come into the world as fully formed responses, with no root cause
11. Islamist extremism constitutes very complex dynamics related to structural problems and youthfulness
12. The engagement of young people in violent extremism and jihadist activism constitutes symptom of a multi-dimensional crisis facing youth today
13. Youth's radicalism and violent activism lie at the nexus between the structure, ideology and cultural identity of youth
14. The recruitment process for radical groups occurs primarily through pre-existing social networks and interpersonal bonds

Recommendations:

- ❖ Increase the evidence-base for the positive role of young people in the preventing violent extremism (PVE), to catalyse new partnerships, and to inform policy and programming interventions at the local, regional and national levels
- ❖ Provide a platform for inter-generational dialogue and create an enabling environment needed to support and promote youth participation across Somalia Catalysing national, regional and local youth-led networks of young champions working on P/CVE
- ❖ Tackling the root causes of radicalization among Somali youth, like unemployment and exclusion
- ❖ Supporting the production of online and offline advocacy materials and communication campaigns created by young people themselves to spur further youth engagement on the issue and to help build a positive narrative on the role of young people in P/CVE.
- ❖ Promote interventions that reduce fragility and underpin stability
- ❖ Understand the drivers of conflict and analyse the technical insights into conflict dynamics in order to identify possible entry points and solutions
- ❖ Develop social protection systems to strengthen resilience to threats and crises and enable development
- ❖ Promote activities towards the demilitarization of young ex-combatants and child soldiers in DDR programmes and support the reintegration of former young prisoners into society
- ❖ Insert youth workers spread out in society in a way that they can immediately adjust issues and break the cycle that goes into extremism
- ❖ Youth workers should break the Cycle of Extremism (Dissatisfaction-Disaffection-Extremism) looking at the causes of disaffection and working with young people to voice and examine their thoughts and feelings

- ❖ Explore how they might address any issues, looking to themselves, their peers and society as a resource (rather than a source of blame);
- ❖ Consider what interests particular groups have when looking to place responsibility for personal or social problems on rivals, while directing others to take action against these people

Session 2, Panel 2: Preventing Youth Radicalization into Violent Extremism

Presenters: Georges Fahmi, Séverin Yao Kouamé and Akil N. Awan

Background: **Georges Fahmi** provided an overview of the military intervention against the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, which many feared that the movement would become radicalized and violent. He pointed out that, instead, only a minority decided to take up arms. There was an internal debate in the Muslim Brotherhood over whether to pursue peaceful political participation or to turn to violence. The historical leadership was non-violent while the new leadership elected in 2014 adopted what it called a “creative painful nonviolence” approach, which combines continued peaceful activities on the street with limited violence used in operations designed to hurt the political regime. Ironically, in January 2015, however, since the violent attacks escalated throughout the year the old leadership intervened and insisted non-violence.

Séverin Yao Kouamé maintained that the radicalization of young people or their voluntary conscription to violent groups is on the rise in conflict zones of West Africa which he explained comprises of weakening of the family structures and the sense of community as a source of solidarity/social protection. Given the failure of the models conveyed by society, youth search for alternative success models.

Akil N. Awan stressed that for Jihadists like Al-Qaida (AQ) and ISIS (IS), identity forms one of the most important themes in their larger meta-narratives. He stressed that their grand narrative compels Muslim audiences to view all contemporary conflicts through the prism of a wider historical global attack on Islam and Muslims. In response to this assault, radical groups offer audiences the opportunity to reply to the enemy in kind.

Overview: According to **Georges Fahmi**, there are a number of reasons why, despite the measures adopted by the regime since 2013 against the Muslim Brotherhood, only a small minority has turned to violence:

1. The Muslim Brotherhood has become more rural over the past 20 years. This rural culture made the majority of the movement members obey to the old leadership.
2. The “rational choice approach”: many members approached the idea of the use of violence rationally (recognition by the leadership that that winning a battle against the Egyptian state was impossible; unwillingness by the members to accept the increased violence by the regime against themselves and their family members; awareness that money and financial support was controlled by the old leadership)
3. The “ideological reason”: during the 80s and the 90s with the rise of the jihadist groups the Muslim Brotherhood decided to rebrand itself as a non-violent group. The rejection of violence became a key part of the institutional ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The three factors mentioned above have weaker influence when it comes to the youth, particularly those who have been jailed after 2013, for the following reasons: they joined the Brotherhood only a few years ago and did not develop a sense of respect to the old leadership; many of them feel that they

have already lost everything; those who joined after 2012 did not have the same ideological training than the older generations.

Séverin Yao Kouamé noted structural causes, especially those of an economic nature, as well as the appeal of Salafist ideology as widely accepted factors when attempting to explain trajectories of radicalization and youth involvement in extremist groups. The radicalization of young people or their voluntary conscription to violent groups is on the rise in conflict zones of West Africa. One of the main reasons why young people join violent groups is the “crises of education” (weakening of the family structures and the community notion, crisis of teachers’ authority, absence of educational continuity between school, family and community). Given the failure of the models conveyed by society they search for alternative success models. Apart from limited access to education, educational attainment is increasingly not a guarantee of the “good life”, hence some youth are seeking the “good life” without necessarily getting a good education”

Séverin Yao Kouamé explained that those joining the extremists’ groups are looking for alternative socialization spaces that can meet their needs for social recognition. He stressed that studies argue that the frustrations and despondency of youth are borne out of the precariousness of their conditions and livelihoods (i.e. unemployment) or a strong feeling of lack of future prospects, exclusion or injustice. Thus, it is not always a religious ideology that these young people defend, but a social order put in place by this group that they want to preserve.

Akil N Awan stressed that Jihadist media practices in relation to identity have three main aims:

- 1) **Attachment:** reinforce and strengthen self-identity. Making audiences see themselves as part of the in-group identity.
- 2) **Deracination/Deculturation:** Weaken and delink from all other types of id whether they’re national, ethnic, cultural and other identities.
- 3) **Polarisation:** Reinforce diametrical opposition between identities (i.e. how us and them differ).

Akil N Awan pointed that the extremists’ narrative is almost irrelevant unless it finds fertile ground to take root, by resonating with individuals on a personal level, resonating with their everyday lives and experiences. The popular and media discourse on Muslims has become toxic in many parts of the US and Europe, presenting Muslim minorities as an unwelcome presence. Many IS recruits come from areas providing a mix of unemployment, crime, drugs, institutional racism and endemic cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement: radical groups might potentially offer an escape from a bleak future or criminal past.

Outcomes and key findings from the discussion:

1. There are a number of reasons why, despite the measures adopted by the regime since 2013 against the Muslim Brotherhood, only a small minority has turned to violence
2. Contrary to popular conception, young people did not take up arms with negative intentions – “against” the Government or the “infidels”, but they see it as an opportunity to contribute constructively to a new order
3. Studies argue that the frustrations and despondency of youth are borne out of the precariousness of their conditions and livelihoods (i.e. unemployment) or a strong feeling of lack of future prospects, exclusion or injustice
4. It is not always a religious ideology that young people defend, but a social order put in place by the group that they want to preserve
5. The frustrations and despondency of youth are borne out of the precariousness of their conditions and livelihoods (i.e. unemployment) or, a strong feeling of lack of future prospects,

6. Structural causes, especially of economic nature, as well as the appeal of Salafist ideology are widely accepted factors when attempting to explain trajectories of radicalization and youth involvement in extremist groups.
7. Radicalization can be prevented and mitigated by the creation of economic opportunities and the production/dissemination of counter-religious narratives that promote moderate religious practice as shown in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali but there are more complex social dynamics concerning the social function of violence
8. Young people's involvement in extreme forms of violence seems to be a form of adaptive response to obtain, maintain and/or enhance their social status.
9. One of the most important practices that take place within extremist organisation is that of identity construction and self-identification, these inform their media practices to a large extent.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Responses should take into account the more complex social dynamics concerning the social function of violence for youth and their societies or certain specific expectations of young people who join these groups
- ❖ Reinvent the education model: in addition to knowledge – 1) integrate the transmission of know-how and of life skills; 2) Reassert the teacher's role and ensure educational continuity between the family, the community and the school
- ❖ Place the aim of strengthening self-esteem at the heart of initiatives targeting youth employment; aim for social transformation rather than the reduction of unemployment
- ❖ Take into consideration the transnational dimension of professionalization of violence dynamics

Session 3, Panel 1: Enhancing Young People's Citizenship Participation

Presenters: Cecile Mazzacurati, Tijani Christian, Lakshitha Saji Prelis

Background: The Security Council resolution 2250 was a turning point in terms of providing a new policy framework focused on youth in relation to peace and security – shifting emphasis from youth as perpetrators of violence to youth as contributors to peace. **Cecile Mazzacurati** provided an overview of Resolution 2250 commissions to the Secretary General's request for a Progress Study. She explained that the aim is to document young people's positive contribution to peace and provide recommendations for action at the local, national, regional and global levels. **Tijani Christian**, presentation focused on a proposal that citizens have to demand political and socio-economic change and sustainable peace, which has significant correlation on enhanced involvement of young people in community-based organizations, cultural, artistic and sports associations. **Lakshitha Saji Prelis** presentation focused on new technologies and global connectivity which have profoundly reshaped the civic landscape in developed and developing societies alike, which he says has eroded trust in institutions and creating new channels for people-led action.

Overview: **Cecile Mazzacurati** focused on Resolution 2250 as a contribution to "sustaining peace", SDG 16 and the fact that this builds upon and extends the work of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). She emphasised that there is a counter-productive impact of "policy panic" on the "youth problem" or on "youth at risk" (violent extremism, demographic growth of youth populations). She maintained that, at the same time there is the avoidance to fall in the opposite trap of romanticizing young people because they are not all "agents of change" or "actors for peace".

Cecile Mazzacurati explained that the central problem is the systemic and extensive exclusion and marginalization of young people. It is only by listening to young people that we can move beyond reductionist and binary understandings of youth identity and motivation. Youth peace building should not be assumed to be limited to the local level: it often transcends geographic boundaries, it is also national or even trans-national, and on-line. It also takes many forms and shapes, including youth dissent and revolutions for social and political change.

She explained that there is need to understanding young people in all their diversity – intersectionality of multiple social determinants but also and always as divided political actors, and focus on sustaining peace and preventing violence which is best served by addressing the “violence of exclusion”, the multi-dimensional experiences of young people’s marginalization and exclusion, and address stereotypes that deprive young people of their agency and role as positive change agents in society.

Tijani Christian paper proposed that the citizens demand for political and socio-economic change and sustainable peace has a significant correlation on the enhanced involvement of young people in community-based organizations, cultural, artistic and sports associations. He provided an example of how UNDP defines youth in all their diversity of experience and contexts, taking into consideration the existing definitions of youth used at the country and/or regional level(s):

- Legal framework and policies would need to be established mandating that youth have a specified quota within the system of governance
- Young people’s citizenship participation

Tijani Christian expounds this by stressing that meaningful youth representation, at all levels leads to more tangible outcomes and greater buy-ins. Youth should not be placed at the table as figure-heads or victims of tokenism. Many states have youth parliaments and other like entities. However, they are seldom included in the actual politics and decision-making processes of the country. A majority of youth have found new, innovative ways to organize and intervene in the political arena and decision-making processes sometimes with notable results:

1. **Youth unification:** He emphasised that there is need for youth within the Caribbean to act as one in order to progress
2. **Youth associations**
3. **Youthful diversity & cohesion:** youth have cross-cultured and shown that tolerance is better than injure, he further explained that the community forms a part of this ecosystem that must foster this engagement and active participation of young people in everyday life which promotes social well-being, in consolidating the social fabric, as well as in conflict prevention, resolution and sustaining peace.

Lakshitha S. Prelis presentation focused on young people preventing violence and sustaining peace, and brings attention to how new technologies and global connectivity have profoundly reshaped the civic landscape in developed and developing societies alike. He maintains that these developments have eroded trust in institutions, creating new channels for people-led action. She explains that ensuring that technological and generational change leads to more inclusive, open, and prosperous societies requires new alliances among youth, movements, the private sector, traditional civil society, and governments at the global, national, and local levels. Protecting and ensuring these spaces is critical to sustaining peace and supporting sustainable development locally, regionally and globally.

Lakshitha S. Prelis also presented results from Search for Common Ground’s contribution to the Progress Study, focus group discussions. (FGDs). As a contribution to the Progress Study, Search for Common Ground in partnership with United Network of Young Peacebuilders conducted a Global Survey of youth-led organizations. She presented the main findings:

- Youth organizations operate on low budgets, are gender-balanced, but also successful at changing perceptions of youth and preventing violence in their communities, build social cohesion and inter-faith unity, deliver humanitarian assistance when other actors fail.
- They call for investment in youth-led peacebuilding efforts and be better represented in decision-making processes and be included in negotiations.

As part of the contribution to the Progress Study, Search for Common Ground consulted a total of 729 young people from areas most affected by the civil war in Nepal, political violence in Burundi, and violent extremism in Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia. In all countries, Search for Common Ground consulted a majority of hard to reach, marginalized young people, including former combatants and internally displaced persons, whose voices are seldom heard in global policy discussions, and whom mainstream development programs have challenges in meaningfully engaging.

Outcomes and key findings from the discussion:

1. Youth peacebuilding is often understood as highly localized, community-based, or even familial or individually based, under the radar, under-funded, or volunteer-based. But it should not be assumed to be limited to the local level: it often transcends geographic boundaries, is also national or even trans-national, and on-line. Youth peacebuilding is very diversified, spanning diverse social constituencies and different sectors – young indigenous people, young migrants and refugees, victims, urban and rural youth, etc.
2. Youth peacebuilding takes many forms and shapes, including youth dissent and revolutions for social and political change. Youth peacebuilding is not devoid of tensions, political manipulation, personal interests. The priority is to “fund the upside”: invest in youth resilience to conflict and in innovation in sustaining peace. This should include strategies to support the creation of an enabling environment, addressing the (social, political, economic and legal) factors that inhibit young people’s peacebuilding and violence prevention work;
3. Citizens demand for political and socio-economic change and sustainable peace has a significant correlation on the enhanced involvement of young people in community-based organizations, cultural, artistic and sports associations
4. Ensuring that technological and generational change leads to more inclusive, open, and prosperous societies requires new alliances among youth, movements, the private sector, traditional civil society, and governments at the global, national, and local levels. Protecting and ensuring these spaces is critical to sustaining peace and supporting sustainable development locally, regionally and globally

Recommendations:

- ❖ There is need to understand young people in all their diversity – intersectionality of multiple social determinants but also and always as divided political actors
- ❖ Instead of investing in “problem-solving,” an effective prevention strategy has to be rooted in a better understanding of and focus on the positive attributes, resources, capacities or attributes (or “positive resilience”) of young men and women
- ❖ Security needs to be embraced as a right, and defined positively as a protective entitlement of young people
- ❖ Invest in youth resilience to conflict and in innovations in sustaining peace
- ❖ Don’t see youth only as victims or perpetrators, but rather as partners for constructive change
- ❖ Recognize young people’s need for respect, dignity, and agency
- ❖ Be wary of quick fixes: experiences of injustice are key motivating factors for youth who participate in political violence.
- ❖ Facilitate collaborative relationship across dividing lines
- ❖ Amplify credible, constructive narratives (and be comfortable with a diversity of viewpoints)

Presenters: Karim Sama and Olawale Ismail

Background: Karim Sama presentation emphasised that a lot of positive things happen on the African continent, which are not covered sufficiently by the media. He maintained that in Burkina Faso there is long tradition of struggle and a political conscience that encourages the people to engage citizens or politicians. Burkina Faso was one of the first countries in Africa to overthrow its first president from a popular uprising on 3 January 1966. And since then, political struggles, union struggles, etc. have nurtured the consciousness of youth. Olawale Ismail in his presentation echoed a similar sentiment by expressing that Socio-Protest movements are forms of collective action focused on advancing socio-economic and political agendas. They are often a mixture of large and informal groupings of people and organizations, and they emerge in the context of unmet expectations, inequality and oppression.

Overview: Karim Sama explained that the movement "le Balais Citoyen" wants a non-violent social revolution to take place. Its main mission is the fight for a democratic rule of law, for a better living together, for the benefit of each citizen, in respect, transparency and accountability. He further explained that the current economic and social model (capitalism) has allowed rapid economic growth and exponential development of the means of production in particular in western countries, but on the other hand it induced a state mode of governance tending to deempower states, from performing their including social obligations. He posed two fundamental questions:

- Can we neglect socialism in a predominantly young human society especially in the southern countries, when we know the vulnerability of this population fringe for whom all the challenges remain to be overcome?
- Can it be a surprise that the reactions that result from these brutal withdrawals of States lead to social upheavals?

According to Karim Sama, citizen engagement is in many cases one of the best ramparts against political governance and a wonderful framework for the training and awareness of the citizen to the stakes of political governance as well as the involvement and active participation of the citizen in the efficient management of the communities at the grassroots.

According to Olawale Ismail, in 2016 the number of political protests in Africa increased by 5%; and South Africa alone accounted for 20% of political protests in Africa, followed by Tunisia (11%) (2016 was indeed the year of Political Protests and Riots in Africa). Political protests are triggered by socio-economic issues such as tax rises, withdrawal of subsidies, increases in school fees, lopsided land reforms programs, poor service delivery and overall rise in the cost of living and worsening living conditions.

Olawale Ismail stated that political issues linked to corruption, acute horizontal and vertical inequalities, human rights violations, political oppression, disputed elections, manipulation of constitutional term limits, and poor governance have triggered political protests as well. First it is almost impossible to delineate socio-economic issues from political issues in the analysis of the triggers of recent political protests in Africa. Each political protest and the involvement of youth must be contextualised in their historical terms. The extent of social change arising from political protests in Africa remains questionable if not limited. In most cases, 'real' social transformations are traded for 'highly symbolic' and tokenistic outcomes, thus underlining preoccupation with trigger issues, rather than structural conditions.

Outcomes and key findings from the discussion:

1. A lot of positive things happen on the African continent, which are not covered sufficiently by the media
2. The current economic and social model (capitalism) has allowed rapid economic growth and exponential development of the means of production in particular in western countries, but on the other hand it induced a state mode of governance tending to deempower states, from performing their including social obligations
3. It is almost impossible to delineate socio-economic issues from political issues in the analysis of the triggers of recent political protests in Africa
4. Political issues linked to corruption, acute horizontal and vertical inequalities, human rights violations, political oppression, disputed elections, manipulation of constitutional term limits, and poor governance have triggered political protests
5. Socio-Protest movements are forms of collective action focused on advancing socio-economic and political agendas. They are often a mixture of large and informal groupings of people and organizations, and they emerge in the context of unmet expectations, inequality and oppression.
6. Political protests are triggered by socio-economic issues such as tax rises, withdrawal of subsidies, increases in school fees, lopsided land reforms programs, poor service delivery and overall rise in the cost of living and worsening living conditions

Recommendations:

- ❖ Comparative assessment is needed to understand similarities and differences in the dissolution of old identities, forging of new ones, different layers and dimensions of identity reconstitution; who and how new identities are constituted and constructed; and the relational aspects of constituting old and new identities
- ❖ Comparative perspectives/assessments are needed to see cross-cutting experiences and learning, for instance on nomenclature: how the youth-led protest groups are named/framed; how consensus is achieved and lost; alliances and breakaway from other civil society actors; possibility of regionalization or regional dimensions of political protests, etc

Session 4: Roundtable Discussion: Recommendations and Next Steps

Presenter: Abdul Rahman Lamin

Background: Abdul Rahman Lamin gave a background pertaining to the African Region in reference to the African Union adopted in 2013, Agenda 2063 as the long-term vision for the continent, (spanning the next 50 years) and how these have to be seen and located in the context of the African Agenda for greater continental unity and integration. He explains that combating violent extremism requires among others, structural transformation of African economies, promotion of intra-Africa trade, and above all investment in the people, especially the youth.

Overview: Abdul Rahman Lamin maintained that Africa's continental/regional framework for youth development in Africa and violent extremism have to be seen and located in the context of the African agenda. He also explained that violent extremism with no specific or standard definition, includes acts of terrorism, deliberating targeting civilians through suicide bombing, mass casualty attacks, kidnappings and hostage taking. While a culture of peace and non-violence is a set of values, principles, attitudes and behaviour, underpinned by respect for others, tolerance of opposing views, and preference for non-violent resolution of disputes and conflicts.

Outcomes and key findings from the discussion:

1. Africa's continental/regional framework for youth development in Africa and violent extremism must be seen and located in the context of the African agenda
2. Structural transformation of African economies, promotion of intra-Africa trade, and above all investment in the people, especially the youth are needed to combat violent extremism

Conclusion

The Expert Group Meeting concluded with a round-up of key outcomes and recommendations arising throughout its duration. The presenters also wrote 15 technical short papers on each thematic area. A list of key recommendations for each thematic area was developed. The recommendations and outcomes have been presented throughout this report under their relevant session area. The full set of recommendations and outcomes can be found in Annexes 2a and 2b.

Input and outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting will be used to help inform substantive and conceptual inputs for the UN Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security and provide substantive input to DSPD's projects and broader work in this area.

Annex 1 – Meeting Agenda

In each working session, experts gave a short presentation, based upon the issues explored in their technical papers. After the presentations, all experts engaged in an inter-active discussion on the topic.

Day 1 – Monday 30 October 2017	
9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30-10:00	Opening Session Welcome and Opening Remarks – Alberto Padova – DESA/DSPD Presentations & Housekeeping Issues – Oleg Serezhin – DESA/DSPD
10:00-10:30	Youth Peace and Security: Social Issues and Social Policies Moderator: Alberto Padova – DESA/DSPD Framing the Discussion – Alcinda Honwana - DESA/DSPD
10:30-11:00	Coffee/Tea Break
11:00-12:30	Session 1: Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence Moderator: Oleg Serezhin – DESA/DSPD Presenter 1: Cyril Obi – Program Director, African Peacebuilding Network (APN), Social science Research Council, New York Presenter 2: Federico Negro – Fragile States and Disaster Response Unit, Employment Policy Department, ILO Presenter 3 : Sharmaarke Abdullahi – Programme Management Officer, UN-HABITAT Q&A
12:30-2:00	Lunch Break
2:00-3:30	Session 2: Preventing Youth Radicalization into Violent Extremism Panel 1: Radicalization and Recruitment Processes Moderator: Nicola Shepherd – DESA/DSPD Presenter 1: João Felipe Scarpelini – UNDP, worked on the UN Youth Strategy for Somalia Presenter 2: Luca Russo – Agricultural Economist, FAO; Francesca Dalla Valle – Youth Employment Specialist, FAO Presenter 3: Layne Robinson – Head of Social Policy, Commonwealth Secretariat Presenter 4: Noorhaidi Hasan – Professor at the Graduate School Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta Q&A
3:30-4:00	Coffee/Tea break
4:00-5:30	Panel 2: Activities within Violent Extremist Organizations Moderator: Cecile Mazzacurati – UNFPA/PBSO, Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security Presenter 1: Georges Fahmi – Research Fellow, Middle East Directions programme at Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute

	<p>Presenter 2: Séverin Yao Kouamé – Coordinator of Indigo Cote D'Ivoire</p> <p>Presenter 3: Akil N. Awan – Associate Professor in Modern History at Royal Holloway College, University of London.</p> <p>Q&A</p>
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Day 2 – Tuesday, 31 October 2017	
09:30-11:00	<p>Session 3: Enhancing Young People's Citizenship Participation</p> <p>Moderator: Abdul Rahman Lamin – UNESCO Regional Office in East Africa</p> <p>Panel 1: <i>Everyday life Participation at Community Level</i></p> <p>Presenter 1: Cecile Mazzacurati – UNFPA/PBSO, Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security</p> <p>Presenter 2: Tijani Christian – Caribbean Regional Youth Council</p> <p>Presenter 3: Lakshitha Saji Prelis – Co-Chair, UN-Civil Society Working Group on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding</p> <p>Q&A</p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee/Tea Break
11:30-1:00	<p>Panel 2: <i>Participation in Social Movements and Political Protests</i></p> <p>Moderator: Elisenda Estruch Puertas – Economist, FAO</p> <p>Presenter 1: Karim Sama – Co-Founder of <i>Le Balai Citoyen</i> (The Citizen's Broom) in Burkina Faso</p> <p>Presenter 2: Olawale Ismail – Visiting Senior Research Fellow, King's College London</p> <p>Presenter 3: Alcinda Honwana – DESA/DSPD</p> <p>Q&A</p>
1:00-2:30	Lunch Break
2:30-4:30	<p>Session 4: Roundtable Discussion: Recommendations and Next Steps</p> <p>Moderator: Alcinda Honwana – DESA/DSPD</p> <p>Presenter 2: Abdul Rahman Lamin – Program Specialist, Social Sciences, UNESCO Regional Office for East Africa</p> <p>Closing Remarks – Alberto Padova – DESA/DSPD</p>
4:30-5:00	Final Coffee/Tea

Annex 2a – Discussion Key Findings and Outcomes

Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence

1. High levels of youth unemployment, poverty and the lack of opportunities for young people have fuelled migration either from rural to urban centers, or from poorer or conflict-affected countries to more prosperous and stable ones. Some draw a parallel between the lack of opportunities and quality education, exclusion, and the susceptibility of youth to radicalization and violence, involvement in militia/gang-related conflict and crime.
2. Two key challenge face the efforts of policy institutions to respond to the youth question in relation to preventing engagement in organized violence. 1) how to best work to create the political and socio-economic conditions that create structural conditions for preventing young people from engaging in organized violence, and beyond that, incentivize and mobilize their creative energies towards conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding. 2) the key challenge may be less about the absence of appropriate policy and institutional responses, but more around the lack of well-resourced implementation of such responses.
3. Youth employment programmes in fragile settings, can have an impact on each respective driver through an “employment effect” and a “programme effect”.
4. In a peacebuilding context, employment programmes targeting “youth at risk” are necessarily tailored to context, yet there are three main components which are normally combined or separately covered: (1) labour-based programmes aiming to provide work immediate job opportunities, (2) skills and vocational training programmes and (3) micro, small (and medium) sized enterprises (MSME) support programmes. These employment programme components are not necessarily linked to peace or resilience building.

Preventing Youth Radicalisation into Violent Extremism

1. Youth in Somalia face unprecedented challenges yet 8 out of ten Somalis are younger than 35 years old, 38% of the Somali population is aged between 15 and 35 years old, representing over 4.6 million people. Avenues for youth to obtain an education and gainful employment opportunities are limited and opportunities to engage politically, economically, or socially remain weak or non-existent
2. Exclusion creates frustration and demoralization among many youth. The link between the emergence of Al-Shabaab and the challenges faced by youth in political engagement are deeply intertwined and engaging and empowering young Somalis is a requirement for the UN to deliver in its mandate
3. Not only conflicts and instability have an impact on food security but also food insecurity can be a trigger of conflict
4. Contexts considered extremely fragile or fragile are also those that rely mostly on agriculture as a means of income
5. In situations of conflict and instability, young people are particularly vulnerable to radicalization due to conditions of poverty, lack of employment and livelihoods opportunities, and increased weakness of family structures
6. Work with youth workers can deliver social, political and economic education and empowerment of young people through non-formal learning methods
7. Youth work enhances young people’s self-esteem, social connectedness, productivity and employability and youth work benefits young people, but it also benefits institutions and society

8. Approach in youth work is the asset-based approach. Such an approach proceeds from the presumption that young people have, in the form of their integrity as human beings, potential, ability, influence, authority and power
9. Extremism can be understood as the wayward child of disaffection and it is at this source where youth workers can be most effective with regard to ‘short-circuiting’ extremism.
10. Terrorism, extremism and organised violence, are often analysed as if they come into the world as fully formed responses, with no root cause
11. There are a number of reasons why, despite the measures adopted by the regime since 2013 against the Muslim Brotherhood, only a small minority has turned to violence
12. Contrary to popular conception, young people did not take up arms with negative intentions – “against” the Government or the “infidels”, but they see it as an opportunity to contribute constructively to a new order
13. Studies argue that the frustrations and despondency of youth are borne out of the precariousness of their conditions and livelihoods (i.e. unemployment) or a strong feeling of lack of future prospects, exclusion or injustice
14. It is not always a religious ideology that young people defend, but a social order put in place by the group that they want to preserve
15. The frustrations and despondency of youth are borne out of the precariousness of their conditions and livelihoods (i.e. unemployment) or, a strong feeling of lack of future prospects,
16. Structural causes, especially of economic nature, as well as the appeal of Salafist ideology are widely accepted factors when attempting to explain trajectories of radicalization and youth involvement in extremist groups.
17. Radicalization can be prevented and mitigated by the creation of economic opportunities and the production/dissemination of counter-religious narratives that promote moderate religious practice as shown in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali but there are more complex social dynamics concerning the social function of violence
18. Young people’s involvement in extreme forms of violence seems to be a form of adaptive response to obtain, maintain and/or enhance their social status.
19. One of the most important practices that take places within extremist organisation is that of identity construction and self-identification, these inform their media practices to a large extent.
20. Islamist extremism constitutes very complex dynamics related to structural problems and youthfulness
21. The engagement of young people in violent extremism and jihadist activism constitutes symptom of a multi-dimensional crisis facing youth today
22. Youth’s radicalism and violent activism lie at the nexus between the structure, ideology and cultural identity of youth
23. The recruitment process for radical groups occurs primarily through pre-existing social networks and interpersonal bonds

Enhancing Young People’s Citizenship Participation

1. Youth peacebuilding is often understood as highly localized, community-based, or even familial or individually based, under the radar, under-funded, or volunteer-based. But it should not be assumed to be limited to the local level: it often transcends geographic boundaries, is also national or even trans-national, and on-line. Youth peacebuilding is very diversified, spanning diverse social constituencies and different sectors – young indigenous people, young migrants and refugees, victims, urban and rural youth, etc.
2. Youth peacebuilding takes many forms and shapes, including youth dissent and revolutions for social and political change. Youth peacebuilding is not devoid of tensions, political manipulation, personal interests. The priority is to “fund the upside”: invest in youth resilience

to conflict and in innovation in sustaining peace. This should include strategies to support the creation of an enabling environment, addressing the (social, political, economic and legal) factors that inhibit young people's peacebuilding and violence prevention work;

3. Citizens demand for political and socio-economic change and sustainable peace has a significant correlation on the enhanced involvement of young people in community-based organizations, cultural, artistic and sports associations
4. Ensuring that technological and generational change leads to more inclusive, open, and prosperous societies requires new alliances among youth, movements, the private sector, traditional civil society, and governments at the global, national, and local levels. Protecting and ensuring these spaces is critical to sustaining peace and supporting sustainable development locally, regionally and globally
5. A lot of positive things happen on the African continent, which are not covered sufficiently by the media
6. The current economic and social model (capitalism) has allowed rapid economic growth and exponential development of the means of production in particular in western countries, but on the other hand it induced a state mode of governance tending to deempower states, from performing their including social obligations
7. It is almost impossible to delineate socio-economic issues from political issues in the analysis of the triggers of recent political protests in Africa
8. Political issues linked to corruption, acute horizontal and vertical inequalities, human rights violations, political oppression, disputed elections, manipulation of constitutional term limits, and poor governance have triggered political protests
9. Socio-Protest movements are forms of collective action focused on advancing socio-economic and political agendas. They are often a mixture of large and informal groupings of people and organizations, and they emerge in the context of unmet expectations, inequality and oppression.
10. Political protests are triggered by socio-economic issues such as tax rises, withdrawal of subsidies, increases in school fees, lopsided land reforms programs, poor service delivery and overall rise in the cost of living and worsening living conditions

Roundtable: Next Steps

1. Africa's continental/regional framework for youth development in Africa and violent extremism have to be seen and located in the context of the African agenda
2. Structural transformation of African economies, promotion of intra-Africa trade, and above all investment in the people, especially the youth are needed to combat violent extremism

Annex 2b– Recommendations

Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence

1. The UN should consolidate its consultations with member States to promote conditions within which young people can better realize their full potential
2. Regional and global institutions need to undertake reforms that enhance their capacity and resource base when it comes to empowering youth
3. Empower youth to play a transformatory role, and dismantle the structural barriers that constrict opportunities for them
4. Conduct studies on issues related to youth and conflict
5. Come up with findings based on evidence-based and participatory research that empower youth
6. Expand opportunities for young people to gain access to high quality and affordable purposive or developmental education.
7. Youth leadership training, creativity and enterprise development should be mainstreamed into the educational curriculum
8. Discourse around the security dimension of the youth-peace dialectics needs a radical rethinking beyond prevention
9. Create, nurture and secure the socio-economic and political conditions within which all youth can realise their full potential
10. Theories of change must be explicit and provide measurable indicators of change in drivers of violence
11. Assess and prevent unintended negative consequences of employment programmes
12. Invest in further research and context analysis in peacebuilding issues including evidenced based approaches that promote inclusive economic development and sustainable livelihoods

Preventing Youth Radicalisation into Violent Extremism

1. Increase the evidence-base for the positive role of young people in the preventing violent extremism
2. Provide a platform for inter-generational dialogue and create an enabling environment needed to support and promote youth participation
3. Support the production of online and offline advocacy materials and build positive narratives
4. Promote interventions that reduce fragility and underpin stability
5. Understand the drivers of conflict and analyse the technical insights into conflict dynamics
6. Develop social protection systems to strengthen resilience to threats and crises and enable development
7. Promote activities towards the demilitarization of young ex-combatants and child soldiers in DDR programmes
8. Insert youth workers spread out in society in a way that they can immediately adjust issues and break the cycle that goes into extremism
9. Youth workers should break the Cycle of Extremism by addressing Dissatisfaction-Disaffection-Extremism
10. Explore how youth workers can address any issues, looking to themselves, their peers and society as a resource
11. Consider what interests groups have when looking to place responsibility for personal or social problems
12. Responses should consider the more complex social dynamics concerning the social function of violence

13. Reinvent the education model: in addition to knowledge, integrate the transmission of know-how and of life skills; Reassert the teacher's role
14. Ensure educational continuity between the family, the community and the school
15. Engage with the communities and to prioritise best practices and identify the best possible junctions with the formal education
16. Place the aim of strengthening self-esteem at the heart of initiatives targeting youth employment
17. Take into consideration the transnational dimension of professionalization of violence dynamics
18. Understand the interpretative significance of youth's radical and violent actions may give us the possibility to work out strategic, integrated, and comprehensive steps to break the chain of radicalism and terrorism.
19. Take steps to erode the influence of radicalism and terrorism have to be taken also through economic and social approaches
20. Develop extensive programs for empowerment and economic support for those who have been involved in terror actions
21. Programs targeting those affected by radicalism should lead to the improvement of their labor skills, economic circumstances, and social welfare
22. Humanize those who have become frustrated by their social, political, and economic circumstances and resort to radicalism

Enhancing Young People's Citizenship Participation

1. Understand young people in all their diversity – intersectionality of multiple social determinants but also and always as divided political actors
2. Understand positive attributes, resources, capacities or attributes (or “positive resilience”) of young men and women
3. Embrace security as a right, and defined positively as a protective entitlement of young people
4. Invest in youth resilience to conflict and in innovation in sustaining peace
5. Youth should not be seen only as victims or perpetrators, but rather as partners for constructive change
6. Recognize young people's need for respect, dignity, and agency
7. Be wary of quick fixes: experiences of injustice are key motivating factors for youth who participate in political violence
8. Facilitate collaborative relationship across dividing lines
9. Amplify credible, constructive narratives
10. Use comparative assessment to understand similarities and differences in the dissolution of old identities and forging of new ones
11. Use comparative perspectives/assessments for see cross-cutting experiences and learning

Day 1

Session 1: Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence

Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence

By Cyril Obi

Introduction

Over time, popular debate about the role of youth, either in the demographic sense of the implications of a youth bulge in countries with a large proportion of young people, or in terms their potential role as “future leaders” has gradually been overshadowed by the binary of youth as “victims”, or “perpetrators” of violence. In other cases it is immersed in securitized narratives of the threats posed by “radicalized” youth as conflict-actors. While the jury is still out on the definition of “youth” and how this identity may, or may not be linked to violent behavior or protest (Kaplan 1994; Ismail; De Waal and Argenti 2002; McIntyre 2003; Obi 2006; Honwana 2012), this paper will not dwell much on that debate. Fortunately, in the past decade, organizations, governments, and some civil society organizations have recognized, and are paying increased attention to the need to empower and mobilize youth to unlock and realize their huge potential as peacebuilders.

This paper is a reflection about the role of youth as a potentially great force for peace, particularly with regard to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It underscores the important place of youth in the future of peace, and examines the various ways in which young people can play more active roles in promoting global peace and security. In setting about the task, the paper is organized into four broad sections. The introduction sets out the broad issues related to the prevention of youth engagement in organized violence and conflict. It is followed by a conceptual reflect on the current state of the youth and the challenges they face particularly in the developing regions of the world. This is followed by an overview of the regional and international responses to youth engagement in violence, while the fourth and concluding section proffers some recommendations that may help resolve the challenges facing the youth, peace and security.

The Current State of Youth Engagement in Organized Violence

According to the 2017 UN Population Prospects Report, out of a global population of 7.6 billion, young persons aged between 15-24 years in the following regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia account for about 1.1 billion (UNDESA 2017a; 10). With regard to Africa, some estimates put the levels of youth unemployment as ranging between 60-70 per cent. The situation of the moderate or extreme poverty facing millions of youth in Africa features prominently in ILO’s World Employment Social Outlook, which among others, reports on the how unequal opportunities adversely affect young men and women, observing that, “Sub-Saharan Africa continues to suffer the highest youth poverty working rates globally, at almost 70 per cent” (Cited on the homepage of the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth).

Such high levels of youth unemployment, poverty and the lack of opportunities for young people have fueled migration either from rural to urban centers, or from poorer or conflict-affected countries to more prosperous and stable ones. Some authors draw a parallel between the lack of opportunities and quality education, exclusion, and the susceptibility of youth to radicalization and violence, involvement in militia/gang-related conflict and crime (Ngom 2016). Evidence drawn from studies on Boko Haram in West Africa and Al Shabaab in East Africa attribute radicalization of youth to several factors including poor education, unemployment, poor governance, corruption, excesses of security forces, poor knowledge of religious teaching and forced conscription among others (Onuoha 2014;

Ewi and Salifu 2017), while other commentators point to socio-economic and political drivers, and the skills of charismatic figures or recruiters operate in contexts where alienated youth seek to resist or fight against perceived injustice, or nurse deep-seated grievances against the social order.

The widely held view of the linkage between youth (particularly males), violent behavior, conflict and instability has not gone unchallenged. Sommers (2010: 322), argues that “highlighting the youth bulge and instability thesis is counter-productive when it incorrectly colours most youth as dangerous and inspires unproven assertions about how young people think and act. The association of youth with criminal, political and religious violence derives from a rather fixed reading of young people, and the association of the “youth bulge” with threats of a violent nature.

While there is a growing consensus on the need not to view youth as a homogenous “demographic” entity, there are still debates over the how best to categorize or conceptualize the group in terms of age, a social, or relational construct (Ozerdem 2016; Obi 2006). More importantly, critical observers have cautioned against a homogenous or “fixed” reading of youth (Ozerdem 2016; Sommers 2010). Ozerdem makes the point that “a myriad of factors make childhood and youth highly heterogeneous categories in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, political position as well as age”. He further captures the implications of the “polarized discourse” particularly in conflict-affected settings, that represent youth as “either vulnerable, powerless and in need of protection” or “dangerous, violent, apathetic and as threats to security”.

Some of the negative readings of youth derive from the literature on gang-related urban violence in developed and developing countries, radicalization by extremist groups, vigilantism, and the activities of armed non-state groups/militias operating in the twilight zone between rebellion and criminality. Others focus on the “push and pull” factors for radicalization of youth, seeking to draw a balance between social and political context and individual motivations that are often complex and difficult to map or decipher. While such literature and images go some way in influencing the securitization of youth in conflict-affected or fragile settings, there is a growing awareness that not all youth are the same or engage in criminal or violent behavior, nor are they hapless victims without agency. Most important however is the question as to why the behavior or actions of a relatively few youth is used to generalize and draw conclusions about threats posed by hundreds of millions of young people. It can be argued that most youth are not prone to organized violence, but are rather constrained by the socio-economic and political context in which they operate. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that most young possess the potential and creative energy necessary for conflict transformation.

Several steps are necessary for empowering youth to play a transformatory role, and dismantle the structural barriers that constrict opportunities for them to thrive, and participate fully in decision-making on issues that affect their own lives. More studies need to be conducted into issues related to youth and conflict to learn more about young people and what drives/motivates, or radicalizes relatively few of them. A lot can be said about expanding opportunities for young people to learn, create, rebuild their lives, earn a decent living, express themselves in non-violent ways, and counter extremist narratives. Some of these steps will involve rediscovering hope, and ‘unlearning’ some negative values and practices. The future of the youth will lie in opening the door that had hither-to prevented them from gaining access to the freedom to dream, create, and lead the process of non-violent social change.

Regional and International Responses to Youth Engagement in Violence: Charting the path to conflict prevention

There has been a clear response of regional and international organizations to the role of youth in peace and security. The Amman Youth Declaration of August 2015, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security of December 2015, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2282 on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, all

underscore the recognition of the important role youth play in preventing conflict and maintaining peace and security. The five pillars of UNSR 2250, on participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, disengagement and reintegration, respond to some of the structural constraints facing youth engagement in conflict resolution, such as political marginalization, lack of, or shrinking access to educational and economic opportunities, and the need to restore fractured relations in post-conflict societies (Youth4peace 2017). Also, initiatives like the 2015 UN Plan of Action Against Violent Extremism (UN General Assembly 2015) recognize the positive role young people can play in countering this source of insecurity. The resolutions of the UNSCR are complemented by the role of many UN agencies in creating and running programs targeting the empowerment of youth to effectively play a critical role in peacebuilding. In the lead-up to UNSCR 2250, the Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding (WG-YPB) as part of the larger UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) as far back as 2012 had laid down the groundwork for the guiding principles that shifted the discourse on youth towards their role in peacebuilding, that partly informed the holding of the Global Forum on Youth Peace and Security, followed by the adoption of UNSCR 2250. The WG-YPB is a coalition co-chaired by the United Nations Peacebuilding Office (UNPBSO), United Network of Youth Peacebuilders (UNOY), Search for Common Ground (SfCG) also working with youth-related civil society organizations (Ibid).

The existence of an international policy framework is based on a new narrative that acknowledges “the positive role that youth can play in preventing and resolving conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace” (UNDESA 2017b). Although regional organizations like the African Union (AU), and African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have long-standing Youth Charters and policies, and some national governments have similar frameworks, they are yet to fully attain the level of the youth-peace nexus of which the UN is taking the lead. Also of note is the progress being achieved by various youth-led and youth organized civil society organizations in mobilizing and training youth to play positive roles in conflict prevention, countering violent extremism, and peacebuilding. Two key challenge face the efforts of policy institutions to respond to the youth question in relation to preventing engagement in organized violence. The first is how to best work to create the political and socio-economic conditions that create structural conditions for preventing young people from engaging in organized violence, and beyond that, incentivize and mobilize their creative energies towards conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding. Secondly, is that the key challenge may be less about the absence of appropriate policy and institutional responses, but more around the lack of well-resourced implementation of such responses.

Tentative Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The foregoing shows the existence of international narratives, discourse, and policies on the positive role(s) that youth can play as leaders, agents, and beneficiaries of peacebuilding. Efforts towards institutionalizing the prevention of youth engagement in organized violence will be better-off by embracing an agenda of social and conflict transformation, rather than one driven by a security discourse underpinned by the concern to contain or manage threats that may be posed by ‘angry, poor, excluded, poorly educated, and unemployed youth’, that are vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups, transnational criminal and trafficking networks, and non-state armed groups. Push and pull factors need to be further unpacked and studies against the background of evolving conflict dynamics, governance gaps and diminished state presence in borderlands. To help consolidate current initiatives and projects that seek to support and project youth engagement in conflict prevention and countering organized violence, the following recommendations are proposed:

The United Nations, its agencies, and international partners should consolidate its consultations with member-states to promote conditions within which young people can better realize their full potential as equal citizens and effective peacebuilders at the grassroots, national and regional levels.

Regional and global institutions need to undertake reforms that enhance their capacity and resource base when it comes to empowering youth as key peace and development actors. There is some need for additional funding to support the real participation of young people in shaping, implementing and evaluating responses aimed at conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

More studies should be commissioned to understand and give vent to the voices of youth on issues ranging across the conflict, peace and security nexus, their lived experiences, and how they envision their role/participation in a just and peaceful society.

Findings based on such evidence-based and participatory research, combined with drawing upon consultations with youth-led and youth-centered civil society, faith and community-based organizations, and the use of special dissemination and youth outreach programs, should be integrated into participatory programs that accord right priority to the empowerment of youth to play a positive role in conflict prevention and countering violent extremism. Some of such programs should integrate the perspectives of ex-fighters in policy design and implementation processes.

Action should be taken to radically expand opportunities for young people to gain access to high quality and affordable purposive or developmental education that imbues them with values of positive non-violent change, and assures them of a right to a dignified, equitable, and secured social life.

Beyond introducing programs that extoll the virtues of youth at all levels of education and public discourse, youth leadership training, creativity and enterprise development should be mainstreamed into the educational curriculum, and actively supported in social institutions, the public and private sectors. As the world's experiences change in the coming years and decades, young people, particularly young women, will have to be better prepared, not just to meet the current challenges, but to shape and transform the future.

The discourse around the security dimension of the youth-peace dialectics needs a radical rethinking beyond preventing or containing the potential threats that radicalized or criminalized violent youth may portend to human society. The starting point will be to explore how best to create, nurture and secure the socio-economic and political conditions within which all youth can positively realize their full potential to engage in peacebuilding. The real threat may lie, not in the fact of being young—however this is defined, but in neglecting the social and structural conditions that subvert the youth.

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Tackling Root Causes of Violence and Conflict through Youth Employment

By Federico Negro

Introduction

Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security recognizes the pivotal role of young women and men in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. More specifically, the Resolution emphasizes the importance of creating policies aimed at social and economic development, local growth, youth employment and vocational training, both to prevent conflict, and to foster the disengagement and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Contributing to this mandate, the ILO engages both in upstream capacity-building and advocacy for policies conducive to youth employment, as well as downstream measures in violent, fragile and conflict-affected settings which create tangible employment benefits to youth and other vulnerable groups. Through its work, the ILO helps to realize the potential of employment and decent work as one of the main factors which contribute to the goals of Resolution 2250.

This note provides some suggestions on how to foster youth employment programmes' peace and conflict prevention impacts. After a short overview of the ILO's work in this area, three "theories of change" (developed jointly with PBSO, UNDP and the WB) on how youth employment can contribute to prevent youth's violent behaviour, as well as some lessons learned in practical programme design and implementation, will be presented.

Background: The ILO's facilitation of employment in fragile situations

In recent years, considering the contemporary focus on prevention and resilience-building within the UN's sustaining peace agenda, the ILO reaffirmed its vital role in tackling unemployment, underemployment, lack of socio-economic participation and insufficient social dialogue around labour related issues, which are, together with other fragility factors, among the root causes of fragility and conflict.

In June 2017, the ILO member states adopted a new [Recommendation number 205 \(R205\) on "Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience"](#), an innovative normative instrument providing guidance to member states, organizations and practitioners dealing with employment and decent work in fragile settings. Recommendation No. 205 will guide the ILO's work in policy advocacy, South-to-South exchange and technical cooperation in the realm of youth employment for peace.

The ILO considers youth employment to be one of the main policy challenges of our time and one of the factors contributing to Resolution 2250: There are 71 million unemployed youth worldwide, while 156 million young workers live in poverty – a "key stress factor" (World Bank 2011) on society's stability. To tackle this immense challenge, efforts **at the global level** include the ILO's Youth Employment Programme and contribution to the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#); activities range from global research to knowledge sharing and the organization of high-level conferences on the subject² (UN General Assembly 2015: 20). **At the country level**, the ILO seeks to build peace and resilience through employment-related technical cooperation projects. Taking stock of its experience in fragile

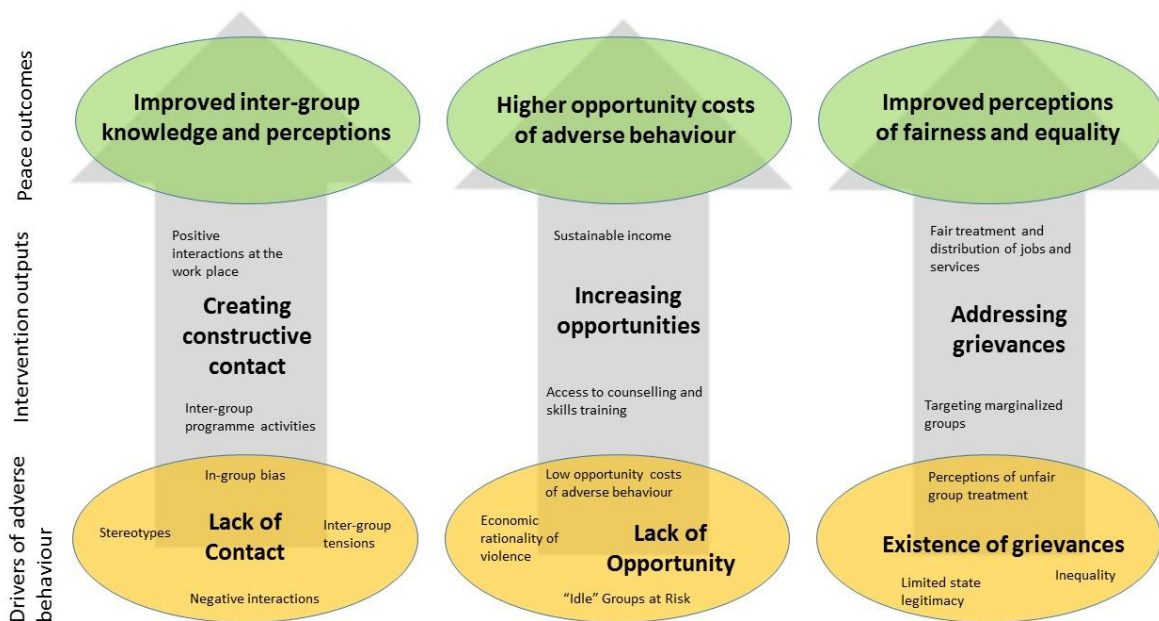
² such as the High-Level Event on Youth Employment for Peace and Resilience, hosted jointly by UNDP and ILO in September 2017 in New York, and the Conference on Youth Employment in North Africa hosted in Geneva in the same month.

settings³, the Organisation has recently developed new strategies, and established new partnerships⁴. The flagship programme – [Jobs for Peace and Resilience \(JPR\)](#) – targets young women and men in fragile, conflict-affected and disaster-prone countries. Its ultimate objective is to create more and better jobs for inclusive growth in places where high unemployment and a lack of life perspectives exacerbate young people’s vulnerabilities and, ultimately, the risks of initial or renewed conflict escalation. The JPR promotes decent work opportunities and a right-based approach with a particular focus on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW), wages and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). These decent work principles will be embedded in enhanced regulatory frameworks and governance principles in the fragile situations where the JPR is implemented.

The effect of youth employment programmes on peace: Three theories of change

In a peacebuilding context, employment programmes targeting “youth at risk” are necessarily tailored to context, yet there are three main components which are normally combined or separately covered: (1) labour-based programmes aiming to provide immediate job opportunities, (2) skills and vocational training programmes and (3) support programmes to micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSME). These employment programme components are not necessarily linked to peace or resilience building. Therefore, in an effort to describe the influence of these types of programmes on peacebuilding and security – and hence on the achievement of Resolution 2250 –, the PBSO, ILO, UNDP and the WB developed, through joint research, three theories of change, each dealing with one (possible) driver of adverse behaviour at the micro level (summarized in figure 1).

Figure 1: The Peace and Security Effect of (Youth) Employment Programmes: Three Theories of Change



Source: Kiniger/Rüdiger (ILO) elaboration based on Brück et al. (2016) “Jobs Aid Peace”

Moreover, the above research states that youth employment programmes in fragile settings can have an impact on each respective driver through what we call an “**employment effect**” and a “**programme effect**”⁵: while through the former, employment generated through peacebuilding programmes is

³ See a synthesis of ILO’s work in the guide on [Employment and Decent Work in Situations of Fragility, Conflict and Disaster](#) (ILO 2016)

⁴ For instance with IGAD, g7+, IFRC, UNOPS and UNHCR

⁵ see ILO, UNDP, World Bank and UNPBSO (2016)

expected to **create opportunities, ameliorate grievances and provide for contact between conflicting social groups**, the programme activities themselves may already signal the existence of opportunities, the value of contact and an experience of fairness to programme participants and the wider community. The ILO is making a global effort to apply the above approach and to use youth employment programmes as an effective contribution to Resolution 2250.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices in youth employment for conflict prevention and peace:

- make theories of change explicit and provide measurable indicators of change in drivers of violence

A recent review of UN agencies' employment programmes in fragile situations⁶ noted that most employment programmes tend to assume there is an effect on peace, without making this assumed effect explicit - neither in project proposals nor in impact evaluations. For prospective programmes aiming to create youth employment with the ultimate aim of building peace through vocational or entrepreneurship training or labour-based programs, it is therefore crucial to **make explicit the precise theories of change** of how employment is expected to lead to changes on the micro-level of (non-)violent behaviour. On the very practical level, this could mean that programmes define both an **"employment outcome"** with measurable results, as well as a **"peace outcome"**, which itself subsumes opportunity, grievance and contact outputs and measurable indicators (including perception surveys) of achieved positive changes in these concepts (e.g. increased inter-group contact, decreased perceptions of grievances).

- target recipient groups according to "risk" and "vulnerability"

Programmatic interventions can only reach a limited subset of the overall population. Programme planners are therefore advised to select beneficiaries according to pre-defined, precise categories. Yet, many programmes apply broad and ambiguous categories, such as "youth at risk", which doesn't allow for a transparent, rule-guided selection process. At the outset of a programme, planners should hence agree on precise criteria, possibly to be disaggregated into a certain weighted score, which can then be applied by all programme partners in their selection of beneficiaries deemed most vulnerable to violent behaviour, to maximize the peace impact of programmes.

- assess and prevent unintended negative consequences of employment programmes

Any intervention dealing with jobs in post-conflict and fragile situations runs a strong risk of doing harm – by, for example, strengthening existing perceptions of favouritism in access to employment, or raising, and then frustrating, hopes for a better future (Brück et al. 2016: 13). So far, employment programmes mostly fail to account for these risks in project proposals and evaluations. All programmes should therefore incorporate "do no harm" lenses through evaluation of programme impacts on non-participants.

- invest in further research and context analysis

Evidence on (1) the link between youth unemployment and violence/conflict and (2) youth employment programmes and peace/reconciliation is still limited, and the youth unemployment/conflict thesis may be inappropriate in specific circumstances. Therefore, agencies should invest in further research on the assumed link and challenge conventional wisdom if evidence in specific programme contexts suggests to do so.

⁶ See a [joint ILO, UNDP and UNHCR \(2017\) report on youth employment in fragile situations](#)

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Preventing Youth Engagement in Organized Violence such as gangs

By Sharmaarke Abdullahi

Introduction

This paper records the contribution of one key working group to the Expert Group Meeting of the Division for Social Policy and Development in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs under the theme “Youth, Peace and Security: Social Issues and Social Policies”. The key working group was focused on preventing young people’s recruitment into and participation in gangs, and forestalling the impact of gang-related activity on communities.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section defines key concepts such as street gang, group structure and Criminal Youth Gang (CYG). The next section highlights lessons learned from the Ottawa Gang Strategy. The final section presents effective strategies for preventing youth involvement in gangs.

Key Concepts: Street Gangs, Group Structure and Criminal Youth Gangs (CYG)

Building a shared understanding of the problem with regard to street gangs that now exist in many cities around the world is an on-going challenge, given the complex and shifting nature of street gangs. The success or failure of any given approach to preventing youth from joining street gangs rests, in part on how, and how well, the problem is defined and understood. Academics, politicians, the media, the public, law enforcement and social service agencies each have a different way of defining the term ‘street gang’ with no standardization of or consensus on its definition. In many western countries, the difficulty inherent in applying an ill-defined term has led law enforcement agencies to move away from ‘street gang member’ in favour of the term ‘person of interest’. For the purpose of this exercise, we adopt the definition offered by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA). NAGIA defines a street gang as a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and who, individually or collectively, engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile acts which if committed by an adult would be a crime.⁷

The group structure of street gangs is commonly described by researchers using criteria based on age range (typically 12-24), a shared identity evidenced by symbols and a street gang name, their level of performance, the structure and organization of the group, and increasing levels of criminal activity.⁸ Although most street gangs have a hierarchical structure, this reality is shifting as street gangs move from being tightly knit groups to more loosely connected individuals involved in activities such as the drug trade, weapons offences, violence and the sex trade.

A criminal youth gang (CYG) is defined by two key attributes: 1. it encourages facilitates and may even require deviant or criminal activity, and some of this activity may involve violence. This engagement in criminal activity may be explained in part by looking at the individuals involved. However, an analysis

⁷ Carter F. Smith, Jeff Rush, Catherine E. Burton. Investigative Science Journal. Volume 5, Number 1 January 2013.

⁸ Howell, J.C., Egley, A., & O’Donnell, C. (2012). Frequently asked questions about gangs. Retrieved from the National Gang Centre website; <http://www.nationalgangcentre.gov/About/FAQ>

of the nature and impact of the group, and of inter-group competition, is vital to any attempt to understand the phenomenon of CYGs. 2. CYGs are collective solutions to shared problems experienced by their members. Recognizing that the decision to join a gang, or to try to leave one, reflects a combination of individual, relational, local and structural factors is key. We need solutions to the problem of gangs that are as complicated as the problem itself. – One-dimensional interventions are unlikely to have a significant and lasting impact on gangs or their individual members. In terms of proposing exit strategies, this means that the challenge will be to provide youth with options or incentives that provide some of the benefits of gang membership without the negative consequences attached to participation in gangs.⁹

The Ottawa Gang Strategy Case Study: Lessons Learned

Complex social issues such as street gangs require complex thoughtful interventions rooted in a holistic approach to problem solving. The Ottawa Gang Strategy (OGS) is a great example of such an approach. From 2013 to 2016, the OGS offered a roadmap to guide action addressing street gangs in Ottawa. The approach design included members of local community organizations, social service agencies, the police, schools, faith based groups and others. Together they developed and implemented 12 initiatives that approached the problem of street gangs in Ottawa from many different angles.

A steering committee was formed to hold the various players accountable to each other and to a holistic, collective impact approach to intervention planning. The collective impact approach places a great deal of emphasis on collective planning to ensure maximum impact on youth street gangs through coordinated action. This approach is built on the assumption that

- Success can only be achieved through a shared agenda which includes:
 - Agreement on clear and shared goals from local and national governments, youth-led Community Based Organizations, and community champions and leaders
 - Shared measures of success and
 - Mutual commitment to the processes, activities, and initiatives that are most likely to effect change and contribute to achieving the desired outcomes
- A long-term commitment by key stakeholders is necessary to achieve success
- Cross-sector engagement, including the community itself as an agent of change, is essential for community wide change
- Measurable data is essential to inform direction, track progress, learn from successes and challenges, and make required adjustments along the way

With this approach in mind the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee developed four key pillars in its plan to address the problem of gangs:

1. **Neighbourhood cohesion:** Building resilient children, families and communities through developing positive relationships in gang-affected neighbourhoods.
2. **Prevention:** Taking an inclusive and preventative approach to social development, addressing situational risk factors, engaging in public education and awareness campaigns and supporting active community policing.
3. **Intervention:** Identifying alternative opportunities for children, youth and adults, including those at-risk, on the verge of joining a gang, or looking to leave gang life.
4. **Enforcement and suppression:** Conducting targeted, sustained and effective law enforcement

⁹ Hastings, R., Dunbar, L., & Bania, M., (2011). Leaving *Criminal Youth Gangs: Exit Strategies and Programs*. Institute for Prevention of Crime.

to discourage gang-related activity.¹⁰

In June 2016, an independent evaluation of the OGS conducted in consultation with its Steering Committee found that OGS programmes had contributed to collective progress and significantly impacted gang membership in Ottawa. These gains include the following short and long-term outcomes:

Short-Term:

- Increased awareness of available services within key neighbourhoods
- Better integration of community services
- New and improved partnerships between communities and community organizations
- Stronger relationships between key players in gang affected communities including young people, families, schools and community organizer
- More effective law enforcement¹¹

Medium-Term:

- Increased access to social services
- Enhanced cross-agency collaboration and social service coordination
- Sustained community partnerships
- Improved service delivery to children, youth, and families
- Risk factors to entering gang life being addressed – fewer individuals being recruited
- Gang members leaving gang life
- Gang members being prosecuted and convicted¹²

Lessons Learned

Some of the key lessons learned in the Ottawa example from 2013-16 include the following:

- Effective **partnerships require ongoing hard work**:
 - efficient, effective meetings keep people engaged
 - internal and external accountability help a lot
 - trust between very different players can be built over time
 - patience, flexibility and attention are required
- If partners feel they are succeeding, they will invest time and resources
- **There are no easy answers**: no program will work for all clients, no approach will solve all problems
- No easy answers part 2: We can only do what we can do. There are external factors that impact us, massively, far beyond our control.
- It is not enough to do the work: we need to **communicate the work, over and over and over again**

Key Recommendations

- Real progress addressing the issue of street gang takes time and is measured in years
- Community ownership of the problem is essential
- Focus on crime prevention approaches created **by** and **for** the community
- Efforts must be sustained
- Tailor-made solutions start in communities; a one-size-fits-all approach will not work

¹⁰ Ottawa Gang Strategy Seeking Solutions to Street Level Violence . Technical Evaluation Report: Our First Three Years. Crime Prevention Ottawa and the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee. October 2016

<http://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/Media/Content/files/Publications/Youth/OGS%20TechEvalReport%20FINAL.pdf>

¹¹ IBID, P.2

¹² IBID. P.2

- Street gang prevention programmes must emphasize the positive attributes of young people
- Effective approaches to addressing street crimes begin with the community's willingness to consider its strengths, problems, and needs
- A positive approach offers positive experiences to those having problems, thereby minimizing their exposure to risk factors and maximizing their exposure to protective factors
- Focusing on positive approaches brings people together and helps to create the kind of communities where crime does not thrive

Conclusion

In summary, this paper highlighted key concepts in street gang literature and the importance of creating a shared understanding of the problem of street gangs in communities. We also stressed that complex social problems, such as street gangs, require a complex response. A holistic approach to problem solving will be needed to reduce street gang violence in communities. The Ottawa Gang Strategy (OGS) example demonstrated the importance of balanced intervention approaching the issues through the four pillars of neighbourhood cohesion, prevention, intervention, and enforcement and suppression in order to be successful. Finally, the OGS experience taught us that a holistic, collaborative and collective impact approach plays a role in mobilizing partners to take effective action on street gangs.

Day 1

Session 2: Preventing Youth
Radicalisation into Violent Extremism

Panel 1: Radicalisation and Recruitment
Processes

UN Integrated Youth Response in Somalia

By Joao Felipe Scarpelini

Situation Analysis

Eight out of ten Somalis are younger than 35 years old, 38% of the Somali population is aged between 15 and 35 years old¹³, representing over 4.6 million people. Nevertheless, avenues for youth to obtain an education and gainful employment opportunities are limited and opportunities to engage politically, economically, or socially remain weak or non-existent. The space and opportunities are even further restricted for girls and young women due to cultural biases and traditional practices.

Participation of young people in decision-making at different levels is also challenging due to issues related to clan and cultural affiliations, gender, age, illiteracy, and poverty, among other factors, including the prominence of elders in the political system.

Exclusion creates frustration and demoralization among many youth. It also forces many young Somalis to embark on an often-dangerous journey across borders, the “tahrir”, searching for better lives. Those that stay behind are endangered by crime, drugs, radicalism, piracy and recruitment into armed groups. Somalia has undergone nearly three decades of prolonged conflict. Since 2007, with the emergence of Al-Shabaab (AS), the global fight against terrorism in East Africa has been cemented in Somalia. The “war on terror” in Somalia has been pervasive, affecting all communities throughout South and Central Somalia and substantive pockets in Somaliland and Puntland. Conflict between AS and the FGS is intertwined with clan dynamics and grievances at a granular level, meaning that political processes, social cohesion and reconciliation are deeply inhibited and defined by the conflict.

The link between the emergence of Al-Shabaab and the challenges faced by youth in political engagement are deeply intertwined. While majority of the Somali population is below the age of 35 and Al-Shabab directly translates as “The Youth”. The origins of Al-Shabaab are closely tied to the Islamic Court Union (ICU) movement; Al-Shabaab served as the paramilitary wing of the ICU, and later took the lead in the fight against the widely perceived Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006. Al-Shabaab gave youth a platform, empowered and employed them and gave them a sense of inclusion unlike ever before. Youth throughout Somalia, without discrimination, flocked towards the movement created by Al-Shabaab. Following the defeat of the ICU by the Transitional Federal Government, Al-Shabaab evolved, forming relations with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The international relegation of Al-Shabaab to a terrorist organisation and the active military conflict against the group was initially viewed as an affront to youth engagement in the political sphere by the young Somali population. Moreover, with the conflicts against Al-Shabaab and without new approach to incorporating the youth, Somali young women and men have returned to a state of marginalisation from all forms of social engagement. Marginalisation coupled with staggeringly low levels of employment, an urban population living at below \$2 a day, with limited education opportunities or transferable skills, youth are at a constant risk and are distinctly vulnerable to a radicalization effort that affords better opportunities.

¹³ In Somalia, in accordance with the African Union’s definition, “youth” is most commonly defined as those between 15-35 years of age, to include many Somalis who did not have opportunities to access services and public goods during years of conflict and absence of formal institutions.

While significant strides have been made to deepen state-building through the federalism process and creating the political space conducive to inclusive political participation at the regional level, Somali's patriarchal society, traditionally dominated by male elders, results in the systematic exclusion of young women and men from decision-making processes at all levels. This political exclusion has been one of the factors driving young women and men to seek alternative avenues of belonging and leadership, often finding social inclusion within extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab.

The involvement of some young people – especially young men – but increasingly also young women – in extremist groups has led to a widespread portrayal of youth as a threat to peace and security. Such stigma further exacerbates disenfranchisement among young Somalis. The link between youth political engagement, political marginalization and violent extremism are thoroughly outlined in a recent UNDP report¹⁴, "The research makes clear that a sense of grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government is widespread in the regions of Africa associated with the highest incidence of violent extremism. This may be an inevitable corollary of the life experience of growing up in the context of acute and relative multidimensional poverty, neglect and political marginalization affecting these areas. However, disaffection with government is highest by significant margins among the respondents who were recruited by violent extremist groups across several key indicators. These include: belief that government only looks after the interests of a few; low level of trust in government authorities; and experience, or willingness to report experience, of bribe-paying. Grievances against security actors, as well as politicians, are particularly marked, with an average of 78 percent rating low levels of trust in the police, politicians and military. Those most susceptible to recruitment express a significantly lower degree of confidence in the potential for democratic institutions to deliver progress or meaningful change. Meanwhile, positive experience of effective service provision is confirmed as a source of resilience: respondents who believed that governments' provision of education was either 'excellent' or 'improving' were less likely to be a member of a violent extremist group, within the sample."

The recruitment of young men and boys into armed groups, by both state and non-state actors is not uncommon. However, forced recruitment by groups such as Al-Shabaab, recruitment in the event of clan conflicts, or simply the neglect of the Federal and State forces in vetting the recruitment of boys is a gender dynamic that is much overlooked in relation to Somali conflict dynamics. In many rural and conflict-prone urban parts of Somalia, boys do not have an option; they are coerced or simply forced into battle. Somali young men and boys over the past few decades have been heavily militarized, with little or no education opportunities and an education in pervasive masculinity and without any social or political avenues to raise their distinct challenges. These factors of marginalization cement the disparities between young men and women who would otherwise be united under common factors.

Moreover, the current electoral model in Somalia is designed to favour the traditional male elders who influence elections, often leaving women and young people out of the political conversation. The formulation of political systems is led by the older generations who have very little understanding of the modern challenges facing young women and men in Somalia. This disconnect reinforces the growing gap between a very young nation and its ageing legislators.

Somalia is aiming to have a universal suffrage in place for the next Federal Election in 2021. In the run up to this democratic milestone, it is crucial that a culture of political engagement and inclusivity is promoted amongst the young population. It is crucial to ensure that young women and men understand the importance of voting, are given the means to engage in the political, governance and peacebuilding processes and can reap the benefits of the emerging democratic systems. The current electoral model

¹⁴ Journey to Extremism: Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa, UNDP, 2017

in Somalia is designed to favour the traditional male elders who influence elections, often leaving women and young people out of the political conversation.

The ongoing conflict has had a particularly severe impact on young Somali women. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is rampant and arbitrary, and young displaced women are at the greatest risk. Similarly, the lack of rule of law and strong governance creates a system of impunity where SGBV is more likely within urban areas and among the community. Finally, the lack of economic opportunities means that young women have less independence and often stay in abusive domestic settings due to a lack of options. As such, women are subjected to violence across the whole spectrum, from domestic to the community level.

Somali Youth within the UN Mandate in Somalia

Engaging and empowering young Somalis is a requirement for the UN to deliver in its mandate. Failure to meaningfully engage to respond to the aspirations and needs of 81.5%¹⁵ of the country's population undermines the prospect for lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2232 (2015) and 2358 (2017) "reaffirms the important role of women and youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, stresses the importance of their participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security".

Security Council Resolution 2232 (2015), 2275 (2016) and 2358 (2017) "encourages UNSOM to enhance its interaction across Somali civil society, including women, youth, and religious leaders in order to ensure that the views of civil society are incorporated in the various political processes".

The ground-breaking Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (2015) recognizes that "young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security". SC Resolution 2250 identifies five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration. This landmark resolution urges Member States to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels and to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes.

SC Resolution 2282 (2016) on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture refers explicitly to SC Resolution 2250, reaffirms "the important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts", and calls upon "Member States and relevant United Nations organs and entities to consider ways to increase meaningful and inclusive participation of youth in peacebuilding efforts (...)".

SC Resolution 2358 (2017) "requests UNSOM to continue to implement its mandate in an integrated manner, and welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen strategic integration and decision-making across the UN system within respective mandates, including with consideration of the role of women and youth".

UN Integrated Youth Response in Somalia

Building on the recommendations from the above-mentioned Security Council Resolutions, the UN in Somalia has developed a joint UN Youth Strategy for Somalia (2016-2019), endorsed by the Federal Government and the international community during the High-Level Partnership Forum on Somalia (HLPF) in Istanbul (2016), and integrated as part of the UN Strategic Framework (2017-2020).

¹⁵ Population Estimation Survey for Somalia 2014, UNFPA Somalia

The UN Youth Strategy articulates into a strategic and integrated framework all the different efforts, programmes and initiatives currently being implemented by the UN in the country. It is structured into six core pillars of work, which are: 1. Youth Programming; 2. Youth Participation; 3. Government Support; 4. Youth Communications; 5. Increased Coordination; 6. Somali Youth Fund.

The Youth Strategy recognizes the role of youth as partners in the UN's development efforts, and places empowerment as a vital prerequisite for lasting transformation in Somalia. The multidimensional concept of empowerment – social, economic and political – provides ample scope for harmonizing approaches to youth policies and programming, and harnesses the full potential of youth to become recognized social and economic actors, as well as peacebuilders.

By unifying different efforts, the UN Youth Strategy aims to maximize coverage and impact, and to ensure sustainability - contributing in this way to the achievement of the Strategic Objectives of the UN Somalia in line with the National Development Plan.

Currently, the UN youth portfolio in Somalia represent over 40 million dollars invested in programming across six thematic priority areas: 1. Employment & Entrepreneurship; 2. Protection of Rights & Civic Engagement; 3. Political Inclusion; 4. Education & Skills Development; 5. Health; and 6. Peacebuilding. Thematic priorities outline at the UN Youth Strategy, building on the UN System Wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP) and the priorities outlined at the National Youth Conference (2015).

The Inter-Agency Youth Working Group is composed by 44 designated youth focal points representing 11 UN Agencies, Fund and Programmes, 5 departments of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the World Bank and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM).

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism among Somali Youth

After years of conflict and instability, Somalia is still burdened by attacks and threats of violent extremism carried out by terrorist groups. Somalia's most infamous one, Al-Shabaab, continues to control and influence territory and communities in parts of Somalia, despite territory gains made in recent years by the Somali National Army and AMISOM. In the North, a small fraction of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – ISIL or Da'esh – has taken ground.

Particularly in an environment of volatile politics and localised security vacuums, violent extremism, terrorist and non-state armed groups have space to thrive and can fill the void left behind by the absence of a functioning state and institutions. However, pull factors of violent extremism are complex and multifaceted, which is reflected in how these groups continue to influence communities and young people through successful media strategies, propaganda, and indoctrination via radical curricula for young children.

Until today, conditions conducive to terrorism and violent extremism are a reality in urban areas as well as communities in newly recovered areas, where – without efforts for local reconciliation and political inclusion, employment opportunities, particularly for young people, and rebuilding the trust between the people and the state – groups like Al-Shabaab have the potential to retake territory and strengthen credibility as provider of social services.

Somali youth are still seen as potential threats or as burdens as well as vulnerable or victims of violent extremism. The reality however, is that the vast majority of young people do not and will not become affiliated with violent extremism—many are actively working for peace.

The Somali Federal Government has taken initial steps to implement its obligations under United Nations Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions by adopting a National Strategy and Action

Plan on Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism in September 2016. However, the capacity, expertise and resources fall short to implement the national strategy effectively. After his election in February 2017, President “Farmaajo” has indicated providing safety and human security for Somalis as a top priority, including through defeating terrorist groups in the coming years.

The UN in Somalia is committed to explore and support youth-led solutions to prevent violent extremism, and is currently doing so through an integrated approach that builds on the UN Youth Strategy for Somalia, including:

1. Context-sensitive research on youth and violent extremism, youth perceptions of existing C/PVE policy and programmes, and of youth-led solutions to PVE. Those research initiatives will help address the knowledge gap and feed into inter-agency efforts around PVE and around Youth, Peace and Security. The main goal is to increase the evidence-base for the positive role of young people in the preventing violent extremism (PVE), to catalyze new partnerships, and to inform policy and programming interventions at the local, regional and national levels.
2. Catalyzing national, regional and local youth-led networks of young champions working on P/CVE, and linking them to regional, national and global networks and policy discussions. Creating safe participatory spaces for young leaders to come together and try to identify local drivers of youth involvement in violent extremism, as well as opportunities for youth-led interventions to respond and prevent violent extremism. The UN is working closely with the FGS and AMISOM to provide a platform for inter-generational dialogue and create an enabling environment needed to support and promote youth participation as partners in P/CVE efforts across Somalia.
3. Tackling the root causes of radicalization among Somali youth. The Secretary-General’s Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism noted the direct impact that lack of socio-economic opportunities, combined with other factors, has on the rise of violent extremism. Unemployment and exclusion of Somali youth create the conditions conducive to the increase in radicalization and the spread of terrorism. The UN in Somalia wants to pursue and reinforce development and social inclusion agendas and will work to create alternative livelihood opportunities as well as advocate for meaningful youth participation at every level. Through a combination of joint programmes, the UN will partner with the FGS and the international community to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions that are responsive to the needs and inspirations of youth.
4. Supporting the production of online and offline advocacy materials and communication campaigns created by young people themselves to spur further youth engagement on the issue and to help build a positive narrative on the role of young people in P/CVE. This includes radio and video production, visual and theatrical interventions, etc.

Lasting peace in Somalia will not be possible unless young people feel represented in political life, have a say in the national political dialogue, peace- and state-building processes, and have a true stake in the country’s future. The creation of appropriate mechanisms of participation enables meaningful and sustained engagement of young Somalis and creates a platform for young people to express their views and make contributions to issues that concern them and society at large.

Disaffection, Dissatisfaction and Extremism: How youth work can contribute to breaking the cycle of Extremism

By Layne Robinson

There has, throughout the world, been huge concern over the last couple of decades about young people finding themselves increasingly unable to identify with and/or engage in the life of their communities or nation. This has caused many to make alliances with alternative, often immoderate, anti-social or even negatively activist groups.

The Civil Paths to Peace report has it that terrorism, extremism, conflict and violence are;

“...in ascendancy in the contemporary world and afflict Commonwealth countries as well as the rest of the world.” (p.10)

It goes on to argue that “While the cultural influences are among the forces that can contribute to disrespect, misunderstanding and violence, they are not the only causal factors, nor are they immutable or irresistible. Indeed, much can be done to prevent the violence that may be thrust on us by promoters of belligerent agendas. For this we need a departure from old ways of thinking about the centrality and the alleged inviolability of cultural confrontations.” (ibid.)

However, part of the problem of grasping the root and nature of considerations such as terrorism, extremism and organised violence, is that we often analyse them as if they come into the world as fully formed responses, with no root cause. This, to some extent is seeking to address the symptom of negative social situations rather than the source. Violence and aggressive agitation do indeed appear to be endemic in the world, perhaps particularly among young people, but to take this as a sort of lightning strike, that it incarnates itself ‘out of the blue’ would be incorrect.

There are any number of policy and academic definitions of disaffection and extremism; however, to most experienced youth workers the apparent two positions are points on the same continuum.

Straightforwardly, to be disaffected is a result of dissatisfaction, but simple feelings of dissatisfaction do not automatically give rise to behaviour associated with disaffection, which is seen to be anything from problematic to anti-social. If a young person is continually dissatisfied, finding no way to achieve or even express personal aspiration, it is not surprising if she might become hostile and rebellious towards those forces or authorities she understands to be preventing her from voicing and achieving those ambitions and desires.

However, if this young person is unable to find the means to communicate her hopes or grievances, it is likely she will experience frustration. This frustration would logically be made worse when no one responds to that frustration when it is actually expressed.

At this point, when the mutinous, disruptive, non-conformist or delinquent behaviour associated with disaffection proves to be insufficient to address apparent injustice, or simply to draw attention to the

plight or the troubles of young people and/or their communities, regions or nations etc., all that is left for the aggrieved person is to become more extreme. Then 'they' (those in authority) will be obliged to hear; then 'they' (those seen as relatively powerful) must respond.

For generations, youth workers have worked to an ethical value base that includes listening and responding to the views, perspectives, wants and needs of young people, but in truth, this has had limited impact. This is because the extent that any one youth worker (or group of youth workers) can respond is restricted by the limitations of their authority. Youth workers are subject to organisational, regional, national and international policy and legislation. At the same time, no matter how attentive or active a listener one might be, the simple act of giving an ear, while helpful to a point in terms of disaffection, will be insufficient with regard to addressing the anguish and frustration that might lead to extremism.

Positively speaking, extremism might be understood as an effort to change the world (something disaffection cannot achieve) and it would be untrue to say it does not have a track record of doing this; many anti-colonial movements for instance were interpreted in their historical contexts as extremist. However, meeting extremist regimes with extremism has been a terribly wasteful habit of humanity, firstly in the terms of direct human suffering, but also with regard to general social resources.

If you shout at someone you are inviting that someone to shout at you; this is fairly predictable all things being equal, but this does not translate to shouting being the best way to proceed in a debate or argument. Likewise, because counter extremism has undermined extremist regimes doesn't mean extremism is a 'good thing' generally; in fact, the cost of such extremist dynamics shows them to be utterly counterproductive. The initial extremism will always result in (at least) equal and opposite extremism – one is the logical progeny of the other – extremism has proved not to be the midwife of peace.

This is discernible at the micro level of youth work; for example, the bully is punished for their bullying by the youth worker. The bully, who has already shown themselves to define the world in terms of 'might is right' experiences the condemnation of the youth worker as bullying (the youth worker has the 'might' to enforce the 'right'). The bully, and the bullied, have learnt (effectively) that bullying 'works'.



Given this, how do youth workers engage young people in the contexts of disaffection and extremism (without becoming one of the sources of disaffection)? Well, we can see that disaffection is a stepping stone to extremism; it is hard to see how one might jump from being satisfied to an extremist point of view. Thus extremism can be understood as the wayward child of disaffection and it is at this source where youth workers can be most effective with regard to 'short-circuiting' extremism. But how is this to be done? The cycle begins with dissatisfaction. If this remains unexpressed or unexamined it invites people (not just young people) to look for 'convenient' or quickly identified causes (blame). We know that there are groups with interest in directing dissatisfaction towards those they see as their rivals and often young people with unspoken or unexamined discontents are easy prey for such factions.

Youth workers can address this above cycle at its very source by working with young people to:

- a. Voice and examine, explain their thoughts and feelings;
- b. Explore how they might address any issues, looking to themselves, their peers and society as a resource (rather than a source of blame);
- c. Consider what interests' particular groups have when looking to place responsibility for personal or social problems on rivals, while directing others to take action against (scapegoat) these people.

The same process might be initiated at any of the three points in the cycle. However, it is likely that young people who have become disaffected or taken on extreme views will demand much more intensive and longer term interaction.

In this session, I will also discuss and give examples of how youth work responses in highly disaffecting, or post-extreme situations (those who survive the cycle of dissatisfaction, disaffection and extremism might be the most likely to repeat this cycle). These responses go beyond merely listening, they involve energetically supported dialogue, a resulting dialectic and action that is capable of instigating perceivable social change and concomitant personal and social development of self. The proposal is that the antidote to disaffection is the generation of the means to address dissatisfaction, thus circumventing extremism.

The Logic behind Youth's Resort to Islamist Radicalism and Terrorism: Lessons Learnt from Indonesia

By Noorhaidi Hasan

Islamist radicalism that has ignited the fire of violent extremism and terrorism is not mere an expression of ideology. It constitutes a very complex dynamics related to structural problems and youthfulness. While ideology and religion play a significant role in justifying Islamists' choice of persisting an exclusive way of behavior— thus making sacrifices and risking being stigmatized—and resorting to violent extremism and terrorism, the radical movement's success in mobilizing fighters for jihad is determined by its leadership's ability to mobilize resources and potential recruits amid mounting uncertainty and growing frustration afflicting young people in their struggle for identity.

This is what happened in Indonesia in the aftermaths of the collapse of the New Order regime in May 1998. A number of Muslim radical groups came to the fore with names like Front Pembela Islam (Front for the Defenders of Islam), Laskar Jihad (Holy War Force), Laskar Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Holy Warriors Force) and Jamaah Islamiyah. They emerged on the scene as undoubtedly radical Islamist organizations and impressed the public through the onward march of their members willing to martyr themselves for the cause of God.

Young people aged between 15 and 29 years served as the backbone of the organizations and constituted the key to the success of the leadership in promoting collective violence. Some youth with perceived leadership potential were even recruited into organizational roles related to mass actions. They ventured to the frontlines in conflict areas of post-Suharto Indonesia and served as the masterminds and perpetrators of bombings that claimed hundreds of lives in Bali, Jakarta and other cities of Indonesia.

In recent days there are also those deciding to travel to Syria and Iraq, joining ISIS and other violent extremist groups. In September 2014 the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) reported the ISIS's aggressive recruitment and propaganda efforts in Indonesia that succeeded in recruiting between 1,000 and 2,000 militants into its orbit. Another report issued by Soufan Group cited an Indonesian government estimate that 700 of ISIS's fighters were hailed from Indonesia.

It is worth noting that youth as a category is commonly understood as the life stage of adolescence, a period in which young people experience changes in their roles and shifts in social expectations. But they have yet to establish the full legal status and roles of adulthood, and consequently, unlike adults, they do not have access to family, professional, and political rights. Moving beyond a narrow perspective that puts too much emphasis on ideology, I argue therefore that youth's radicalism and violent activism lie at the nexus between the structure, ideology and cultural identity of youth.

Sociological Context

Recent literature has conceptualized the main problems facing young people in their transition to adulthood to be the consequences of sweeping social changes associated with modernization and globalization. During the critical and turbulent phase of early life not all young people have the same resources, experiences and opportunities. There are gradations in material resources available to young people of different classes to deal with globalization. This problem creates a profound and enduring tension among youth.

Indonesia has strived relentlessly to adjust to global developments and accelerate the process of development, which led the country to be labelled in the early 1990s as one of Asia's new 'tigers'. However, the country has still to solve basic problems of transparency and accountability linked to widespread corruption and bureaucratic incompetence. In spite of economic growth, the government has failed to balance supply and demand for workers, giving rise to labour market competition.

The consequence of this is that opportunities for youth's upward mobility will decrease. For young people, who have to be mobile and ready to reap opportunities, living with uncertainty can frustrate opportunity. Not infrequently they become the 'losers of globalization'. This condition requires youth to re-establish their identities. One possible option for them is joining radical organizations and venturing to the front lines to fight jihad in troubled spots.

Recruitment Process

Joining a radical organization must not be an easy decision. The whole story usually begins with a process of getting acquainted with somebody who had been active in a radical Islamist movement that intentionally targeted youth. Many of them are senior high school and university students as well as drops out who are essentially passive; their interest is aroused only after they unwittingly become targets of the movement's mission activities.

This process occurs primarily through preexisting social networks and interpersonal bonds. The pattern has been "friends recruit friends, family members each other, and neighbors recruit neighbors." Either familial or spatial closeness with an active member of an Islamic group, therefore, has often been a determining factor in the radicalization process.

Apart from this, economic factors play a role in informing an individual's propensity to join to a radical organization. People with limited secular opportunities, such as those who earn a relatively low income and have limited education or minimal job experience are more likely to join compared with those who have established economic positions. This pattern is associated with a cost and benefit variable: those most likely to join are those with the least to lose.

The potential recruits were invited to join Islamic study circles organized by the radical movement and later introduced into a variant of strict Islam which aggressively promotes rigid purification of faith under the banner of Salafism. Followers who identify themselves as Salafis are inclined to stand distinctly apart from the "anything goes" open society around them, living in small, exclusive, tight-knit communities.

The movement's main concern emphasizes the purity and oneness of God, meaning to accept and believe in the oneness of God and his absolute authority, considered the foundation of Muslim life; other Salafi concerns centered on the call for a return to strict religious practice as well as the moral integrity of individuals.

Following the Afghan War in the late 1980s, the Salafis were divided into three factions: purists, politicians, and jihadists. While the purists were primarily concerned with the purity of Islam and thus

rejecting political activism, the politicians were politically minded and highly critical of incumbent regimes. Close to the latter, the jihadists believed in the necessity of jihad to fight for Islam.

Doctrinal Underpinning

For these people, becoming acquainted with Islam later in life had its own consequences. They became directly involved in strict Islam, inspired by the thinking of fundamentalist ideologues such as Hasan Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Abul A'la al-Mawdudi, or of their predecessors, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab.

In contrast to traditional Islam, the Salafi Islam entails doctrines and beliefs that are literal and relatively coherent, centered on the contrast between *shirk* (polytheism) and *tawhid* (Oneness of God). Being introduced to Islam in this manner is in many instances a shocking experience to people who have little previous knowledge about the religion. They are faced with a choice between black and white. According to their teachers, to reject the call to Islam means to remain an infidel. But if they are already locked in this logic, it would not be easy for them to escape.

Those who are introduced to Islam in this manner usually try hard to disassociate themselves quickly from their village past. In this stage the doctrine of *al-wala wa'l-barra* was infused into their minds. Basically, *al-wala* means "to love, support, help, follow, defend," and *al-bara* means "to despise, desert, denounce." *Al-wala wa'l-bara* implies that any Muslim who claims to have faith in Allah must love, help, and defend Islam and other Muslims while at the same time denouncing infidelity and segregating himself or herself from the influence of infidels. Theoretically, this doctrine entails a clear-cut distinction between the world of believers and that of unbelievers.

In the next stage of this radicalization process, initiates adopt a new, Arab-style costume, including *jalabiyya* and *chadar*, and men let their beards grow long. This move was usually accompanied by a commitment to distance themselves from their previous environment. They feel that, by doing so, they could more readily assert their claim to be true Muslims. Next, the doctrine of *hakimiyya* comes to strengthen their commitments to movement goal. This is a key concept developed by Qutbi, whose writings teach that in Islam governance belongs only to God. In Qutb's interpretations, *hakimiyya* is understood to be one of the main components of *tawhid*. This understanding requires one to embrace the *takfir* doctrine teaching that the rulers—or even a society as a whole—who do not follow the *shari'a* are considered apostate (*kafir*) and consequently should be resisted and replaced by true Islamic leaders through the use of violence, if necessary.

In the context of their response to the apostate ruler, the jihadists identified jihad, which means armed war, as an obligation for every Muslim. The matter takes more urgency when Muslims are in a conflict situation and perceived to be main target of slaughtering by the enemies of Islam. To respond this situation all Muslims are obliged to wage war in order to prove their commitment to *tawhid*; any repudiation of the fulfillment of this obligation would carry the risk of being an outcast from Islam.

Based on these aforementioned doctrines the Islamists develop a discourse that offers a banner for rebellion against the ruling class who, these groups claim, often manipulated Islam as a legitimating ideology and as part of the state mechanism. Opposition may take the form of blaming the West for the failure of ruling regimes in the Muslim world to address unemployment and poverty. Readiness to venture to the front lines in order to repel Western aggression, thus regaining the glory of Islam, is considered evidence of one's commitment to the purity of *tawhid*.

Concluding Notes:

1. Moving beyond a narrow perspective that put a particular emphasis on ideology, I argue that the engagement of young people in violent extremism and jihadist activism constitutes symptom of a multi-dimensional crisis facing youth today.
2. Radicalization usually begins with a process of getting acquainted with somebody who had been active in a radical Islamist movement that intentionally targeted youth. This process occurs primarily through preexisting social networks and interpersonal bonds. The pattern has been “friends recruit friends, family members each other, and neighbors recruit neighbors.”
6. The potential recruits were invited to join Islamic study circles organized by the radical movement and later introduced into a variant of strict Islam which aggressively promotes rigid purification of faith under the banner of Salafism.
7. Salafi Islam faces those having little previous knowledge about religion with a choice between black and white. They are forced to set themselves apart from anything goes around them.
8. Four key doctrines that play a crucial role in this process of radicalization include *tawhid*, *al-wala wa'l barra*, *hakimiyya*, and *jihad*.
9. These doctrines are at work in a functional manner, intertwined with youth’s frustration caused by daily interactions with the outside world which is perfectly matched by the structural socio-economic conditions often portraying unemployment, backwardness, inequality, corruption, injustice, and poverty.
10. Being sanctioned religiously, they are now ready to venture to the front lines and involve in violent activism.
11. Violent activism offers youth a privileged arena for the diffusion of their heroic messages and identity, and thus a crucial aspect of their efforts to negotiate meaningful identities, claim space and gain circumscribed but effective power and autonomy.
12. An understanding of the interpretative significance of youth’s radical and violent actions may give us the possibility to work out strategic, integrated, and comprehensive steps to break the chain of radicalism and terrorism.
13. Apart from using ideological approaches and launching de-radicalization programs by using civil society as its backbone, steps to erode the influence of radicalism and terrorism have to be taken also through economic and social approaches.
14. Extensive programs for empowerment and economic support have to be developed for those who have been involved in terror actions and who have been or are in danger of being exposed to radical ideologies.
15. The program should lead to the improvement of their labor skills, economic circumstances, and social welfare, especially for those who have felt the impact of radicalism.
16. Success in ‘humanizing’ those who have become frustrated by their social, political, and economic circumstances and who try to channel their frustration through radical and terror actions in the public domain is one of the prerequisites for the success of comprehensive anti-radicalism and anti-terrorism campaigns.
17. These approaches are on the level of protection and prevention and form parts of an integrated counter-terrorism strategy that also involves response and pursue tactics. The state should consider how to put this comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy into action and how to combine it with efforts to systematically manage pluralism in the framework of civil democracy as a solution to surmount radicalism and terrorism.

Day 1

Session 2: Preventing Youth Radicalisation into Violent Extremism

Panel 2: Activities within Violent Extremist Organizations

Self-promotion and social mobility of young people in violent extremist groups – Lessons from Côte d’Ivoire and Mali

By Kouamé Yao Séverin

Though difficult to quantify due to the lack of reliable data, the radicalization of young people or their voluntary conscription to violent groups is on the rise in conflict zones of West Africa. The establishment of violent groups such as Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in Northern Mali and Boko Haram in Nigeria may provide fertile ground for the expansion of this phenomenon. Studies have already been conducted in the region in order to better understand the determinant factors of this phenomenon. These studies mainly argue that the frustrations and despondency of youth are borne out of, first, the precariousness of their conditions and livelihoods (*i.e.* unemployment) or, second, a strong feeling of lack of future prospects, exclusion or injustice brought about by aspects of public development policies. Participatory research¹⁶ on individual and collective trajectories of young people towards radicalization and violent extremism conducted by Interpeace and its partners in Mali and Côte d’Ivoire, offers an additional perspective. It prioritizes the complex social dynamics underpinning violence as the key structural elements.

Structural causes, especially of economic nature, as well as the appeal of Salafist ideology are widely accepted factors when attempting to explain trajectories of radicalization and youth involvement in extremist groups. These analyses suggest that radicalization can be prevented and mitigated by the creation of economic opportunities and the production/dissemination of counter-religious narratives that promote moderate religious practice. Consultations conducted in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali show that when this approach based on economic and ideological determinants is implemented in a specific context, it can only provide partial responses. To ensure greater effectiveness, these responses should take into account the more complex social dynamics concerning the social function of violence for youth and their societies or certain specific expectations of young people who join these groups.

Young people engaging in violent or extremist groups do not necessarily do so from a negative perspective. They integrate these groups because they offer them an alternative opportunity to build socially, to evolve and to escape from the social invisibility in which they are confined to their societies of origin, even when they are active there. economic. Many more in these groups than elsewhere, these young people have an opportunity to become someone. They start at the bottom of the ladder and, through their ability to produce more and better violence, they move up the hierarchy of the group. Thus the group offers them an opportunity to evolve, to circumvent the social blockage in their home society. In many groups, this social ascent, this social mobility is codified. And, the fact of being entrusted with a responsibility and, most importantly, a weapon, becomes an element of social prestige that must be defended. Thus, it is not always a religious ideology that these young people defend, but a social order put in place by this group that they want to preserve. In these conditions, their activities within these groups are more to preserve the group and its mode of operation against the outside world. It is for them to deserve the "confidence" that the group has placed in them.

¹⁶ This research engaged more than 750 young people and their communities in a process of reflection in four localities in these two countries: Abobo and Bouaké in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as Sikasso and Gao in Mali.

Based on this, we can argue that young people's involvement in extreme forms of violence seems to be a form of adaptive response to obtain, maintain and/or enhance their social status. Our research in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire have shown that a culture of violence permeates these societies and thus informs and conditions the personal development of young people. In this context, certain models of upward social mobility and success based on violence are valued. As a logical consequence, those displaying the character traits of a warrior or fearless adventurer are praised and promoted within these societies. Numerous types of social institutions (e.g. family, community, schools and groups of friends) perpetuate this culture of violence and ensure its social legitimacy.

Furthermore, contrary to popular conception, these young people did not take up arms with negative intentions – “against” the Government or the “infidels”. In a context where the presence of the State remains purely theoretical, the arrival of the so-called jihadist groups brought an alternative order of society and governance. Following this logic, the population in some areas widely subscribed to the establishment of security and to a form of justice which, whilst harsh, was perceived as more just than previous regimes. Young people engaged in what they perceived as an opportunity to contribute constructively to a new order – which thereafter may have turned too violent in the opinion of some. The religious dimension is therefore highly marginal even though the defense of a religious orthodoxy is often used as an element of justification.

Building identities within extremist organisations: The case of ISIS

By Akil N Awan

One of the most important practices that take places within extremist organisation is that of identity construction and self-identification – who they are, what defines them, and who belongs. In fact it's probably one of the most important themes in their own narratives, and the one informs their media practices to a large extent. In fact, the focus on identity and belonging is everpresent irrespective of what type of extremist group you're looking at.

Today I'm going to focus on my recent work with ISIS and how this practice of identity construction works, particularly as seen through its media output, and why it's so important

The Grand Narrative

For Jihadists like AQ and IS, Identity really forms one of the most important themes in their larger meta-narratives. That's almost self-evident from their own grand narratives (and by narrative I mean the story that they tell themselves and others which connects their imagined past, present and future, and which allows them to make sense of the world around them)

This narrative compels Muslim audiences to view contemporary conflicts through the prism of a wider historical global attack on Islam and Muslims by a belligerent "Zionist-Crusader Alliance." In response to this assault, the jihadists claimed not only to have awakened the ummah to the reality of their predicament, but also claimed to serve as the sole and crucial vanguard, offering audiences the opportunity to reply to the enemy in kind

Since June 2014, there's a second part of the narrative — ISIS's own unique addendum to the already heady mix — claims that the caliphate has now been re-established, thereby restoring glory and honor to the downtrodden Muslims once again. The obvious corollary to the establishment of the caliphate was that it was therefore now incumbent on every Muslim to 1) make hijrah, or emigrate to the new caliphate, and 2) pledge allegiance to it's leader and caliph. 3) defend and help build the new state and utopia

Both ideas, of jihad and Caliphate, are underpinned by the primary identity of all Muslims as first and foremost part of the worldwide *Ummah* or community of believers, not as residents or citizens of their countries of birth or residence. It is this radical interpretation of the religious community of believers then, that becomes the sole locus of identity and belonging

Media Practices

So jihadist media practices and grand narratives in relation to identity have 3 central aims and strategies then, and IS media has individual strategies for each of these aims and actually does them very well.

1) Attachment: reinforce and strengthen self-identity. Making audiences see themselves as part of the in-group identity. Examples include:

- Transforming individual recruits into fighting unit, almost effacing the identity of the individual and then fusing the identity of the individual with the broader fighting group/unit

- Fictive kinship – the vicarious identification with victimhood and grievance (all jihadists talk about altruistic motivations for doing what they do – about defending their community, my brothers and sisters, which IS media reinforce constantly) resulting in attachment to the group almost through blood bonds
- The identities that are being effaced and replaced don't just have to be religious, national, ethnic, etc...they can also be what I call redemptive identities. The identification as warrior, a hero, champion, winner, as real men-redemption from impotent, marginalised or emasculated identities and IS' social media canon is replete with this sort of imagery.

2) Deracination/Deculturation: Weaken and delink from all other types of id whether they're national, ethnic, cultural and other identities. Examples include:

- Denying the legitimacy of modern Nation-States, or Geographical Boundaries (post WWI, Sykes-Picot), and erasing current national boundaries and state demarcations.
- Co-opting feelings of alienation and estrangement and building on ideas that Muslims are not welcome in their home countries. IS issues new passports to their fighters, many of whom publicly burnt their original national identity documents in response, and so is acting as a kind of welcoming utopia.
- Other strategies include promoting a deculturated religion – the growth of Salafism or Wahhabism which offers a religious identity that is divorced from the cultural baggage of their parents.

3) Polarisation: Reinforce diametrical opposition between identities (i.e how us and them differ). Examples include:

- Dehumanization of enemies (referring to them as dogs, pigs, monkeys etc, but also using pejorative sectarian insults)
- Al-wala wal-bara essentially means loyalty and disavowal, loving and having loyalty to the believers and disavowing those who are not. Issue 11 of *Dabiq* shows happy brothers in arms-multi-racial brothers in arms alongside the concept of loyalty to believers and disavowal of disbelievers), juxtaposed against its opposite: 'American Racism. This is not just about disavowing those who are not of your faith (believers and disbelievers), it's about disavowing anyone who isn't exactly like you including parents and family.
- Takfir is the process of excommunication. Its function is to keep the faith pure. Thus, if someone interprets ideas or practices in a particular way, you can label this person an apostate to push them away. It is also used to licence violence against apostates. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France, the February issue of *Dabiq*, wrote of polarizing dividing the world by destroying its greatest threat, the "grayzone." That space in which young Frenchmen could be both Muslims and good citizens of the French Republic, without any inherent contradiction. IS anticipated that provocative terrorist attacks, like the ones in Paris, would goad the French towards overreaction and create a climate of fear and hostility, further alienating French Muslims from wider society. Western Muslims would then be forced to make "one of two choices": between apostasy or IS' bastardized version of belief.

Resonating with Lived Experiences

Studying the media strategies and practices of extremist groups alone doesn't get us very far in understanding why these narratives resonate with some people and not with others. And what I've done in my work previously is to conceptualise this problem as a venn diagram. And to view the narrative as one of the important pull factors that offers something—an appeal—but it is the individual's context and their personal circumstances and the structural conditions that are central to whether or not this narrative resonates on an individual level. The narrative has to find fertile ground to take root. And, of course, we have to consider the role of individual agency here too. So the easy

part is what was the narrative – what is ISIS selling. However that’s only part of the problem. The extremists’ narrative is almost irrelevant unless it finds fertile ground to take root. And the way it does that is by resonating with individuals on a personal level, resonating with their everyday lives and experiences. Extremist narratives only resonate when they intersect with real world issues. Consequently, CVE campaigns cannot only focus on the content of the message, or even focus on the medium through which it is disseminated, and try to contest the narrative without paying any attention to the real world issues which allow it to resonate in the first place.

Alienation & Estrangement

So let me illustrate what I mean here with tangible examples of how these identity narratives might resonate. If we look at the example of France and the experience of French Muslims, within the public discourse in France there’s an ominous fear of Islam, the immigrant, or the other, is what leads to, amongst other things, the desecration of gravestones of French Muslim World War II veterans; sartorial restrictions on Muslim women’s dress and also importantly the linkage of dress to violence (most recently with the banning of the burkini by various French towns); And most significantly, what has helped spur the far-right National Front party to victory in the European Parliament.

A broader geographical survey of public attitudes on Muslims and an examination of Islamophobia within mainstream tabloid media tabloid illustrates how toxic the popular and media discourse on Muslims has become in many parts of the US and Europe, presenting Muslim minorities as an unwelcome presence. In this context, you can begin to understand how, for some Muslims feeling under siege and alienated in their own country, an alternative identity narrative might begin to resonate. Of course, groups that prey on this kind of alienation, end up benefitting enormously. IS has shrewdly attempted not just to capitalise on these feelings of alienation and identity crises, but hopes to actively build on them by creating conditions in Western societies that work towards these outcomes by eliminating the so-called “grayzones”

Moreover, IS wants to be seen as a kind of welcoming utopia, and the idea of a welcoming utopia is quite important in its grand strategy. When we think of IS propaganda, we think of brutal violence, beheadings, crucifixions - we think of what you might call the pornography of violence, deliberately targeting Western audiences and sensibilities. However, the overwhelming majority of IS media content (around 80%) and propaganda is in fact centred around depictions of blissful civilian life in the ‘utopian’ caliphate. It’s about state building, identity and welcoming, joining a community, escaping persecution and enjoying religious freedoms.

Socio-Economic Marginalisation

A second example of how these media narratives might resonate with lived experiences relates to socio-economic marginalization. Many of the individuals from France and Belgium who joined IS or carried out attack at home, have hailed from the French *banlieues*, or other ghetto like areas in and around Brussels that are often characterised as environments providing a heady mix of unemployment, crime, drugs, institutional racism and endemic cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. It is in these sorts of scenarios that radical groups might potentially offer an escape from a bleak future, or a criminal past. This is particularly striking in France where around 70% of the prison population is Muslim, despite the fact that Muslims make up around 7-8% of the general population.

IS online propaganda shrewdly seeks to capitalise on these structural inequalities in its appeals. The Jihadists’ offer redemption through the image of the heroic warrior, with the individual reborn as some sort of avenging hero for the victimised community. Following the Charlie Hedbo attack, Islamic State’s official radio station praised the “Jihadi *heroes* who had avenged the Prophet”, confirming the Kouachi brothers transformation from petty criminals and nobodies into heroes of Islam. The appeal to the valiant holy warrior or chivalrous knight is a recurring theme in Jihadist literature, and the Islamic State’s

propaganda machine has been busy pumping out material that shrewdly seeks to exploit these tensions. Recent social media propaganda included the telling phrases “Sometimes people with the worst pasts create the best futures” and “Why be a loser when you can be a martyr?”

Today, as ISIS continues to suffer territorial losses and military defeats, and with its caliphate project a distant dream, the power of its narrative still holds some appeal. More importantly, for many countries such as France, the appeal of ISIS amongst some of its citizens was the symptom of a much greater malaise, that will not disappear with the demise of ISIS. Indeed we can be certain that if ISIS ended tomorrow, the problem of radicalization would not go away.

Day 2

Session 3: Enhancing Young People's Citizenship Participation

Panel 1: Everyday life Participation at Community Level

An overview of the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, mandated by Security Council 2250 (2015)

By Cécile Mazzacurati

1. The adoption of **Security Council Resolution 2250** (2015) was a turning point in terms of providing a new policy framework focused on youth in relation to peace and security, shifting the emphasis from youth as perpetrators of violence to youth as contributors to peace. SCR 2250 was modeled after Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, putting emphasis on the inclusivity of peace processes and the political role of traditionally marginalized groups. The Resolution includes five pillars: participation, prevention, protection, disengagement and reintegration and partnership. It highlights the demographic dividend presented by a large youth population when the right investments are in place.
 - The Resolution was adopted under the leadership of Jordan by a unanimous Security Council in December 2015. Like all resolutions, it is a political, negotiated text.
 - SCR 2250 was called for by civil society, first and foremost young people working on peacebuilding and asking for a framework that would recognize their role and give them an entry point with their governments and decision-makers to get a seat at the table. Concerted work by civil society organizations, with youth-led org at the forefront, international NGOs and the UN eventually led to support from a coalition of supportive Member States, which keeps slowly expanding.
 - Some of the language in SCR 2250 comes from the Amman Youth Declaration, adopted a few months before SCR 2250 at a Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security organized in Amman.
2. SCR 2250 commissions to the Secretary-General a **Progress Study** aiming at documenting young people’s positive contribution to peace and providing recommendations for action at the local, national, regional and global levels.
 - The UN Secretary-General appointed (August 2016) an independent **lead author**, [Graeme Simpson](#), to develop the Study, as well as an [Advisory Group of Experts](#), including 21 scholars, practitioners and young leaders.
 - The Progress Study is supported by the UN system and partners but it is an **independent report**. The objective is to develop an **operational report, a strategy for the implementation of 2250, proposing a forward-looking agenda for the international community, including practical recommendations** for the peace and security community to work with young people in new ways.
 - The overarching **research questions** that the Study is addressing are the following:

- What are the main peace and security challenges that young women and men face, and how do these impact their lives (locally, nationally, regionally or globally)?
 - What factors prevent or inhibit the involvement of young women and men in building peace and contributing to security? And what factors could promote and support young people's active involvement in building peace, preventing violence and contributing to positive social cohesion in their communities, societies and institutions?
 - What are the peacebuilding and violence prevention activities, initiatives and projects being undertaken by young people, and what is their impact?
 - What do young people recommend to enhance the contribution and leadership of young men and women to building sustainable peace and preventing violence? Do they have particular views on how their government, State Institutions, civil society organizations, media or the international community, could help to support these contributions?
- **Methodology:**

The Study prioritized a strategy for accessing the voice of young people, through an inclusive and participatory methodology based on consulting young people:

- Seven [regional consultations](#) with youth from civil society were held, involving youth from 157 countries (Arab States, December 2016; Asia & Pacific, May 2017; Eastern Europe & Central Asia, May 2017; Latin America and the Caribbean, May 2017; Eastern & Southern Africa, August 2017; Europe, September 2017);
- [Country focused-research](#) was completed through 14 [country case-studies](#) and [over 120 focus group discussions](#) with “hard-to-reach youth” (about 1,500 total) in another twelve countries;
- 20 [thematic papers](#) were developed by partner organizations as expert/strategic contributions to the study;
- A [Global Survey of Youth-Led Organizations Working on Peace and Security](#) was completed by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground;
- [2 mapping exercises](#) have been conducted, to document the work on YPS being undertaken by Member States and UN entities; and
- [5 thematic on-line consultations](#) were completed on the youth4peace portal.
- [Extensive literature review](#)

The Study is thus firmly positioned in the heart of *the triangle of policy, practice and scholarship*. One of the key challenges it faces is to define what is and is not in the youth, peace and security “field” – not a social science field in itself but a political agenda with multiple entry points and dimensions that need to be brought together in a coherent way.

3. Some emerging key messages:

- **A system-wide approach — Contributing to larger policy discussions**

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda is an essential contribution to “sustaining peace” (as defined by recent UN resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council), as well as to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the advancement of “peaceful, just and inclusive societies” – SDG 16. As such, Youth, Peace and Security lies at the heart of an integrated prevention approach to violent conflict.

Resolution 2250 also builds upon and extends the work of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The YPS agenda is an age-responsive approach to the WPS agenda in differentiating the unique experiences of young women and young men and appreciating the impact

of the diverse gender roles within youth populations. These two peace and security agendas are therefore inextricably linked, with the YPS agenda re-emphasizing the pivotal role of young women, in particular, in preventing violent conflict and sustaining peace.

- **Counter-productive impact of “policy panic”**

Simplistic romanticized, demonized or patronizing stereotypes about young people have skewed policy and programmatic priorities. The dominant focus tends to remain on the “youth problem” or on “youth at risk”, to the exclusion of the everyday lives of young people or those contributing to peace. This has contributed to a number of “policy panics”:

- Policy panic about **violent extremism** based on assumptions that young people can be easily recruited to participate in violent groups – despite the fact that the majority of young people are *not* involved in violence.
- Policy panic about the **demographic growth of youth populations (“youth bulges”)**, particularly within conflict-affected societies. This centres on assumptions that large groups of young people present a risk for violence as a result of the lack of absorptive capacity of these societies and the exclusion that is a result. Yet, this fails to recognize the resourcefulness of most youth and the potential value of these “youth booms,” as well as the importance of political, social, cultural and economic inclusion of young men and women.
- Policy assumptions about how **unemployment** and **lack of education** (“idle hands”) stimulate or contribute to youth violence, despite the fact that most young people in these circumstances do not resort to violence. This also often results in the erroneous assumption that education and/or employment serve as stand-alone solutions to the problem of youth violence.
- Policy panic about the **crisis of (forced) migration and the influx of (young) migrants and refugees**: young forced migrants are often represented as a drain on the economy, a problem for the education system, competitors for scarce local jobs, intruders who cannot or do not ‘culturally assimilate’, or potential security threats or would-be terrorist infiltrators - all perceptions that also fuel anti-immigrant movements.

The mono-causal explanations which underlie much of these “policy panics” produce solutions that are at best palliative or ameliorative. **Prevention is not effectively served by these simplistic solutions** (e.g. repression, education, employment and control over movement) where these are often based on policy assumptions rather than good data, often address the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of conflict and violence, and seldom engage or listen to young people to assess the validity of these assumptions.

- **Avoiding to fall in the opposite trap of romanticizing young people**: that they all are (or can be turned into) “agents of change” or “actors for peace”, that they all share same objectives and mostly want to discuss “youth issues”, common views, a willingness to engage if given the proper push. Need to understanding young people in all their diversity – intersectionality of multiple social determinants but also and always as divided political actors. Example of proposals submitted to PBF, void of most political analysis on what motivates and drives young people. Multiple panels about young people’s right to participate rather than practicing the inclusion of young people in discussions not about youth.

- **A prevention approach: countering the violence of exclusion**

The central problem is the systemic and extensive exclusion and marginalization of young people, which has led to a trust deficit in the relationship of young people to both their governments and the multilateral system. Sustaining peace and preventing violence is best served by addressing the “**violence of exclusion.**” The multi-dimensional experiences of young people’s marginalization and exclusion (e.g.

youth plus gender, plus forced migration, plus unemployment and plus victimization) have to be fully understood and appreciated.

Instead of investing in “problem-solving,” which is oriented around the small sliver of young people involved in violence, an effective prevention strategy has to be rooted in a better understanding of and focus on the positive attributes, resources, capacities or attributes (or “positive resilience”) of young men and women, in their responses to marginalization and exclusion, and to invest in supporting and sustaining them.

- **It is only by listening to young people that we can move beyond reductionist and binary understandings of youth identity and motivation**

Stereotypes deprive young people of their agency and role as positive change agents in society. But defining exclusion and marginalization of young men and women as the core problem, still begs the question of what kind of “inclusion” is the solution. It is not enough to talk about youth “voices” and “representation”, or to opt for patronizing or tokenistic gestures. Rather, the “agency” and the “leadership” of young people needs to be supported. For young people themselves, participation and inclusion is not unconditional, but must be based on the integrity and accountability of social, political and economic systems and processes.

- **Focusing on a “positive security” approach**

There is strong evidence that moral messaging and strong law enforcement measures are remedial at best, but do not work as effective prevention or deterrence. Although it is neither determinist nor predictive, exposure to violence coupled with lived experiences and perceptions of injustice are key factors in determining whether or not young people may be desensitized to or subsequently predisposed to be involved in violence, and there is a significant danger that violent oppression will produce more violence in response.

Security needs to be embraced as a right, and defined positively as a protective entitlement of young people, rather than all young people being tainted by association and the youth sector as a whole being seen as a security risk.

- **Understanding youth peacebuilding**

Youth peacebuilding is often understood as highly localized, community-based, or even familial or individually based, under the radar, under-funded, or volunteer-based. But it should not be assumed to be limited to the local level: it often transcends geographic boundaries, is also national or even trans-national, and on-line. Youth peacebuilding is very diversified, spanning diverse social constituencies and different sectors – young indigenous people, young migrants and refugees, victims, urban and rural youth, etc. It also goes beyond the horizontal relationships among youth alone, forging connections across generations and with other thematic sectors and organizations, for example in the human rights, gender and education sectors. Youth peacebuilding takes many forms and shapes, including youth dissent and revolutions for social and political change. Youth peacebuilding is not devoid of tensions, political manipulation, personal interests – ex Cote d’Ivoire FGDs.

- **From a demographic dividend to a peace dividend: investing in the positive resilience of young people**

The priority is to “fund the upside”: invest in youth resilience to conflict and in innovation in sustaining peace. This should include strategies to support the creation of an enabling environment, addressing the (social, political, economic and legal) factors that inhibit young people’s peacebuilding and violence prevention work; prioritizing funding for youth-based peacebuilding; enabling the role of youth peacebuilding in “listening down” (engaging at community level); and “speaking up” (advocacy and critical partnership with government and policy-makers).

Engaging the #SWIFT Generation: Repositioning Community-based Action Movement (Snapchat, Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter)

By Tijani Christian

Preamble

Whether it’s turning promises on climate change into action, rebuilding trust in the financial system, or connecting the world to the internet, there are a number of key global challenges that, if they are to be addressed, require cooperation from the public and private sector; particularly the sub-national level of the community. Sustainable peacebuilding cannot be achieved without assuring that all girls and boys, enjoy the dignity and human rights to expand their capabilities, secure their reproductive health and rights, find decent work, social inclusion and contribute to economic growth.

Toward this end, the inclusion of youth in citizenship participation is critical in order to advance towards more egalitarian societies and it is one of the most urgent challenges facing societies today. People aged between 15 and 24 represent more than half of the world’s total population; which is translated in the same representation of the demography of youth at the community level. In many ways, a large proportion of this population is extremely excluded and marginalized from the economic, political and social processes that are taking place due to the marked social and economic inequality that is quite prevalent. This has presented an opportunity for negative violence is present itself as the only obvious outlet/alternative to this capitalist, classist, exclusive system – which hold itself together in this tripartite relationship i.e. embodiment, employment and empowerment. Nonetheless, a majority of them have found new, innovative ways to organize and intervene in the political arena and decision-making processes sometimes with notable results – youth have protagonized a number of movements that have resulted in significant political and social changes in recent years.

Overview

This paper proposes that citizen demand for political and socio-economic change and sustainable peace has a significant correlation on the enhanced involvement of young people in community-based organizations, cultural, artistic and sports associations; especially at the sub-national level. A young person’s surrounding greatly affect their development – particularly their immediacy. Urie Bronfenbrenner believed, *“that a person's development was affected by everything in their surrounding environment. He divided the person's environment into five different levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem.”*¹⁷

The community forms a part of this ecosystem that must foster this engagement and active participation of young people in everyday life which promotes social well-being, in consolidating the social fabric, as well as in conflict prevention, resolution and sustaining peace.

Meaningful Youth Representation

Meaningful youth representation, at all levels leads to more tangible outcomes and greater buy-ins. While the broad definition of youth varies across different platforms, the Commonwealth identifies

¹⁷ Bronfenbrenner, Urie. 1979. Ecological Systems Theory. Retrieved from: http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/providers/early_steps/training/documents/bronfenbrenners_ecological.pdf

youth as people who fall between the ages of 15 and 29¹⁸ and the United Nations' age range is 15-24.¹⁹ However, *"the UNDP Youth Strategy uses a more flexible definition of youth to allow programming to be aligned to national and local realities."* With respect to the term youth, *"...UNDP refers to young women and men, in all their diversity of experiences and contexts, taking into consideration the existing definitions of youth used at the country and/or regional level(s)."*²⁰

Meaningful representation can be defined as impacting, having a more significant purpose or having greater inclusion in a quantitative and qualitative manner. Forbes²¹ asserts that *"Young people account for 60% of the Latin American and Caribbean population."* However, youth are underrepresented within political systems at all levels, particularly, the sub-national level of the community.

Since 2016, young people under the age of thirty (30) account for less than two (2) per cent of the world's Members of Parliament ("MPs"). Additionally, less than twenty (20) per cent of the world's upper houses have no MP under the age of thirty (30).²² Undoubtedly, this is a clear indication that youth political participation does not adequately align with the definition of meaningful representation provided above.

There are many different groupings (example youth with disabilities, ethnic groups etc.) within the youth context, and far too often their voices get lost in the myriad of ideas and actionable plans.

Legal framework and policies would need to be established mandating that youth have a specified quota within the system of governance. Having an established number of youth who ought to be included in the political sphere can form the stepping-stone to the actualization of more meaningful youth participation. This is also underscored by the UNDP's recommendation that the youth and women quotas be introduced in electoral laws. The UNDP purports that *"...due attention to the electoral system and other contextual factors, quotas for youth in Parliaments can be one way to increase youth representation."*²³ This quota will be discussed later on in this paper.

Youth should not be placed at the table as figure-heads or victims of tokenism. Many states have Youth Parliaments and other like entities. However, they are seldom included in the actual politics and decision making processes of the country.

Enhancing the Young People's Citizenship Participation

Youth unification (SNAPCHAT MOMENT) is paramount to realizing our true presence and power in the political sphere. There is a popular adage within the Caribbean region which states that, *"a house divided, cannot stand."* Together, we are stronger. On that premise, we submit that the obvious disconnect in ideas and tangible support among Caribbean youth results in youth being excluded from the political process. Michael Hyatt asserts that, *"Unity is the state of many acting as one. It is an attribute of highly effective teams, whether in marriage, business, church,*

¹⁸ Youth. Retrieved 3rd October, 2017 from <<http://thecommonwealth.org/youth> Retrieved 3rd October, 2017>

¹⁹ Secretary- General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

²⁰ UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017 at page 9

²¹ Forbes, M. (2015, January 06). Caribbean Youth and Unemployment. Retrieved 3rd October, 2017, from <https://www.caribjournal.com/2015/01/06/caribbean-youth-and-unemployment/#>

²² Youth Participation in National Parliaments at page 3. Retrieved 2nd October, 2017 from <<http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/youthrep-e.pdf>>

²³ Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle at pages 22 to 23

or government. Without it, progress stops."²⁴ This profound statement underscores the need for youth within the Caribbean to act as one in order to progress.

Youth Associations (=WHATSAPP group chat & FACEBOOK Live) is a mixed methodology that has reaped qualitative and quantitative benefits from the demographic dividend – whether through cultural, political, social, economic and environmental empowerment. The involvement of youth in these community-based organisations has created a shift in outlook on global perspective and diversity – moving from insular motives. The young people due to their inept innovative and new way of accepting new ways of thinking have caused a push for intergenerational dialogues where young and older generations discuss issues, plan engagements and advocate together on similar platform for social change. As a result of this new age of technology and young people's mastery of such, community citizenship participation is greatly enhanced as their voices are amplified beyond their locale.

Youthful Diversity & Cohesion (INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER MOMENTS) is identifiable in transforming the most violent communities into the most just. The Sustainable Development Goals 16 speaks to "peaceful, just, inclusive and strong institutions".²⁵ Young people, with a global worldview, have been able to tolerate, if not accept, differences for the purpose of inclusivity and peace much more than any demography. While the cultural dimensions of race, ethnicity and religion play a strong part in their perception of issue – due to the higher level of education, youth have resorted to more civil and socially impacting approaches of resolving conflict and preventing higher levels of violence. While it is alarming how young people are often perceived as the main perpetrators of violence and extremism, it is also quite worthy of note, the conscious effort of youth to not "turn a blind eye" to political, social and economic inequalities; but rather, to petition – whether to the streets of the earth or the corridors of the worldwide – in an effort to ensure that a group of five (5) or ten thousand (10,000) in a community a small island state is heard. Diversity is greatly culturally underpinned; youth have cross-cultured and shown that tolerance is better than injure.

²⁴ Hyatt, M. (n.d.). How to Create the Kind of Team Unity That Drives Results. Retrieved October 02, 2017, from <<https://michaelhyatt.com/how-to-create-the-kind-of-team-unity-that-drives-results.html>>

²⁵ United Nations. 2015. Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

Young People Preventing Violence and Sustaining Peace²⁶

By Lakshitha S. Prelis

I. CONTEXT

New technologies and global connectivity have profoundly reshaped the civic landscape in developed and developing societies alike, eroding trust in institutions and creating new channels for people-led action. From Tunisia to the Gambia the aspirations of connected youth can and have radically changed societies and drive powerful openings and reforms. At the same time, global connectivity and the failings of formal institutions have created an environment for extremist and violent ideologies to take root and spread – and many governments have sought to use the threat of insecurity as a pretext to close civic spaces or restrict civic engagement, especially harming the youth-driven spaces.

Technological and generational changes threaten governments in many parts of the world and Open Societies face threats on all sides – intolerant and extremist ideologies and violence that seek to curtail civil liberties on one hand, and the powerful who propose to restrict freedoms in the guise of preserving security and order on the other. Nowhere is this more true than in the fast-transitioning societies across West Africa, East Africa, Middle East and Southeast Asia, where connectivity, economic growth, and demographic changes have opened the full range of opportunities and threats.

Ensuring that technological and generational change leads to more inclusive, open, and prosperous societies requires new alliances among youth, movements, the private sector, traditional civil society, and governments at the global, national, and local levels. Protecting and ensuring these spaces is critical to sustaining peace and supporting sustainable development locally, regionally and globally.

II. YOUTH-DRIVEN CIVIL SOCIETY

What are youth-led organizations saying about their role in Peace and Security

As a contribution to the Progress Study, Search for Common Ground in partnership with United Network of Young Peacebuilders conducted a Global Survey²⁷ of youth-led organizations. One of the first of its kind.

About the survey: The survey targeted organizations led by youth under 35 years, working on peace and security (*received 688 responses*). Questions focused on youth organizations’ operations, areas of work, results, challenges, and recommendations. The survey was translated into 11 languages and consisted of *online & offline versions and was managed by Outreach Managers for 7 geographical regions*.

- 399 youth orgs completed the survey in full - Mostly coming from Africa (43%) and 20% came from Asia, others from Europe, Americas, & MENA
- Findings:
 - **How they operate:** These youth organizations are primarily driven by volunteers (97% unpaid staff) and mostly (49%) operate on a budget of 5,000 USD per year or less. *Only 11% above \$100,000 per year.*

²⁶ This article includes content supported by Rachel Taza and Isabelle Tibi.

²⁷ <https://www.sfcg.org/mapping-a-sector-unscr-2250/>

- Despite this limited budget, they are **successful** at preventing violence in their communities, including by preventing recruitment to violent groups, change perceptions of youth in their communities, from troublemakers to positive contributors, build social cohesion and inter-faith unity, deliver humanitarian assistance when other actors fail.
 - *Example: One youth organization in Swabi District (a district in province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in Pakistan described how his organization were able to work with a young person interested in joining an extremist group to prevent his recruitment. Although he was not interested in their initial outreach, they continued to invite him to their youth activities and he joined a couple cultural tours to beautiful locations nearby - **after months** he started opening up and sharing his story and changed his mind about the violent extremist group and instead became one of the most active members in their youth network.*
- Interestingly, these youth led organizations are also fairly **gender balanced** in staff and leadership (45% female)
- **Strengths:** They are built on trust, shared values and a sense of belonging. They are uniquely able to mobilise both youth and other community members, having access where other organisations may not.
- Some of their **main challenges** are related to their operational status (funding), and the fact that they are working in conflict-affected areas (face threats of violence), and they encounter a lack of trust from governments and other stakeholders which makes it harder to do their work.
- They also are looking for **increased technical support**, including through capacity development (in areas like monitoring and evaluation) and **partnerships** with regional and international platforms,
- When asked about their priorities for **short- and medium-term outcomes of Resolution 2250// Recommendations for international community**, nearly all called for investment in youth-led peacebuilding efforts. The second priority was for young people to be better represented in decision-making processes (and to be included at negotiation table). They request to be recognised and taken seriously as peacebuilding practitioners.
 - *Want to be recognized beyond playing roles in traditional youth structures such as local and national youth councils because in some places these structures are perceived as pet projects by traditional decision makers.*
 - *Want the ability to run for office at local and national level.*
 - *They don't want to be regarded as wanting only benefits to themselves. They want to work toward inter-generational collaboration. Their sense of horizontal leadership concepts focus on benefiting the whole as opposed to traditional leadership structures that are vertical that show more benefits at the top*
- A lot of these findings confirm assumptions we already had about the field. But the Global Survey was the first time (we know of) to consult youth-led orgs specifically working on peace and security at this scale.
- There is a need to continue to build on this survey to expand the portfolio of youth driven organizations.

III. DISENGAGED OR HARD TO REACH YOUTH NOT PART OF FORMAL YOUTH-LED EFFORTS:

As part of Search for Common Ground's contribution to the Progress Study, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and individual conversations were conducted in the fourth quarter of 2017 drawing on a youth-led and peer-to-peer approach²⁸ with "hard to reach" youth groups and individuals. Search consulted a total of 729 young people (45% were young women, 55% were young men) from areas most affected by the civil war in Nepal, political violence in Burundi, and violent extremism in Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia. In all countries, Search consulted a majority of hard to reach, marginalized young people, including former combatants and internally displaced persons, whose voices are seldom heard in global policy discussions, and whom mainstream development programs have challenges in meaningfully engaging.

In **Burundi**, political participation and civic engagement are currently lived as a risk, with many youth having been involved in or victims of political violence. Lack of freedom of expression and association, as well as a socio-political climate that deters people from exchanging across divisive lines, prevent youth from engaging in building peace and promoting social cohesion.

In **Nepal**, youth who participated in the civil war (1996-2006), as well as a new generation involved in social movements in the Terai/Mhadesh, are left with the feeling of having been used as they now struggle to find their place in society. Stigmatized, unemployed, and pressured by society and their families to earn a livelihood, their only alternative to save face, gain status or escape the pain, frustration and isolation is often to engage in criminal activities or substance abuse, or to be manipulated by political parties. Yet, most of them resist violence and many engage in positive activities in their community. In their view, political manipulation of youth, caste-based discrimination, impunity, and need for national reconciliation must be addressed.

In **Niger**, youth consulted live in areas both affected by violence and hard to reach by development programming. They included youth active in their communities and youth facing marginalization and hardships (refugees, young women abducted by and forced to marry Boko Haram members). They are resisting violence and looking for opportunities to make a difference. However, their action remains largely informal and small-scale, limited by economic insecurity, lack of access to decision-making, lack of recognition by local authorities and the wider community (especially the case for young women). Youth appear more united than divided, supporting each other in a context of isolation from mainstream spheres of society. The case of Niger highlights the importance of leveraging youth solidarity and supporting and investing in youth who have successfully resisted violence and violent extremism.

The case of **Nigeria** highlights that consolidating peace requires working with all groups of youth directly affected by violence and the insurgency, and who may respond to this violence in different ways. Key messages include: secure a more responsive and responsible approach from government, security agencies and community leaders to work in collaboration with young people; provide more services to internally displaced persons, and work for their return home; create opportunities for positively engaging vigilante groups and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force; recognize and support the work that young people are doing in extremely difficult situations to build peace, counter violent extremism, provide security and emergency relief.

In **Tunisia**, youth from regions consulted feel marginalized to such an extent that they have developed a profound skepticism and disinterest in the very notion of peacebuilding, emphasizing that their

²⁸ See toolkits and guidance at <https://www.sfcg.org/youth-led-research/>

problems are such that involvement is difficult, almost pointless²⁹. Forgotten by the State and its institutions, disdained and misunderstood by the elites, youth feel that violence is done upon them. Many elements that could support them in exploring non-violent alternatives, participating in violence prevention and the consolidation of peace, were found to be missing. The case of Tunisia highlights the importance of engaging personally with and listening to marginalized youth, to prevent further disengagement.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following are based on Search's experience engaging youth over the past thirty years around inclusive security and sustainable peace efforts in fragile and conflict affected settings. These recommendations also build on the Guiding Principles of Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding³⁰;

- **DON'T SEE THEM ONLY AS VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS, BUT RATHER AS PARTNERS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE** - Young people have a unique and critical perspective to offer on addressing violence and exclusion based on their understanding of what drives recruitment at the community level and their proximity to local realities, grievances, and messaging. They also play an important role in promoting peace and inclusive security in their communities and can bring about constructive change.
 - *As partners, young people should be actively engaged in both policy and programming, from analysis and design, to implementation and monitoring, and developing recommendations for the future based on lessons learned.*
 - **Recognize young people's need for respect, dignity, and agency** - Violent groups often offer young people a sense of purpose, the comfort of a shared sense of identity, and a path to heroism. Why don't we do the same? Those who engage in violence are often driven by **legitimate** social and political grievances, experiences of injustice, witnessing abuse and corruption.
 - *International Alert research (2016)*³¹ about young people's involvement in violent extremism in Syria suggests that a sense of self-realization, the relationships of respect and dignity, and the potential to exercise agency are equally important for young people's resilience as the needs for material well-being including jobs. Similar examples are also highlighted in *Mercy Corps' study from 2015 on Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia*.³²
- **BE WARY OF QUICK FIXES:** [Experiences of injustice are key motivating factors](#) for youth who participate in political violence. Similar evidence is captured in an informal global Facebook survey of young people from over 110 countries and territories when asked about key drivers of violent extremism³³. Accordingly, "quick fixes" or strategies that aim to pacify youth, such as addressing violent extremism through vocational training or

²⁹ "But what are you talking about, Madame, have you not understood what we have just told you about our misery?" [...] "Peace is impossible, no one will let you live in peace, even the state, it does not suit them that we live in peace." (Focus group discussion with hard to reach youth, Tunisia)

³⁰ Access Guiding Principles at <https://www.youth4peace.info/node/60>

³¹ Why Young Syrians Choose to Fight: Vulnerability and resilience to recruitment by violent extremist groups in Syria http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Syria_YouthRecruitmentExtremistGroups_EN_2016.pdf

³² Download report at https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps_YouthConsequencesReport_2015.pdf

³³ See Poll on Youth Transforming Violent Extremism Facebook group at: <https://web.facebook.com/groups/YouthTransformingVE/>

promoting “moderation”, can further frustrate or stigmatize youth. Young people have legitimate social and political aspirations, historically at the forefront of movements to challenge injustice and abuse of power. When pursued through constructive and nonviolent action, these aspirations can create positive and visionary change for their communities. Be open to engaging young women and young men who are *beyond the “usual constituency”*.

- Look for ways to move beyond the capital-city-based elite youth organizations towards associations of motorcycle drivers, or sports clubs, or associations linked with religious organizations.
- **FACILITATE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP ACROSS DIVIDING LINES** - Systemic mistrust is one of the greatest barriers to involving young people in policy and programming. Creating informal and formal channels for communication and coordination between youth and security actors is crucial. This can be challenging when governments practice a closed-door approach in security matters and youth are wary of efforts for engagement (particularly when there’s a history of human rights abuses and domestic spying). Trust-building may need to start gradually, through informal or discreet channels if necessary.
 - In Eastern DRC, where more than 65% of the country’s population is below age 25, lack of inclusive and participatory decision-making has been a key source of tension. We have seen young people contributing to the peace and security issues in the Ruzizi Plan. That was done when CSOs (like Search or Common Ground) helped strengthen young people’s capacities in analyzing local conflict dynamics and provided opportunities and support platforms for them to come together from across different ethnic affiliations to discuss the issues they face and address and defuse tensions (through listening clubs, cultural centers and peace hotlines). As a result, not only did an increased percentage of the community (24%) recognize the importance of involving youth in conflict analysis and resolution in a primary role, but relationships across community divides were strengthened and there was reduction in violent incidents.³⁴
 - In places like Lebanon, Nepal and DRC, Search and others worked to build relationships and improve accountability between youth and security forces. Through roundtables, youth shadowing police patrols to understanding the complexity of their work, and joint simulations (Lebanon)³⁵ or soccer games and team building exercises (Nepal)³⁶ to tilling a communal field together (DRC) these types of activities have led to community policing and joint security planning. This includes working also with prison officials and correction officers to improve reintegration of former violent offenders for example in Morocco, Tunisia and Indonesia.
- **AMPLIFY CREDIBLE, CONSTRUCTIVE NARRATIVES (AND BE COMFORTABLE WITH A DIVERSITY OF VIEWPOINTS):** Amplifying young voices who are tackling grievances or speaking to similar needs through nonviolent means offers other young people credible

³⁴ See final evaluation, Yawezekana – Youth for Peace in the Rusizi Plain: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SFCG_Evaluation_2016_Yawezekana_COD109.pdf

³⁵ See more info at: <https://www.sfcg.org/better-together/>

³⁶ See <https://www.sfcg.org/football-brings-nepal-youth-police-together/>

alternatives to violence. The aim is *not* to demonize young people who have chosen violent paths or to have all young people speak with one unified voice. On the contrary, it is important to open the door for youth to disengage from violent movements and to give visibility to a diverse range of ideological viewpoints. This engages young people across the ideological spectrum and highlights that both hardline and moderate individuals can benefit from engaging each other peacefully.

- In Indonesia, Search established youth-run radio stations inside the Islamic boarding schools.³⁷ The students were trained and coached-not just to broadcast a radio drama series on tolerance-but to hold discussions which valued all points of view, creating a safe space for questions and told stories of young students in all of their diversity. Powerful especially when radio has the power to stir the imagination of those listening alone.

³⁷ See more info at: <https://www.sfcg.org/salam-from-pesantren-santris-experience-in-managing-media-for-peace/>

Day 2

Session 3: Enhancing Young People's Citizenship Participation

Panel 2: Participation in Social Movements and Political Protests

Remake the world?

By Karim Sama

We are celebrating today the 3rd anniversary of the upheaval that overthrew a dictatorship of 27 years.

I would like to thank you for the honor you give me to be able to learn and share experiences, ideas, at this international meeting here in Rome.

As an artist, activist and a peace builder, the discussions we had yesterday opened my eyes on some subjects that would help me guide my actions on the field.

We have been invited to meditate on the general theme of "youth, peace and security" and I've been asked to address the specific theme of participation in social movements and political protests.

Well, like many, I have been an observer, sometimes witness, sometimes victim of injustices, bad governance, dictatorship, attack and violation of basic human rights. Marcus Garvey had said "we are the descendants of a people who have suffered so much, we are the descendants of a people determined to no longer suffer". and I belong to this generation of young people who decided to take control of their destiny to answer this call of Frantz Fanon who says that "each generation must in a relative opacity, discover its mission, to fill it or betray it ...". Indeed, how can one remain indifferent in a world where dictators are protected just because they are friends and protectors of the interests of certain international powers?

How to remain indifferent to the rapes and murders of women, children in areas transformed into "no man's land" because of traffic of all kinds? How to sit with arms crossed, eyes closed and mouth taped for fear of being killed, and thus becoming an accomplice of tyrants, exploiters, bandits etc. While it is just to organize, to denounce, to fight with the certain hope to move the lines.

It is happening today on the African continent, wonderful things. There is a social revolution on the African continent that no one can stop.

For our part, in a movement like the Balai Citoyen, all our wish is to see this revolution take place in non-violence. There is a saying that "an old man sitting sees more than a young man standing". Past experiences have taught us that alone, isolated and unorganized, it will be difficult for us to struggle effectively.

I come from a country that has a long tradition of struggle. In my country, there is a political conscience that encourages us to engage in politics or in society. Burkina Faso was one of the first countries in Africa to overthrow its first president at the end of a popular uprising in 1966. And since then, political struggles, union struggles, etc., have nourished the conscience of the youth. Our movement is the sum of all these experiences of struggles.

As a Popular Movement, The Citizen Broom is inspired by the fight of Thomas Sankara, one of the most popular presidents of the African continent, assassinated in 1987.

The theoretical basis is necessary before any commitment, but useless if it is not put into practice. So we decided to put into practice, on the field, the sum of our experiences. And to be more effective and efficient, we created in 2013, the Balai Citoyen with the main mission for a democratic state of law, where reigns a better life together, for the benefit of each citizen, with respect, transparency and accountability.

- Our organization chart:
 - Coordination nationale
 - Coordinationa régionale
 - Club cibals
 - Ambassades cibal

- Some of our actions:
 - **political actions:** sensitization campaigns, registration on the electoral lists, voting a duty, peaceful elections, after your revolte your vote, and the concept of “I vote and I stay”,
 - **security actions:** meetings with the police, producing a documentary film on koglwéogo a self-defense groups, organizing of meetings between pupils, students, security forces, customary leaders, religious leaders, catlers and farmers
 - **social actions:** reforestation, blood donation, tea-debate, screenings-debates, concerts
 - **diplomatic actions:** meetings with diplomatic representations (ambassador of France, USA, Canada, European Union)
 - **network actions:** organizing meetings with other african civil society mouvements like y'en a marre, lucha, filimbi..

the prospects: the source of the evil being political (bad governance) we need a new political offer based on new virtues in the conduct of social policies. Trust, confidence and a good communication between governments, institutions and the people. We therefore encourage young people to engage in politics to be decision makers.

Talking about gender issue, we really strive to get girls with us.

The nation-state, where the State, as a whole, is today considered as the form of human organization able to sustainably and effectively embody the sovereign interests of the peoples and nations party to their constitutions. The main task, more important than the multitude of other tasks devolved to a State, is to provide every citizen with equal opportunities of access to resources, education, culture, science and above all to dignity.

Since the end of the Second World War and the parenthesis of the cold war, which ended in the early 1990s with the fall of the Soviet bloc, an economic and social model has been established as an absolute model. At the beginning of the 20th century, this model seems to reign on the economic and social vision of almost all states on the planet. This model is capitalism. If this model has allowed rapid economic growth and exponential development of production means especially in Western countries, it has unfortunately led to a mode of state governance tending to disempower the States, their obligations including social. From then on, two fundamental questions arise: Can we neglect the social in a mostly young human society especially in the southern countries, when we know the vulnerability of this segment of the population for whom all challenges remain to be met? Can we be

surprised that the reactions resulting from these brutal withdrawals of states lead to social upheavals?

In a human society where better living together was to be the golden rule, divisions, exclusions and exploitations are moving us further and further away from each other and creating virtual walls that install and maintain fear, aggression and so on. - On the one hand, we have men and women who want to hold the reins of society to print their own rhythms for the benefit of all or for special interests.

- On the other hand, men and women who are not interested in ruling the power of States but who are highly concerned with the good functioning of society and who in fact control the actions of the first whose motives are far from the wills of people. Since one does not recognize oneself in the first case, as a citizen, if one is eager to be useful to one's society, the only remaining option is to engage in a citizen movement and for good reason :

In many cases, Citizen Engagement is one of the best bulwarks against bad political governance that can lead to conflicts,.

Commitment is also, and above all, a wonderful framework for training and raising the awareness of citizens on the issues of political governance and the involvement and active participation of citizens in the efficient management of grassroots communities. It would be even desirable for our current societies to put the citizen's commitment as a prerequisite for starting a political career. This would skilfully avoid the disembarkation of men with unacknowledged designs and totally out of step with the aspirations of the real need of which they are ignorant. That said, citizen engagement is not meant to systematically challenge any measure from political power-holders, especially if they came up with salutary actions. The greatness of the committed citizens resides also in their readiness to recognize to Caesar what is Caesar's and to say it loud and clear if necessary.

This is what will legitimize their taking positions contrary to unfair and unjust measures that could be taken by the same rulers. Political governance, however, is what you and I know, the relationship between these two entities are rarely marked by a cordial agreement. A citizen movement, to remain faithful to itself, can not remain silent, without action, when the political powers commit failures in their missions. The protest, preferably public, then becomes totally justified. Just as power relations govern interstate relations, the balance of power in disputes also governs the behavior of rulers who seriously take them seriously only when the situation of protest becomes critical. In other words, we are nowadays in a situation of "no victory without dispute" and especially without serious dispute. Thus, a government that comes to think of abandoning priority sectors or a regime that would be tempted to establish itself as a monarchy in the context of today's world, will make concessions only if the reaction of popular protest is of great magnitude. How then achieve a reaction of magnitude without prior actions?

Upstream citizen engagement resolves this crucial detail. While it is true that the citizen plays a determining role in the life of a state, it remains however that its absence on the ground of the commitment will weigh heavily on the result of the struggles which will inevitably civil activists. It is through actions and active vigilance that the citizen gives a particular meaning to his citizenship.

Ms. Alcinda pointed it out yesterday. We have young people who want everything, here and now. The paradigms are no longer the same. And in a world where communications tools have become numerous and diverse, do we have the right communications codes? Do we show the youth that every one can be a positive leader?

Injustices, inequalities, exclusions are breeding grounds for instability. "Where there is no struggle, there is no progress," said Thomas Sankara. Let's work to have a more human world. Let's work to give a smile, hope to more people. Before closing, I wish here to have a thought for the youth of Togo in struggle. A thought for all these women, and these students in northern Burkina Faso and Mali, Niger etc who can no longer go to school because of these armed bandits who sow death and desolation.

I finish with this sentence in one of my songs "the tree of peace is watered with the water of justice".

Thank you.

Vidéo 1 : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLY4CLu_vWw

Vidéo 2 : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25cSE08-VSI&t=153s>

Youth and Social Movement and Political Protests in Africa: A Strategic Analysis

By Olawale Ismail

1. My presentation today provides a strategic overview of youth and social movements in Africa with emphasis on dissecting emerging patterns and trends; the spatial distribution of youth-led political protest events; and to map the changes and continuities in the compositions, strategies and outcomes of protests movements in Africa. This presentation takes a macro-level perspective and analysis of the nexus between youth and social movements in Africa. This is intended to enrich the array of more micro-level analysis in the context of specific case studies that are listed on the agenda for this meeting.
2. In mainstream social theory, social movements are structures and strategies of empowerment used by marginalized and oppressed groups/citizens to resist, challenge, and transform their situations. Socio-Protest movements are forms of collective action focused on advancing socio-economic and political agendas. They are often a mixture of large and informal groupings of people and organizations, and they emerge in the context of unmet expectations, inequality and oppression.
3. According to ACLED Database, in 2016 the number of political protests in Africa increased by 5%; and South Africa alone accounted for 20% of political protests in Africa, followed by Tunisia (11%). South Africa and Ethiopia accounted for a third of all political protests events in 2016, while South, Ethiopia, Tunisia and Nigeria make up 50% of political protests in Africa in 2016.
4. It is no accident that young male and female Africans are the arrowheads of recent patterns of social movements and political protests in Africa; it is consistent with historical patterns such as the push for de-colonization and independence; ending of military rule and one-party state systems, etc. Perhaps there is a hint of demography in the current scenario as well. But more importantly, contemporary political protests in Africa reflect youth social agency in very distinct forms, including their comprehensive understanding and diagnosis of society, the transition from latent to action phases.
5. Increasingly, the social protests and youth role thereat in Africa do expose the weak underbelly of governments, especially the so-called authoritarian regimes, and social movements have become the biggest source of regime insecurity and the ebbing of totalitarian power. Crucially, the intensity increased to the extent that a new mantra emerged – ‘the fear of protest is the beginning of wisdom for incumbents of power in Africa.
6. As with most social movements and political protests in other spheres, emergent political protests and riots in Africa are triggered by socio-economic issues such as tax rises, withdrawal of subsidies, increases in school fees, lopsided land reforms programs, poor service delivery and overall rise in the cost of living and worsening living conditions. Some of the countries to have witnessed political protests triggered by one or more of these issues in the last 2-3 years include Sudan, South Sudan, Namibia, South Africa, Libya, Mali, Ethiopia, Egypt, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

7. In other instances, expressly political issues linked to corruption, acute horizontal and vertical inequalities, human rights violations, political oppression, disputed elections, manipulation of constitutional term limits, and poor governance have triggered political protests as well. Examples include Cameroon, DRC, Gambia, Chad, Gabon, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, etc.
8. According to the State of Peace and Security in Africa Report by the 2017 Tana Forum, the year 2016 was indeed the year of Political Protests and Riots in Africa. Why? The wave of political protests spread to far more countries and regions; it occurred in the so-called 'stable' and 'fragile' countries; 'big/powerful' and small/weak' states; 'rich' and 'poor' countries; and took place in peace time, as well as in the midst of active armed conflicts. Political protests transcend the usual catchphrases used to categorize or label countries. This suggests that the fate, aspirations and strategies of youth in Africa is almost parallel irrespective of the socio-economic, political and geo-strategic profile of their respective countries.
9. Nonetheless, it is important to signpost two important caveats; first is that it is almost impossible to delineate socio-economic issues from political issues in the analysis of the triggers of recent political protests in Africa. In most cases, there is a confluence of both by virtue of historical patterns and evolution of social movements, and they tend to elicit political solutions and choices. The second caveat is that irrespective of the triggers, social movements and political protests in Africa do have a long duree; they are often the climax or anti-climax of years of muted, suppressed voices; unaddressed historical grievances; political oppression and marginalization; mismanagement of public finances and resources; and leadership failures. To this extent, emergent political protests in Africa are rooted in subsisting structural weaknesses.
10. Accordingly, it is important that each political protest and the involvement of youth must be contextualised in their historical terms. Contextualization is crucial in order to fully understand the evolution and fluctuations, composition and demands, activities and strategies, and results/outcomes of youth-led political protests in Africa.
11. Political protests in 2016 also signpost regional dimensions; West Africa had the least number versus high numbers/visible increases and intensity in other regions, namely East Africa, Central Africa, North Africa and Southern Africa. This raises the question as to whether this is just a statistical and empirical coincidence, or it underlines the scale/scope (or the absence) of structural embeddedness of democracy and good governance.
12. The rise in the number, spatial distribution and intensity of political protests and youth participation in Africa in the last 3 years also raise questions and observations as to why now (and not before)? Why in some places and not in others? Why breakout at a particular moment? The answers to this lies in contextualizing each episode, still anecdotal evidence suggest that we need to look at the amplifiers, especially the increasing internet penetrability and access to social media across Africa; spill-over effect of events in other countries/climes; episodic trials/practices and role learning; increasing consensus over 'change' issues in society, including the rise in the number of social activists, shared opinion/understanding and vision; unifying demands/goals; and mismanagement of political protests by incumbents of power.

Takeaways

- a. Increasingly, political protests are redefining the youth identity, power and culture, and their relocation to the mainstream. Yet more comparative assessment is needed to understand similarities and differences in the dissolution of old identities, forging of new ones, different layers and dimensions of identity reconstitution; who and how new identities are constituted and constructed; and the relational aspects of constituting old and new identities.

- b. Youth in Africa are manifesting 'youth power' (street power), and transforming their 'below' and marginalized positions into mainstream; young people are increasingly translating their latent power into real power and influence through the instrumentalities of social movements and political protests. Of course, the power is highly transient, yet potent at specific moments.
- c. Youth are increasingly the custodians and conscience of democracy and the ideals of democratic ethos and good governance. However the gaps between ideals and reality/practice would suggest the need for deeper comparative analysis of the visionary elements of youth-led political protests and demands.
- d. Yet the extent of social change arising from political protests in Africa remains questionable if not limited. In most cases, 'real' social transformations are traded for 'highly symbolic' and tokenistic outcomes, thus underlining preoccupation with trigger issues, rather than structural conditions. There is a debate to be heard as to how to properly place some of the political protests in the four broad typologies of protests, namely, alternative, redemptive, reformative and revolutionary or if they are more hybrid in nature. Events in Tunisia, Egypt, Burkina Faso, and South Africa exemplify this.
- e. Broadly speaking, recent political protests and youth participation therein in Africa are highly gendered; there is greater number and visibility of female youth alongside male counterparts. Yet, there is very little evidence of gendered outcomes – much of the protest agenda/demands do not reflect female and male issues in equal proportion, and outcomes hardly address gender roles and relations.
- f. Overall, political consciousness and demands for good governance are increasing across the continent due to the growth in internet penetrability, progress in school enrolment and literacy rate, higher rural-urban migration, rapid urbanization, surge in the role of diaspora groups in the politics of home countries, and greater use of social media among Africans. Political protests parallel the broad Global Trend observed by the USA National Intelligence Council as the 'Paradox of Progress' that embodies the achievement of industrial and information age, delivering danger and richer opportunities. According to the American National Intelligence Council, "the next five years will see rising tensions within and between countries; layered crisis with local, national, and international dimensions; and sharp differences regarding the role of government in religion, security, and the rights of individuals, etc.
- g. Need for more comparative perspectives/assessments to see cross-cutting experiences and learning, for instance on nomenclature: how the youth-led protest groups are named/framed; how consensus is achieved and lost; alliances and breakaway from other civil society actors; possibility of regionalization or regional dimensions of political protests, etc.

Day 2

Session 4: Roundtable Discussion: Recommendations and Next Steps

Youth Everyday Life Participation: Civic and Social Engagement

By Abdul Rahman Lamin

Background and Context

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed (Preamble to UNESCO Constitution, 1945)

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on *Youth, Peace and Security* adopted in 2015, provides a framework that recognizes and further calls for the engagement of young people as agents of change and transformation in their respective societies. More to the point, the resolution acknowledges the special qualities that the youth possess in building peace, enhancing social cohesion and promoting national unity, provided those qualities are, properly harnessed. The resolution urges multiple stakeholders, including UN Member States, UN agencies and other entities to support the youth by facilitating their roles and responsibilities as peacemakers. In many respects, Resolution 2250 is quite similar, not the least in spirit, to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* adopted in 2000. To be clear, Resolution 1325 was adopted at a moment when the world became quite alarmed at the devastating impact of armed conflict on women as victims, hence the urgent need by the international community to portray them as positive agents of peace and security, and supporting them in playing that role. Similarly, Resolution 2250 was also adopted at the climax of global outrage at the increasing participation of young people in what has now become part of our everyday lexicon, namely; violent extremism, hence the need to equally portray the youth as positive contributors to peacebuilding, and relevant actors in quest for an inclusive, secure and prosperous world.

In this short piece, we highlight the everyday contribution of young women and men to peace building through active participation in civic associations, popular culture, sport, music, arts, theater and other forms of social engagement in their respective communities. We argue that recognition and support of such activities by governments and other actors, including regional bodies, international organizations, donors and so forth would go a long way to overcome the negative portrayal of the youth as mere forces of destruction. It would significantly contribute to reinforcing their agency as productive members of society, and help isolate those that prey on the vulnerability of young people, and ultimately recruit them into extremist organizations.

Conceptualizing the Youth Problematique: Civic and Social Engagement

In a world where narratives on youth, and around issues related to youth, are increasingly associated with negative phenomena such as *violent extremism, radicalization, rebellion* and so forth, it is quite easy to see why many would conclude that this is a homogenous demographic group, with nothing positive to contribute to the development of their respective communities. Put differently, it is more difficult these days for society to recognize that, in fact, the vast majority of young people can, and are, indeed major agents of change and social transformation by virtue of their daily activities in the civic spaces where they operate, with tremendous positive impact on peace building and social cohesion in their communities and localities. One need only to examine the works of everyday artists and musicians, whose messages about their societies, and calls for transformation, through peaceful and non-violent resistance is reflected in the lyrics of their songs, and visual paintings, respectively. Theater is similarly another form of artistic expression used by young people to communicate messages of social transformation, although this too is often not recognized for the positive value it conveys. Rather, it has become convenient these days to label young people as a burden on society, and a group that need to

be carefully watched, and in fact even controlled, for fear that they might break loose and disrupt social and public order.

It is also important to highlight the role of university students who constitute a significant percentage of the youth population across countries in a region such as the Horn of Africa, where years of political fragility and social turmoil have virtually brought many of these countries to their knees. In these countries, while insecurity has overshadowed any form of positive youth contribution to development, it is also true that students remain the voices of hope and reason. In one of the most extreme cases of insecurity in the region, Somalia, while the influence of radical groups such as *Al-Shabaab*, on young Somalis persist, students still remain very much in the frontline, agitating change through peace and non-violent means. This was amply illustrated in 2016, when UNESCO launched the first *Somali Youth Peace Dialogue* in Mogadishu, a platform designed to place youth as central actors in the conversation on peace and security in Somalia, with the participation of decision makers, including political leaders such as the then Prime Minister of the Federal Republic. During the four-day *peace dialogues* which took place at Mogadishu's *Al-Jazeera Hotel*, more than one hundred Somali youth, most of them from the country's premier university, Somali National University, participated in robust deliberations about the future of Somalia, and placing at the center the positive role that young people can play in promoting a peaceful and socially cohesive country. In a city where *Al-Shabaab* militants are constantly looking for opportunities to exterminate innocent Somalis, many of who do not subscribe to their so-called message of *radicalization*, it is refreshing to note the determination of young university students articulating a non-violent path to change and social transformation in Somalia.

Towards a Building a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence through Youth Civil Engagement

A culture of peace is a set of *values, principles, attitudes and behaviour*, underpinned by respect for others, *tolerance* of opposing views, and preference for *non-violent resolution* of disputes and conflicts. Peace, in this sense, and a culture of peace for that matter, is not a condition or an event, but rather a *way of life*. To paraphrase the great American civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., peace is after all not just the absence of war but also the prevalence of justice. In other words, to build an inclusive and peaceful society requires also uprooting the structural underpinnings of violence such as inequalities, which in our world today is so prevalent within and among countries, thus making violence an attractive option to many young men and women.

The genesis of the concept of the culture of peace goes all the way back to the origins of the UNESCO Constitution adopted in 1945, and talks about building peace in the minds of men (and women). It is also significant in that regard, to recall the *Peace in the Minds of Men* Summit, convened by then Ivorian leader, Felix Houphouët Boigny, in Yamoussoukro, in 1989, during which a Declaration was adopted, committing participants to take steps towards internalizing the concept and incorporating it in every aspect of life in their respective countries. At a time when the world faces with the major challenges of security, with the youth caught in the midst, the concept is even more relevant now.

At the some fundamental questions are worth raising and reflecting. What tools do we have in place to counter the participation of the youth in violent extremism? What mechanisms do countries have in place to dissuade young people from violent behavior? What role do concepts such as culture of peace and non-violence play in countering violent extremism? What about the educational systems, that in many countries, focus more on appraising academic competence, rather than building well-rounded citizens who understand their civic responsibilities in transforming society? How can young people become advocates for a culture of peace and non-violence? These and many other related questions will for a long time continue to beg for answers, as we grapple with the changing global dynamics. One thing is certain though, in sum. Recognizing and promoting civic and social engagement by the youth and involving them in nation and peacebuilding as meaningful partners will significantly contribute to

dissuading, especially the few, who may become vulnerable to extremism ideologies. After all, we know that most young people, while not perfect, are not as bad as they are portrayed today.