

# Youth in Africa: a demographic imperative for peace and security

Horn of Africa,  
the Great Lakes and the Sahel



January 2023

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### **Disclaimer**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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Mr. Srikiran Devara served as the lead consultant and initial drafter of this report, which was enriched by contributions and inputs from peer colleagues, and from young peacebuilders during focus group discussions conducted in 2021 and 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Esso Samah Tidjow, Danielle Bella Abega, and Christina Christoforou have contributed with their skills and expertise virtually, through the Online Volunteering service of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). Online Volunteer assignments are advertised on the Unified Volunteering Platform (UVP) : <https://app.unv.org/>.

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November 2022 – Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan  
During one of the economic empowerment for peace and community  
cohesion projects of the Peacebuilding and Community Cohesion  
project (PaCC), young females from different communities are trained  
in bedsheet making. UNDP South Sudan



## Foreword

There has been a great deal of research carried out on the demographic dividend, which emphasizes that Africa's youthful population (approximately 60 per cent of the total) could spur economic development. However, there are not many studies on the link between this economic demographic dividend and sustaining peace in Africa: this study seeks to fill this gap. It uses case studies from the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and the Great Lakes region to show that when we focus on youth in development and peacebuilding processes, we stand a better chance of addressing the evolving nature of violent conflict in Africa.

This study carried out by the UNDP Regional Service Center for Africa shows that in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Great Lakes region, conflicts are becoming more complex, protracted and intricate. It also shows that the youth population is the fastest growing segment of the population across the sub-regions and is expected to increase exponentially until 2050; it is therefore not a surprise that the impact of conflict disproportionately affects them. An additional emerging trend is issues of civil unrest are not limited by national boundaries, just as can be observed with issues regarding climate change

and food insecurity. Therefore, while national perceptions of the role of youth in peacebuilding are critical, we must not lose the regional and sub-regional perspective.

It is for these reasons that the report recommends leveraging the regional organizations and Regional Economic Communities because they offer unique comparative advantages in responding to the changing face of conflict and increasing youth inclusion in peacebuilding interventions. It is our view that unlocking the potential of youth is essential to social cohesion and peacebuilding. To support these efforts, UNDP has developed its Renewed Governance and Peacebuilding Framework for Africa and the Regional Project for Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa with the overall objective of supporting and building capacity of member states, policymakers, practitioners and key stakeholders in conflict and transition settings to respond effectively.

UNDP's approach is to move beyond mainstreaming youth in national development planning and financing, to focus on youth are the core segment of the population in most African countries. They are the digital natives that can use innovation to address some of Africa's peacebuilding and development challenges. But this requires a shift in our approaches and how our institutions function to increase trust and open avenues for innovation. It requires youth to be effectively represented as equal partners with influence at all stages of governance, political and economic processes rather than mainstreamed solely for fulfilment of a metric or quota. Our challenge is to embrace the demographic dividend and unleash the potential of youth to promote social cohesion, peacebuilding, and development in Africa.

**Dr. Roselyn Akombe**

Chief of the Peacebuilding Strategy and Partnerships (PSPB) branch, DPPA/PBSO

## Introduction

Over the past few decades, intra-state violent conflict in Africa has greatly reduced the possibility of changing the narrative from a continent prone to civil war and instability to one of economic growth and positive development. Indeed, despite the positive results registered in peacebuilding efforts in many parts, the continent continues to face varying forms of violence, particularly at sub-regional levels and across borders. It also experiences different manifestations of violence, for example, terrorism and violent extremism. The African Union (AU) identified 15 armed conflicts in 2021 across the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa, and parts of the Sahel, including in Ethiopia, Cameroon, Mali, South Sudan, Somalia and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Intra-state conflict today is increasingly fragmented primarily occurring at a smaller scale and on the peripheries of states involving more nonstate actors. It is therefore more challenging to make the distinction between criminal and political violence, with insurgents now more connected to transnational networks. Although the continent has become more democratized, violence directly associated with elections has increased and has led to short and medium-term societal shocks in settings characterized by tensions and systematic grievances related to political competition.

The continent has also seen an increase in community-level violence caused by competition over limited livelihood resources, further compounded by rapid population growth and climate-related factors. The strong correlation has been recognized between the widespread exclusion of Africa's large youth population

and violence. This is especially true in areas where youth unemployment rates are comparatively high.

However, this is an accurate depiction of the role of youth in violent conflict, because the violence is only perpetrated by a minority of them.

It is estimated that, in 2019, about 230 million youth (aged 15–24) were living in Africa, which accounts for approximately 19 percent of the global youth population. Projections show that by 2030, the number of youth living in Africa will have increased by up to 42 percent.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of socio-economic development and inclusion of youth in peacebuilding-related processes has been key for achieving peace and security in Africa. Despite the socio-economic and political challenges they face, youth are proactive and use alternative innovative ways to participate in peacebuilding within their communities. Their interventions include awareness campaigns, community dialogues, political activism and dissemination of relevant information, among others. Through targeted networks and civil society organizations, youth's engagement includes the prevention of violence during elections, early warning through online platforms, reconciliation

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2 Mo Ibrahim Foundation. 2019. [Ibrahim Forum Report: Africa's youth: jobs or migration? Demography, economic prospects and mobility.](#)

# African youth population facts



The 2019 estimate of the African youth population is

**230M**

It accounts for

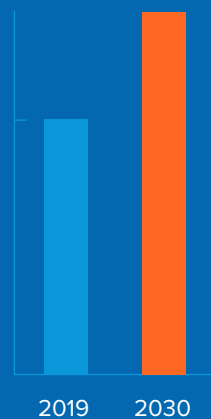
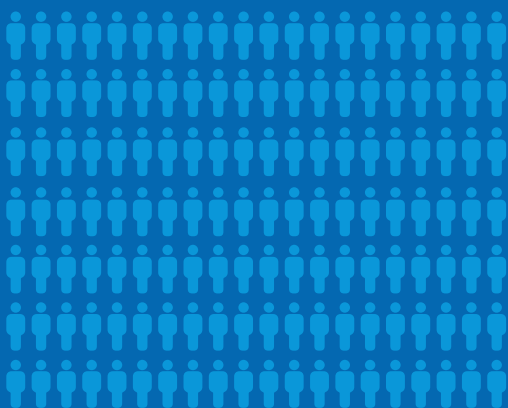
**19%**

of the global youth population

It is expected to rise by

**42%**

by 2030



campaigns and targeted community-inclusive dialogues. Although there is a growing recognition of the crucial role that youth play as peacebuilders in Africa, their inclusion has been relatively minimal, ineffective and largely not directly linked to national and formal peacebuilding infrastructures. Growing evidence of best practices in peacebuilding suggest that a coordinated approach through targeted and well-designed mechanisms that are inclusive result in improved community resilience and social cohesion. It is therefore crucial to understand how to harness and scale up innovative peacebuilding solutions leveraging Africa's young men and women as an important resource. In recent years, the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda has gained momentum, thereby marking a shift in the overall understanding of youth and the role they play in peace and security.

This report seeks to examine and understand the extent to which peacebuilding policies and programmes in Africa have effectively enhanced the role of youth as positive and innovative change agents in peacebuilding. The report provides a review of national and regional interventions related to YPS and provides distilled recommendations towards ensuring improved inclusion of youth-led interventions in the peacebuilding process. The report also examines the multi-dimensional challenges facing this youthful component and provides a deeper analysis of the cross-sectoral theories of change regarding youth inclusion in peacebuilding development planning in conflict-affected areas.

The analysis of youth inclusion in peacebuilding in the three sub-regions of the Sahel, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, and is underpinned by the following guiding questions:

- What are the existing frameworks for peacebuilding?
- What has been the role of youth in peacebuilding in the three sub-regions?
- What have been the challenges experienced by youth in contributing towards peacebuilding and social cohesion interventions?
- To what extent have the existing frameworks and

formal structures enhanced the role of youth in peacebuilding?

- How can youth engagement in this area be strengthened further?

With youth and peacebuilding as core areas of analysis, the report adopts a development approach guided by the normative positions offered in the Reports of the Secretary-General.<sup>3 4</sup> The report provides a review of existing publications and reports produced by international and regional organizations, government, civil society organizations (CSOs), and academia. The report was also developed through a consultative process involving two groups of youth representatives from West and Central Africa, and East and Southern Africa. The report is further guided by the need to move from the dichotomized analysis of youth either as perpetrators or victims, to focusing on the critical value that they can offer to peacebuilding and social cohesion.

The report recognizes that both youth and peacebuilding are complex concepts influenced by intrastate and cross-border factors. It does not, however, aim to offer a comprehensive digest of all factors that affect youth and their role in governance and peacebuilding, but rather relies on the idea that the face of violent conflict has changed significantly; conflicts between and within countries are complex in nature and require a coordinated response at the local, national and sub-regional levels. This report focuses largely at the sub-regional level, and provides an analysis of the sub-regional frameworks and tools that influence youth engagement in peacebuilding.

3 [Report of the Secretary-General: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace 2020.](#)

4 [Report of the Secretary General: Promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa 2021.](#)



# The changing face of conflict

**Situation Analysis**

*What are the existing frameworks for peacebuilding?  
How have they enhanced the role of youth in peacebuilding and social cohesion?*

There is a growing recognition that the nature and dynamics of violent conflict at the global level are changing significantly.

The 2021 Report of the Secretary-General,<sup>5</sup> notes that there is a decline in conflicts between states, but has been replaced by non-state conflicts.

These trends are also observed to apply in Africa with evidence showing an overall reduction in conflicts between states in the last few decades. The space has, however, been occupied by more complex and multi-dimensional forms of conflict involving volatile political, economic and social structures, ideologies, players and drivers, most often transcending national boundaries.

Since youth represent the largest segment

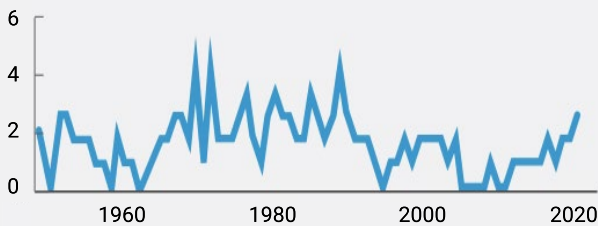
of the population in Africa, the impact of these trends continues to affect them disproportionately. The complex and intricate nature of conflict renders obsolete the analysis of youth based on the perpetrators/victims dichotomy. Given that youth represent a fundamental demographic on the continent, the overall influence that this segment has on social cohesion has critical implications at the global, regional and national levels.

**Traction for youth-led peacebuilding**

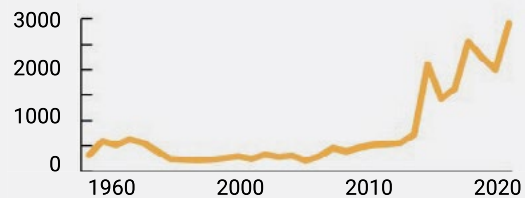
As established in the Global Report, Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, Security Council Resolutions and other sub-regional and global assessments, youth are not passive bystanders; they are positioning themselves as active and competent peacebuilding agents.

STATE AND NON-STATE CONFLICTS

**Conflicts between States, 1946-2020**



**Rapid increase in non-State conflicts since 2010**



Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2020

5 [Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General. 2021](#)

The Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace and Security,<sup>6</sup> which reviewed progress made since the adoption of the Security Council Resolutions 2419 and 2250,<sup>7</sup> noted that, “on the basis of analysis and data provided by the United Nations system, member states and regional and civil society organizations including those led by and focused on young people”, two critical findings were presented: (i) a growing recognition of young people’s essential role in peace and security; and (ii) core challenges remain, including structural barriers limiting the participation of young people and their capacity to influence decision-making; violations of their human rights; and insufficient investment in facilitating their inclusion, in particular through education.

In order to advance youth inclusion in peacebuilding, the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security 2020–2029 provides guidelines for mainstreaming and enhancing youth participation in all stages of peacebuilding processes. Further reflecting on the realities of youth and peacebuilding in the continent, the African Union Commission’s (AUC) Common African Position on the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture draws specific attention to youth as well as regional approaches to peacebuilding as follows:

#### **Youth and Peacebuilding:**

1. Cross-cutting issue: Youth peace and security are cross-cutting issues that require linkages with programmes and interventions that specifically focus on social protection, peacebuilding and youth empowerment.
2. Youth as drivers of change: Youth are at the centre of instability both as victims, actors and, increasingly, as potential drivers of change.
3. Gaining traction of youth engagements: The important role of youth within political and governance structures is slowly gaining traction.
4. Empowerment: Proactive policies that result in political, economic, and social empowerment of youth

can help reduce the allure of joining criminal and terrorist networks as well as illegal migration.

#### **Regional Approach to Peacebuilding**

1. Cross-border dimensions: Conflicts have shown a tendency to spread across borders, affecting the safety of communities as well as economic activities and political stability in more than one country. The growing recognition that such crises and related peacebuilding efforts cannot be adequately addressed within national contexts has provided the impetus for a regional approach to crisis management and peacebuilding. Thus, regional approaches have increasingly been developed to address the peacebuilding efforts in the Lake Chad Basin, the Great Lakes region, the Mano River Basin and the Sahel region.
2. Coherence: There is need to enhance collaboration among multiple partners in sub-regional engagements.<sup>8</sup>

6 Simpson, G. 2017. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security.

7 [Report of the Secretary-General: Youth and Peace and Security. 2020.](#)

8 [African Union. 2020. Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the Common African position on the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, towards an enhanced global peacebuilding system.](#)

January 2023 – Dapaong, Togo. Cross-border project with local partner Refed/s and Rafia to help women's groups in the Kpendjal prefecture. UNDP Togo



## Key frameworks guiding peacebuilding and youth engagement at the global level and in Africa

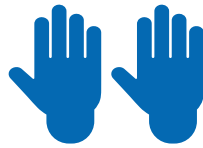
November 2022 - Rural  
community of Miti, South Kivu,  
Democratic Republic of Congo.  
Young man participating in  
a youth, peace and security  
dialogue. UNDP DRC



## The United Nations

The United Nations' approach to peacebuilding and youth has also evolved over time. Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) underscore the importance of youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. These Council Resolutions mark a watershed moment in the recognition of youth as critical actors capable of supporting peacebuilding. Security Council Resolution 2250 identifies five pillars for action and “calls for mechanisms that allow the meaningful participation of young women and men in peace processes and dispute resolution and that address the underlying causes of the rise in violent extremism and conflict”.<sup>9</sup>

### The five pillars of Security Council Resolution 2250



#### Participation

Take youth's participation and views into account in decision-making, from negotiation and prevention of violence to peace agreements.



#### Protection

Ensure the protection of young civilian's lives and human rights, and investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes perpetrated against them.



#### Prevention

Support young people in preventing violence and in promoting a culture of tolerance and intercultural dialogue.



#### Partnership

Engage young people during and after conflict when developing peacebuilding strategies, along with community actors and United Nations bodies.



#### Disengagement and Reintegration

Invest in youth affected by armed conflict through employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies and education promoting a culture of peace.

Since the first report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa 22 years ago, the United Nations has continuously invested in building partnerships with key organizations to mobilize joint action for conflict prevention and peacekeeping. For instance, the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security is one of the key initiatives to “collaborate from the earliest indications of conflict on the African Continent”. The Framework places an emphasis on identifying and responding to indicators of potential conflict and plan for prevention as well as

cooperate on early warning. Should preventive efforts fail, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Secretariat commit to work together throughout the stages of conflict management – preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding.

As shown in Figure 1, the partnership between the AU-United Nations in conflict prevention and mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the August 2019 to July 2020 period has been multifaceted in order to respond to the various needs on the ground.

Figure 1



The above mentioned UN resolutions on sustaining peace represented a shift to preventing and resolving conflicts. They shift actions to conflict resolution and a whole-of-system approach to strengthening resilience within societies and institutions while addressing peace and security challenges.<sup>10</sup> By envisaging prevention as a development and governance process, under the Peace and Security Agenda the United Nations' peacebuilding, humanitarian, human rights and development bodies apply a coordinated, multisectoral approach in responding to peacebuilding and conflict prevention needs.

Further, within the United Nations system, the Peacebuilding Commission provides a leadership anchor to the wider United Nations peacebuilding architecture, with one component of its mandate aimed "to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery".<sup>11</sup> To guide and monitor its efforts in support of the critical role of young women and men, the Commission adopted the Strategic Action Plan on youth and peacebuilding. To strengthen its work with and for young people, in 2018, the United Nations system launched Youth 2030, an umbrella framework to guide its work in the 'three pillars of peace and security, human rights and sustainable development'.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the United Nations Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) serves as the Organization's financial instrument to support response to sustain peace in countries or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict. It works across the pillars and supports United Nations integrated response in order to fill critical gaps related to peacebuilding opportunities and processes. Through its Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI), the PBF further supports innovative projects that focus on youth empowerment and participation with the potential for catalytic effects in peacebuilding outcomes. The YPI, which is an annual competitive call, prioritizes and emphasizes transparency among local partnerships. Furthermore, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the Department of

Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), in partnership with the PeaceNexus, commissioned a review of local peacebuilding, outlining practical recommendations for the PBF and its applicants and recipients, as well as the community of peacebuilding practitioners towards guiding the design of future local peacebuilding programming.

In recognizing the role of government in preventing and mitigating conflict and guiding national stakeholders in the development of context-specific solutions to the challenges, the Joint UNDP-DPPA-Development Coordination Office Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention was developed. The Programme brings together the political, peacebuilding and development work, and also works closely with the United Nations' leadership at the country level to consolidate and further support preventio efforts.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> [United Nations Peacebuilding. Mandate.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.](#)

## The United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been heavily engaged in facilitating youth-led peacebuilding by supporting national governments and sub-regional structures in translating the frameworks into actual programmatic and policy engagements. The first-ever Youth Strategy 2014–2017 provided a paradigm shift for UNDP's development work. The Strategy recognized youth as development partners, initiators and catalysts of change, with a particular attention devoted to the importance of working with young women and youth from marginalized groups.

June 2022 – Mombasa, Kenya.  
Interfaith Youth Planting Trees with  
the Area Chief and the  
Sub County Health Programme  
Co-ordinator; Our Lady of Fatma-  
Kongowea Parish, Photo Credit:  
Hamad Tenguri







July 2022 – Mtwara District, Mtwara region, Tanzania. A participant sharing her views on how young people in their local community can engage in peacebuilding processes, during the Peace Building Awareness Workshop with community youth groups.

Photo credit: Global Peace Foundation Tanzania

Thematically, the Strategy sets out a strong vision for engaging youth and supporting their empowerment in governance, jobs and livelihoods, and in strengthening resilience in their communities.<sup>13</sup> It focuses on: supporting conducive legislative and policy reforms for youth; facilitating access to services; promoting rights; and creating new opportunities for participation in politics and public life, economic life, resilience and peacebuilding at all levels, as well as youth capacity development, networking and advocacy.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, UNDP supported the development of the Youth, Peace, and Security Programming Handbook in coordination with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-DPPA, and the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development.

The Handbook contributes to the operational readiness and capacity of United Nations practitioners in implementing the YPS agenda. Beyond the United Nations, it also provides insights and guidance to partners and practitioners, such as international and regional organizations, national counterparts, movements and networks, youth-led and focused organizations, and more.

UNDPs Global Youth Programme was developed as a lead programme to “empower young women and men to take advantage of opportunities for their own development and act effectively as citizens, leaders, innovators and agents of change in their communities, thereby contributing to the overall sustainable development and peace”.<sup>15</sup>

13 2016–2020 Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

## The African Union

The AU adopted several normative instruments related to peacebuilding and the prevention of conflict. These instruments relate to human rights, governance and corruption, democratization processes, disarmament, terrorism, and the prevention and reduction of interstate conflicts.<sup>16</sup> The AU Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) is one of the key normative measures put in place to address the needs of countries emerging from conflict and/or difficult transitions. The scope of the activities encompasses six indicative elements: security; humanitarian/emergency assistance; political governance and transition; socio-economic reconstruction and development; human rights; justice and reconciliation; and women and gender.<sup>17</sup> Another key normative framework is the AU Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF), which aims to provide a Commission-wide coordinated approach to structural conflict prevention.<sup>18</sup> This Framework seeks to identify and address structural weaknesses, which often evolve over time with the potential to cause violent conflict if unaddressed.<sup>19</sup> While emphasizing the central role of member states in addressing prevention dimensions of violent conflict, the CSCPF underscores the need to constantly develop and deploy mechanisms, processes and structures to address underlying structural weaknesses for the prevention of violent conflict.

The AU Constitutive Act identified youth as important partners in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion. Furthermore, the AU adopted the African Youth Charter in 2006 as a framework to guide continental and national-level responses to unlock the full potential of youth. The Charter notes that the “challenges of youth are interrelated and cross-sectoral in nature, hence the need for a comprehensive approach to developmental solutions focused on youth”. Article 17 of the Charter underscores the important role of youth in promoting peace and security in Africa. The Silencing Guns by 2020 initiative, as part of the AU flagship project under Agenda 2063, recognizes

the role of youth as one of the critical areas to ending all wars in Africa. The Youth for Peace Africa Programme, the African Union Youth Envoy Action Plan 2019/2020, and the 1 Million By 2021 Initiative are some of the other key frameworks that guide action in peacebuilding and youth engagement.

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16 [African Union. Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework](#)

17 African Union: Guidelines Note for the Implementation of the African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy, Peace and Security Department.

18 [African Union. Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework.](#)

19 Ibid.

## Regional Economic Communities

February 2020 - Bamako, Mali. Cumba Diakit  in her 'workshop'. This young woman entrepreneur, is the founder of « Be recycle », a small business which recycles used tires in interior furnishing. She was selected during the TEF -UNDP Sahel Youth Entrepreneurship programme. The partnership trained, mentored and financially supported 100,000 young entrepreneurs in Africa in 10 years and targeted young Africans in under-served communities from seven Sahel African countries: Northern Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroun, Mauritania, Mali and Burkina Faso. Photo: UNDP/Aur lia Rusek



Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are regional groupings of African states, which serve as coordination pillars of the AU.<sup>20</sup> The RECs play an important role in driving the peacebuilding agenda forward. This report notes that all RECs except for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) lacked an explicit mandate for peace and security when the original treaties establishing the regional bodies were signed.<sup>21</sup> However, recognizing that the agenda for economic transformation and regional integration cannot be achieved without sustainable peace, currently all the RECs except the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) have a clear mandate to target conflict prevention.<sup>22</sup> All the RECs except AMU and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) have a functional early warning mechanism in place, and three RECs – East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have established Peace Funds to support the implementation of conflict prevention initiatives.<sup>23</sup>

Different RECs have adopted different strategies to focus on youth empowerment as part of their engagements. ECOWAS has a Youth Plan and Strategic Action Plan 2010, which includes: the ECOWAS Volunteer Programme; the ECOWAS Humanitarian Programme; and the ECOWAS Programme for capacity building for displaced youth.<sup>24</sup> EAC has a CSO Action Plan organized around six goals, one of which focuses on youth: “enhance participation in the conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanism with civil society, youth, women and media”. One of the pillars of the Regional Strategy of the IGA Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) focuses on peace and security, where youth unemployment, the population bulge and mismatch in service delivery are identified as ‘demographic stressors’. In 2021, IGAD launched the IGAD Youth Forum,<sup>25</sup> with the objective of establishing a regional platform led by youth for the enhancement of peace, security and stability in the IGAD Region. This is perhaps one of the most unique initiatives aimed at youth.

20 [African Union. Regional Economic Communities.](#)

21 [2020 United Nations, Assessment of the Conflict Prevention Capabilities of African Regional Economic Communities.](#)

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 [UN iLibrary](#)

25 [IGAD. ECOWAS](#)

## Main tools for conflict prevention in the Regional Economic Communities

RECs/Regional Mechanisms (RMs) have in place a series of policies on youth engagement in their respective peace and security agenda.<sup>26</sup> For example, ECOWAS prioritized youth empowerment in its conflict prevention framework; ECCAS developed a regional programme to strengthen youth's capacities in the management of youth-led organizations and CSOs, crisis and conflict prevention, as well as their contribution to the Central Africa Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC). Similarly, IGAD mainstreamed youth into its Regional Strategy, and the EAC launched a youth policy and instituted a youth ambassadors programme to promote youth engagement.<sup>27</sup>

To provide key tools that guide sub-regional engagements for conflict prevention and to decipher their effectiveness is enhancing youth participation, this report relies on the 2020 capacity assessment exercise carried out by the United Nations on the RECs' conflict prevention capacities and examines the youth focus within each of the tools where there is an explicit and stand-alone focus. The following RECs' tools are presented that address conflict prevention and early warning.

March 2020 – Mora, Maroua region, Far North of Cameroon. Bernadette Weyme, 29, (far right) a young peace ambassador from Meme. "I want to be a peace ambassador, because I want to live in harmony with my community, and I want peace to return to our town..."The Youth and Stabilization for Peace and Security in the Far North of Cameroon, is a joint project between 3 UN agencies UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF. Among other extremism prevention activities, the project trained 175 youth peace ambassadors in 4 localities: Limani, Meme, Amchide; and Kolofata. Photo: UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/Aurélia Rusek



26 [2020 Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security](#).

27 Ibid.

MAIN REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES' TOOLS FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION <sup>28</sup>		'STAND-ALONE' YOUTH FOCUS
	Anchored in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) and the African Union (AU) Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) implements a Youth, Peace, and Security programme that prioritizes peace education and peer mediation; youth participation in peace processes; and youth dialogue and advocacy on governance, peace and security.	
	<b>ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF):</b> <sup>29</sup> ECPF has 14 components designed to strengthen human security and incorporate conflict prevention activities (operational and structural), as well as aspects of peacebuilding. The ECPF Secretariat within the Political Affairs Directorate ensures implementation.	One of the 14 components of ECPF is youth empowerment
	<b>ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN)</b> is early warning tool for monitoring and reporting on conflicts, tracking a total of 66 indicators under five themes – security, crime and criminality, governance and human rights, environment, and health (in particular, pandemics), with dimensions of gender mainstreamed across all five thematic sectors. ECOWARN has 77 field monitors in 15 member states.	
	<b>Preventive diplomacy and mediation:</b> This mechanism includes the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Mediation and Security Council, the Council of Wise, Special Representatives of the President, and various special envoys and facilitators. The Mediation Facilitation Division backstops these mediation organs and structures.	
ECOWAS	<b>ECOWAS Long-Term Observer Missions:</b> These missions are composed of experts from fields of conflict prevention, gender, legal affairs media, and security. They are deployed for 45 days covering the period before, during and after elections. ECOWAS established the West Africa Electoral Commission Network to sustain this process.	
	<b>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Early Warning Analyses and Reports:</b> This is the main element of the ECCAS conflict prevention toolkit. MARAC produces reports covering political, social, military, economic, health and climatic situations (MARAC Standing Orders).	
	<b>Mediation and mediation support:</b> ECCAS Heads of State and Government engage in mediation activities on behalf of the community. Mediation support is provided through the ECCAS General Secretariat and the Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation Unit.	
	<b>Good Offices of the Secretary General:</b> The Secretary General of ECCAS has good office functions.	
ECCAS	<b>Economic Community of Central African State (ECCAS) short-term observation missions:</b> ECCAS deploys observation missions as a preventive tool to monitor elections.	

28 2018 United Nations Secretariat, Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA), Mapping Study of the Conflict Prevention Capabilities of African Regional Economic Communities.

29 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework.

EAC	<p><b>East African Warning Mechanism (EACWARN):</b> EACWARN is based on the data collection from open sources. (An annual report on the State of Peace and Security in the EAC Region is envisaged.)</p>	
	<p><b>Preventive Diplomacy:</b> The Secretary General deploys the Panel of Eminent Persons to undertake preventive diplomacy functions.</p>	
	<p><b>Mediation and facilitation:</b> A key tool for the East African Community (EAC) conflict prevention work is mediation and facilitation (For example, at its 2016 Summit, the Heads of State and Government appointed the President of Uganda as mediator, and the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania as facilitator for situation in Burundi).</p>	
	<p><b>EAC Election Observation Missions:</b> These missions are headed by a former Head of State and consist of three EAC staff, experts from research institutions and academia, Members of Parliament, and women and youth groups.</p>	Mission composition has youth groups
IGAD	<p><b>Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN):</b> This is an early warning mechanism that relies on both open sources and a system of field monitor to collect information and data along five thematic clusters: security, governance, the environment, economy, and socio-cultural issues, with gender as a cross-cutting issue.</p> <p>Article 11 of the 'Protocol on establishment of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism' also envisages the establishment of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), a national conflict early warning and response mechanism. CEWERU consists of an optional steering committee, a focal point and local committees. Membership of the Steering Committee is envisaged to include: policy makers and government officials at national and provincial level, the police, the military, representatives of civil society including religious organizations, academic institutions, research institutions and other relevant stakeholders.</p>	
	<p><b>Mediation Support Unit:</b> IGAD established the Mediation Support Unit as outlined in the Resolution of the Committee of Ambassadors.</p>	
	<p><b>Preventive Diplomacy:</b> The Executive Secretary has good offices for preventive diplomacy. IGAD has established Offices of Special Envoys to head and facilitate mediation processes in countries.</p>	
	<p><b>IGAD Election Observation Missions:</b> These missions provide electoral assistance and election observation through short-term election observation missions to Member States.</p>	
	<p><b>IGAD Women Peace Forum:</b> This Forum consists of three women representatives each from IGAD Member States representing the executive, the legislature and civil society, who are tasked to promote women's participation in peacebuilding and resolution processes, as stipulated in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.</p>	
	<p><b>IGAD Centre of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism:</b> This Centre was established as a tool to promote regional sharing of good practices and lessons learned in preventing and countering violent extremism narratives.</p>	

## Gaps and overall effectiveness of frameworks and tools for supporting youth within peacebuilding at global level and in Africa

**Frameworks:** Within the specific area of youth and peacebuilding, this report notes that the existing frameworks developed and implemented by the United Nations, the AU and the RECs are robust enough to prevent and respond to conflict, while ensuring effective youth engagement in peacebuilding processes. It highlights that progress made in implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security and the design of AU continental framework for YPS provide critical insights and lessons for the RECs/RMs to further strengthen their frameworks with a particular emphasis on promoting youth in peacebuilding.

**Tools:** The findings of this report indicate that conflict prevention and early warning tools within the RECs provide more desirable results when dedicated to strengthening youth engagement in peacebuilding. This does not imply, however, that there is no youth focus in other tools. According to this report, given the increasing size of the youth population in Africa, there may be a larger case for

deepening the focus on youth alone in the current tools in order to respond to these needs across the three sub-regions.

The report notes that the changing nature of conflict, which often transcends national boundaries with a tendency to spill over the borders, requires the RECs/RMs to leverage their unique comparative advantages in providing a sub-regional-level prevention impetus addressing the changing nature of conflict and deepening the role of youth in peacebuilding. The formulation and adoption of regional stabilization frameworks, as seen in Lake Chad Basin, the Great Lakes region, the Mano River Basin and the Sahel, provide critical insights that can be used to further leverage the RECs/RMs, the AU and the United Nations collaborations in youth-led peacebuilding.

### **Role and challenges of youth peacebuilders:**

What has been the role of youth in peacebuilding within three sub-regions? What have been the challenges?

In exploring the answers to these questions, this report is limited to understanding: (i) sub-regional trends within the Sahel, the Great Lakes, and the Horn; and (ii) youth and peacebuilding-specific factors and practices as emerging from within the three sub-regions. It is not aimed at providing an exhaustive list, since country context is a highly relevant factor in shaping youth-led peacebuilding trends.

### **A. Political inclusion and representation of youth in decision-making are increasingly recognized as critical in redefining youth's role in peacebuilding, but the progress is uneven and slow.**

The African Union Charter, through its Article 14.2 and 26 provides a solid framework for the participation of youth in



December 2021 – Koulikoro, Mali. Young woman participating in the Grand Trail de la Jeunesse pour la Paix, an initiative implemented by UNDP and IOM, that mobilized more than 1500 young people in running race and a massive peace and social cohesion campaign from Bamako to Gao, Mali. UNDP Mali

decision-making structures and processes. Yet, as identified by the Office of the Youth Envoy and the African Leadership Institute, “despite Africa being disproportionately young, young Africans are missing at the tables of decision-making and are not represented in the governance structures that determine their futures”. Although the three sub-regions are witnessing critical developments that address these gaps, according to the 2019 Forum Report of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 60 percent of Africans, mostly youth, think that their governments are doing a very bad or a fairly bad job at addressing the needs of youth.<sup>30</sup>

However, the agency of youth in pushing for the opening of avenues for greater political inclusion is firmly taking shape with a focus on addressing the multiple barriers at both regional and national levels (e.g. age restrictions to entry into office, limited financial capacities to run for office, limited political party structures support). This enhanced attention of youth and youth-led organizations is gaining traction towards changing this narrative. Experiences of youth organizations in focusing efforts on opening avenues for youth provide evidence to further redefine youth’s role in peacebuilding, as described below.

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30 [African Union Office of Youth Envoy and African Leadership Institute. July 2020. Greater Inclusion of African Youth in Public Service and Governance.](#)





### Case study

## # NotTooYoungToRun movement in Nigeria.

Yiaga Africa is a non-profit civic hub focused on the promotion of democratic governance, human rights and civic engagement.<sup>31</sup> It serves as an anchor for the #NotTooYoungToRun movement in Nigeria.<sup>32</sup> The aim of the movement is “not only to create a more level playing field for young people, but also to enhance the competitiveness of electoral politics in Nigeria leveraging the innovation, creativity, dynamism and resourcefulness that youth bring to the electoral processes”.<sup>33</sup> The #NotTooYoungToRun movement championed the Age Reduction Bill, which began as a constitutional amendment movement. Addressing one of the key barriers to youth – i.e. their age – this movement was galvanized by “empowering people with information” and thus facilitating necessary political action towards reducing the age limit for running for the Office of the President from 40 to 35, the House of Representatives from 30 to 25, and the State House of Assembly from 30 to 25. The impact of the new law is already bearing results: in 2019 Nigerian elections, 34.2 percent of candidates were classified as youth, compared to 21 percent in the 2015 elections.



### Case study:

## #SouthSudanisWatching

Online platforms are providing critical opportunities for greater youth interface in processes such as the national dialogues and peacebuilding engagements that lay the foundations for the future developmental agenda of the country. For instance, the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCF) launched a social media campaign on the first day of the South Sudan High Level Revitalization Forum. Youth wore sunglasses and took selfies, and shared them on social media platforms with #SouthSudanisWatching. These campaigns, however, did not necessarily have a direct impact on the decision-making processes, but had a symbolically powerful<sup>34</sup> message for the various constituencies of the deliberations on the “unity amongst the civil society members of South Sudan”.<sup>35</sup>

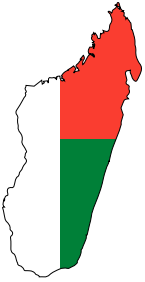
31 [Yiaga Africa. About us.](#)

32 African Union Office of Youth Envoy and African Leadership Institute, Greater Inclusion of African Youth in Public Service and Governance).

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.



### Case study:

## Youth in elections

In Madagascar, Observatoire Safidy has enabled youth to participate in electoral observation, data collection and early warning against electoral violence. The Observatoire, with UNDP's support, facilitated almost 80 percent of the electoral observation conducted by youth, of whom 50 percent were young women.<sup>36</sup>

### Case study:

## Community mobilization

Using art as a tool to raise youth consciousness and to empower them in preventing and countering violent extremism, Youth Peace Art, one of the youth groups in Yaoundé, Cameroon, launched a 14-month campaign with World Dynamics of Young People to raise awareness among more than 30,000 youth on non-violence, tolerance and peacebuilding.<sup>37</sup>

This report places an emphasis on the need to further support this mobilization and build on the momentum of youth-led initiatives such as the above towards increasing youth political inclusion and youth representation at the country level in the three sub-regions.

### **B. The youth population is increasing; violent conflicts and civil unrest continue to affect their socio-economic development.**

Moving beyond notions and narratives that loosely correlate increasing youth population with increasing incidents of violence, according to this report, increasing youth is a demographic advantage for consideration given the evidence that in 2015, 225 million youth lived in Africa, accounting for 19 percent of the global youth population, and by 2030, this is projected to increase by 42 percent,<sup>38</sup> Compared to youth population stagnation in the rest of the world, in Africa it is expected to increase.

The increasing trends of violent conflicts in various parts of the continent are also impacting the socio-economic and political development of youth. Data on active conflict, instability and conflict incidents show a clear upward trend<sup>39</sup> across the continent over the past five years (A/75/917-S/2021/562: Report of Secretary General). As highlighted in the Report of the Secretary-General, according to one database, in 2019, there were 27 active

36 Focus Group Discussion.

37 [African Union, A Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa](#)

38 [2015, UNDESA Population Division No.2015/1: Youth population trends and sustainable development.](#)

39 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project database, 2020; Uppsala Conflict Data Program/ Peace Research Institute Oslo Conflict Dataset

conflicts in 19 countries in Africa and 8,855 known fatalities as a result of those conflicts.<sup>40</sup> Since 2015, the number of conflicts has slightly increased.<sup>41</sup> In addition, from 2015 to 2020, the number of incidents related to civil unrest nearly doubled.<sup>42</sup>

According to this report, neither the youth bulge theories nor the dichotomous analysis presenting youth as perpetrators or victims does justice to understanding these two trends that deeply shape the peacebuilding context at the sub-regional level as well as at the country level. In line with the recognition of the Security Council of a large youth population as presenting “a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity”, this report underlines that since today’s generation of youth form the majority of the population affected by armed conflict, there is a need for a more multidimensional approach to understanding and responding to the structural drivers of conflict with youth at the centre. Strengthening infrastructures for peace – defined broadly as a dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values and skills that, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a society – is not only vital but necessary to transform the islands of rich experiences in youth-led peacebuilding that are emerging from across the sub-regions.

**Case study:**

## Youth inclusion in the negotiating teams and in delegations

Youth participation in dialogue processes that shape the future developmental and governance discourse has been limited but this is changing with the increasing

participation of youth in national discussion forums. For instance, South Sudan’s High Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) focused on the inclusion of youth representatives in the Forum deliberations and making youth part of the HLRF process. The HLRF youth representatives shared a position paper with the political parties and secured a place for youth in the boarder governance structures through affirmative quota systems applied within political parties. The Minister of Youth was guaranteed to younger than 40 years old. Youth participation at the HLRF also shaped the implementation phase of the agreement through the allocation of roles in different technical committees to motivate youth.<sup>43</sup>

**Case study:**

## #OneYoungAfrica

The Youth Leadership Program (YouLead) is a regional flagship initiative working to unlock the leadership potential of young people by identifying, recognizing, connecting and fostering cooperation among Africa’s vibrant and influential young leaders and their initiatives.

**Case study:**

## Youth inclusion and participation – Horn of Africa

From an evidence base of over 20,000 hours of youth-led dialogues in the Horn of Africa, the Life and Peace Institute (LPI)<sup>44</sup> and its partners in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan have drawn four major insights:

3. Youth are not a homogenous group, but rather, are as diverse and divided as the rest of the population and

40 Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset version 20.1 and Uppsala Conflict Data Program Battle-related Deaths Dataset version 20.1. The fatality indicator used is the Uppsala Conflict Data Program best estimate for battle-related deaths in the given year.

41 Ibid.

42 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project database, 2020.

43 United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. n.d. *We are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes*, by Altiok, A. and Irena Grizelj, I. New York. Global policy paper “We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes” | Youth4Peace Portal

44 [2017 Life and Peace Institute: Submission to the Progress Study on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.](#)

live in conflict-affected and fragile settings subject to the same social, economic and identity-based fractures.

4. The notion that there are 'youth issues' is misleading and unhelpful – youth are able to speak to the pressing issues of conflict, governance, justice and development that affect their countries, beyond areas traditionally considered youth-specific, such as education, employment, drug and alcohol abuse.
5. Youth are both present and future leaders and their knowledge and capacity should be used to address current peace and security challenges and future threats to peace.
6. Youth need an enabling environment – they require safe space for engagement and exploration and to build their confidence in order to develop common agendas and have their voices heard.

#### **Drawing from the youth-led dialogues, LPI notes:**

*Formal and informal, traditional and more contemporary peace processes, including systems of conflict resolution, and peace agreements have mostly been the exclusive preserve of older male generations, across the Horn. This deep-rooted exclusion of young women and men from peace efforts, at different levels, is one of the most visible effects – and reinforcing factors - of the structural socio-political exclusion of youth. Both formal and informal systems of authority in the Horn are heavily infused with elements of gerontocracy.*

*Nevertheless, the growing recognition of the benefits of inclusiveness in peace processes, among international, national, and local stakeholders, is leading to perceptible positive shifts in peacebuilding theory and practice. LPI has observed that youth participation and inclusion in peace processes tend to be more advanced in local level processes with reference to inter-communal conflicts, especially in pastoralist areas of the region. Key methodologies that foreground youth have become popularized such as community radio shows and sports competitions between previously antagonistic communities. As for youth participation and inclusion in Track I peace processes, they are still limited, often tokenistic, and youth*

*needs, interests and positions are often reduced to issues of education and employment.*

#### **Case study:**

### Joint Galkayo Youth Committee

Territorial tensions between two dominant clans in the city of Galkayo led to violent hostilities in late 2015. To address this, the Government, with the support of the United Nations, mediated and created a Joint Ceasefire Committee (JCC) to oversee implementation of the ceasefire agreement. In 2018, the government-led JCC transitioned into a more community-led peace committee consisting of 61 elders instead of government officials. However, women and youth still lacked an official channel to engage in peace negotiations. Local youth organizations established the Joint Galkayo Youth Committee in 2018, which acts as an interlocutor to the Elders Peace Committee. A similar structure also emerged for women, known as the Women's Committee.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Case study:**

### The Youth Network of the Lake Chad Region

Upon recognizing that due to the lack of a common platform and a unified youth voice, there is a fundamental need to bring youth's voice to the centre of the engagements in areas impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency, The Youth Network of the Lake Chad Region was established on the side-lines of the second Lake Chad Basin Region Governors' Forum held in Niamey, Niger in July 2019. It is made up of at least 50 youth organizations operating in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, and comprises non-governmental, community-based, faith-based and women-led organizations.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Case study:**

### Youth engagements in early

45 United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. Op. cit.

46 [ISS \(Institute for Security Studies\). 2021. Lake Chad Basin: Youth-led stabilisation amid a pandemic, by Muneinazvo Kujekje and Alvin G Odinukwe.](#)

## warning

In Chad, early warning and monitoring informal committees have been established in the Lake Chad Basin (in Bol), at the initiative of the communities (chefs de village), and with the participation and support of youth. Youth liaise with women to collect information on possible threats, and play an active advocacy and outreach role in the communities. However, there is a key challenge in building capacity for conflict prevention and early warning.<sup>47</sup>

### **C. The drylands of West Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Southern Africa consist of large nomadic populations that rely on pastoralism as the main source of livelihood.<sup>48</sup>**

More than 20 million people in the Sahel migrate in search of food and pastures for their herds, and livestock farming provides an important source of livelihood.<sup>49</sup> The Horn of Africa contains the largest groups of pastoralists in the world: Sudan has the highest pastoralist percentage globally, while Somalia and Ethiopia rank third and fifth, respectively;<sup>50</sup> and in Djibouti, one-third of the population is pastoralist. The semi-arid and arid areas of the Horn make up 70 percent of the total land area, which provides an average of 20 to 30 percent of GDP; and semi-arid and arid land constitutes nearly 80 percent of the total land area of Kenya.<sup>51</sup>

According to an analysis on pastoralism and security trends by United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), growing competition between herders and farmers for access to water and pasture is a primary driver of conflicts, and which are frequently exacerbated by weak rule of law enforcement, political manipulation, demographic pressure, climate change, and the prevalence of weapons.



December 2021 - Segou, Mali. Fishermen on the Niger river. UNDP Mali

47 The focus group discussion for the report.

48 [FAO. 2018. Pastoralism in Africa's drylands. Rome. 52 pp. Rome.](#)

49 [World Bank, Where Climate Change Is Reality: Supporting Africa's Sahel pastoralists to secure a resilient future.](#)

50 [Kennedy Mkutu Pastoralism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa: Report.](#)

51 Ibid.



December 2021 - Mali. Young people getting ready before the start of the running race. The Grand Trail de la Jeunesse pour la Paix is an initiative implemented by UNDP and IOM, that mobilized more than 1500 young people in a running race and a massive peace and social cohesion campaign from Bamako to Gao, Mali. UNDP Mali

Youth in pastoral communities are particularly vulnerable due to a combination of factors that are broadly common across the three sub-regions: exclusion; violence and militarization of pastoral livelihood systems; diminishing forage and increasing vulnerability to climatic extremes; risk of animal and zoonotic diseases.<sup>52</sup> With the youth population expected to increase further in the agricultural and pastoral communities, the competition for accessing natural resources for animals will only increase further.

The AU's Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa, IGAD's Protocol on Transhumance and the Permanent Interstate Committee Against Drought in the Sahel (CILSS) provide the necessary normative framework. Similarly, there are institutional responses to minimize violent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers (as highlighted below), which provide invaluable lessons to further expand or strengthen these institutional responses using the normative frameworks identified. Pastoral and agricultural interfaces have strong sub-regional dimensions given the mobility and climatic variability dimensions to consider, hence the need for a sub-regional level refocus on youth.

#### **Case study:**

### **Youth organizations focus on conflict prevention at the local level**

According to an independent expert report commissioned by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, A study on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa, in Niger:

*STRATCORE Plus is implementing a major intervention in 15 villages to enhance social stability and peaceful coexistence among communities in Tillaberi, one of the eight autonomous regions in the country. The intervention exposes participating communities to dialogue, mediation and conflict prevention methods to enable them resolve disputes between and among themselves without necessarily embarking on formal litigating and judicial processes that take longer time and cost more.*

**Case study:**

## Community Dialogue Platform for Social Cohesion and Local Development

In Togo, youth represent close to 38 percent of the total population. To prevent youth from being marginalized and to strengthen their civic engagement as citizens, the Government identified that, at the municipality level, social cohesion is an intrinsic element of development processes, without which communities' resilience to conflict situations would be greatly compromised.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly:

*... three peace clubs have been created in three pilot municipalities, allowing 13,620 students (51 percent girls) to be sensitized on living together, the prevention of violent extremism and the peaceful management of land and leading to the definition by the youth of a vision for their municipality.*

*... more than 400 local actors (42 percent of whom are women) have been trained in social cohesion, including mayors, opinion leaders and young people, which made it possible to conduct connector initiatives such as the creation of youth groups carrying out public health actions, sports awareness-raising activities in public spaces, and the drafting of petitions to local authorities on specific social and environmental issues (UNDP, 2021).*

### **D. Food insecurity exacerbates violent conflicts and youth engagement in comparison to the threat of food insecurity to violent conflict needs to further unfold.**

Across the East Africa region, 75 percent of people in crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) were concentrated

in three countries – Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan.<sup>54</sup> These figures are for the period before the conflict in the northeast of Ethiopia. The countries forecasted to have the highest number of people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) are as follows: in 2021, Democratic Republic of the Congo, with nearly 27.3 million; in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, at 12.9 million; and in the Sahel, Nigeria, at 12.8 million people.<sup>55</sup>

Youth and women are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and undernourishment because they are disadvantaged in accessing economic and financial resources, which play a significant role in strengthening purchasing power. Evidence to establish these links can be seen from the analysis of countries experiencing prolonged conflicts/crisis situations and the proportion of people who cannot afford healthy diets.<sup>56</sup> Although the cost of the healthy diet is comparable between Africa and across the global average, the proportion of people who cannot afford this diet is significantly greater in countries with protracted crisis situations,<sup>57</sup> which is evidence of weak purchasing capacities. United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Sixth Global Environment Assessment identified that 50 percent more food would be needed by 2050 to feed the world population and with Africa expected to experience higher youth population and population growth in general, food security and access is a major consideration in the youth and peacebuilding trends.

**Case study:**

“Much of the recent increase in food insecurity can be attributed to the greater number of conflicts, often exacerbated by climate-

53 UNDP. Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation: Scaling up Made-in-Africa Solutions – Insight from work of UNDP Togo Country Office.

54 [Food Security Information Network. 2021. Global Report on Food Crises.](#)

55 Ibid.

56 [FAO. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Transforming food systems and affordable healthy diets. 2020.](#)

57 Ibid



January, 2023 – Dapaong, Togo. Cross-border project with local partner Refed/s and Rafia to help young people and women become financially independent. UNDP Togo

## related shocks.”<sup>58</sup>

Providing a global perspective, FAO’s 2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition shows that almost all countries experiencing some form of violent conflict<sup>59</sup> over prolonged periods are also countries whose populations face frequent food price fluctuations and spikes, disruptions in food supply and in access to functioning markets, risks and inefficiencies in food systems. Sudden and unexpected

January, 2023 – Tabligo, Togo. Civic engagement project for the consolidation of peace and social cohesion with local partner ACDIEF. UNDP Togo



food price rises, or the reduction of food subsidies, can act as a catalyst for civil and political conflicts when interfaced with existing socio-economic and political factors such as higher poverty and unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, and marginalization.

**E. Climate extremes, especially drought vulnerability, are an integral part of violent conflict narratives across the three sub-regions, and there is a need to further explore**

58 FAO. 2021. The State of Food Security and Nutrition. Rome.

59 FAO defines protracted crisis situations as “characterized by recurrent natural disasters and/or conflict, longevity of food crises, breakdown of livelihoods and insufficient institutional capacity to react to the crises”. There are three criteria used to define a country with a protracted crisis situation: (i) the longevity of the crisis; (ii) humanitarian aid flow to the country; and (iii) the country’s economic and food security status.



### youth's role in addressing this trend.

While economic, social and political factors are shaping the underlying root causes, climatic extremes are also unfolding as a 'threat multiplier'. An independent report<sup>60</sup> commissioned by the G7 members identified *seven compound climate-fragility risks* delineating the climate-poverty-peace nexus identifying climate change as the ultimate 'threat multiplier'. The independent report noted that persistent inequalities, political marginalization and unresponsive governments when interfaced with climatic stresses and risks will gravely exacerbate the potential for conflict and instability. Similarly, using a panel regression of climate variation and conflict events between 1981 and 2002, it is estimated that temperature variables are strongly related to conflict incidence: a 1 percent increase in temperature leads to a 4.5 percent increase in civil war and a 0.9 percent increase in conflict incidence the following year,<sup>61</sup> i.e. a 54 percent increase in armed conflicts by 2030.<sup>62</sup>

With the youth population expected to be the lion-share of the population within the three sub-regions, the impact of the climatic extremes is most likely to be disproportionate. Its impact on women, who make up the majority of labour engaged in agriculture and cross-border trade, is also expected to be significant. Within the three sub-regions, there are valuable experiences of youth-led interventions to address climate change, making a real difference at the local level. These experiences reveal the untapped potential of young people as positive and effective peacebuilders. This report therefore recommends leveraging community level peacebuilding experiences and best practices, and converting them into specific institutional responses at a national and sub-regional level.

#### Case study:

### Youth groups leadership in building

### skills and capacities to combat climate change

According to an independent expert report commissioned by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, A study on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa:

*Mostly working at the community levels, Action for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainable Development (ACIREDED), a youth group initiative in the Technical College of Meskine in the Far North (Cameroon) region was established to encourage students to become more actively involved in combating deforestation and desertification. To date, the initiative has led to the establishment of environmental clubs known as Friends of Nature in schools in Meskine, awareness raised among over 300 school children on environmental issues, and the planting of thousands of trees in the outskirts of the city of Maroua.*

**F. Transboundary zones (i.e. the Lake Chad Basin, Liptako Gourma in the Sahel) and borderlands have important subregional implications for peace and stability, and youth's role in leading peacebuilding efforts within these specific geographic points is extremely vital.**

An important trend associated with the geography of the conflict is that most of the conflicts are geographically limited, with only a small part of the country directly affected.<sup>63</sup> The map in Figure 2 shows that in 2018, most of the 'conflict event locations within the sub-regions of this report have a borderland narrative.

The governance of borderland regions has two distinct characteristics: a situation of limited statehood; and a situation in which the presence of an international border

60 Rüttinger, L., Smith, D., Stang, G., Tänzler, D., and Vivekananda, J. 2015. *A New Climate for Peace. Climate Diplomacy– Taking action on climate and fragility risks.*

61 Burke, M., Miguel, E. Satyanath, D., Dykema, J., and Lobell, D. 2009. *Warming increases the risk of civil war in Africa.*

62 *Earth.Org. 2020. Climate Change and Conflict in Africa, by Owen Mulhern. 11 December.*

63 Rustad, S.A., and Bakken., I.V. 2019. *Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989-2018* Peace Research Institute, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

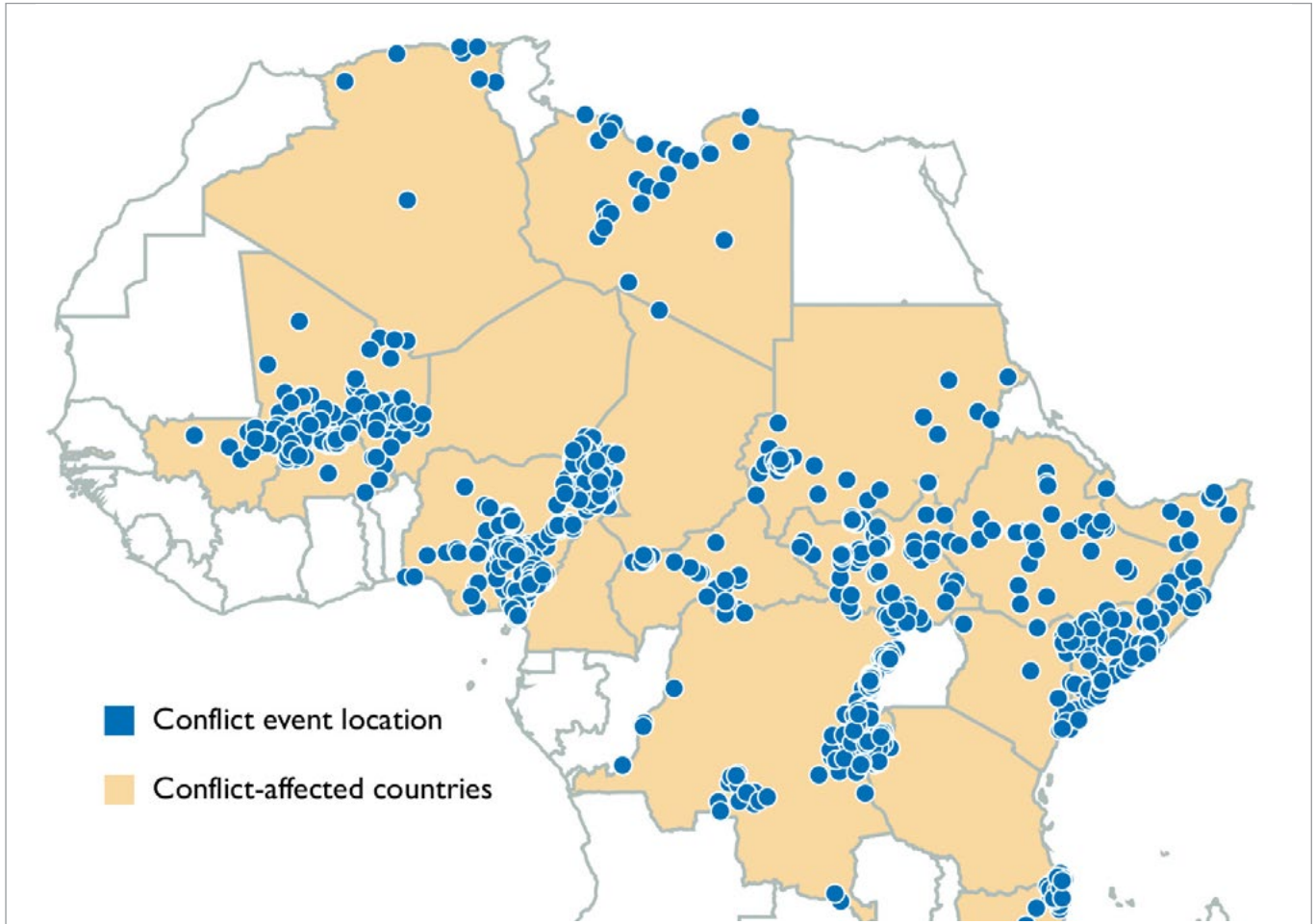


Figure 2: Conflict events and conflict affected countries in Africa.

Source Rustad & Bakken (2019)

shapes economic and social life.<sup>64</sup> In addition, borderland communities are characterized by a low presence of health and education services and other public service delivery mechanisms, and a high mobility due to economic considerations. Some of the borderland geographies are experiencing alleviated levels of multi-dimensional poverty. Evidence that conflict events are concentrated across borderlands provides insight into the governance

factors influencing the conflict events and the structural weaknesses of borderlands.

Youth alienation in the borderlands is particularly acute, with many youth experiencing poverty and exclusion from education, employment and local decision-making, all of which lead to high risk of radicalization and the active involvement in conflict or illicit activities.<sup>65</sup> For instance,

64 2020 UNDP Borderlands in Africa Literature Overview and Key Terms. Observation based on original reference of Raeymaekers, T., Menkhaus, K., and Vlassenroot, K. (2008). State and non-state regulation in African protracted crises: governance without government? *Afrika focus*, 21(2).

65 [2021 UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre Project Document](#). This is also a key observation from UNDP's 2017 publication, *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, incentives and the tipping point for recruitment*.

rates of youth unemployment in border regions are among the Horn of Africa region's highest and pose an economic challenge with regional implications.<sup>66</sup> IGAD indicates that Africa has close to 100 active border disputes whose causes include politics of identity, competition over natural resources, population growth and displacement and environmental pressures.<sup>67</sup>

While there are informal mechanisms anchored on the traditional mechanisms of survival within the borderlands and larger transboundary zones that people, and youth in particular, are engaged in, there is a need to further explore the role of youth in these geographical contexts. This is particularly important given that, according to empirical estimates, over 270 million live in borderland regions, which is a higher population than any single state population on the continent.

#### **Case study:**

### Lake Chad Basin as a historical trading and commercial hub, and the role of canoe drivers

Historically, the Lake Chad Basin has been a trading and commercial hub, relying primarily on canoe transportation. Before the Boko Haram crisis, generations of boat drivers contributed to a flourishing formal and informal economy based on the movement of people and goods.<sup>68</sup> Compared to road transport, boats offered a faster solution to delivering large quantities of goods,<sup>69</sup> thus becoming a lifeline for trading. This trade was crucial for youth and women as it provided informal trading opportunities, and their role was central in managing the trading and commerce within the zone. Before the violent conflict, canoes used to carry people and goods (smoked fish, corn,



Figure 3: Lake Chad basin trade routes.

Source: Hoinathy, Institute for Security Studies.

wheat, cow and camel skins, etc.) from Bol and Baga Sola in Chad to Baga Kawa in Nigeria.<sup>70</sup> On the way back, canoes used to carry food products such as pasta, rice, oil, soft drinks, wheat, flour, sugar, tea, soap, detergents, cosmetics, loin cloths, clothes and cement.<sup>71</sup> These manufactured goods are supplied to larger parts of Chad. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) estimates that this trade alone was valued at thousands of euros. Violent conflict impacted the overall supply demand nexus within the area, leading to higher inflation on some of the basic products thus impacting lives directly.<sup>72</sup>

66 [2020 World Bank. From Isolation to Integration: the borderlands of the Horn of Africa.](#)

67 [Comments from the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development \(IGAD\).](#)

68 [Hoinathy, R. 2021. Terrorism has disrupted a thriving regional trade hub sustained by generations of boat drivers. Institute for Security Studies.](#)

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Hoinathy Op. cit.

## Recent examples of United Nations engagements in support of peacebuilding at the sub-regional level

### ***Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region***

Countries in the Lake Chad Basin affected by Boko Haram have developed individual strategies to respond to humanitarian challenges. The Lake Chad Basin Commission, together with the AUC and the United Nations partners produced a regional strategy to be adopted and implemented by each of the affected countries with a prime focus on stabilization, recovery and resilience by balancing the military and civilian responses to the crisis. It outlines nine pillars that aim to address the root causes of the crisis and rationalize various initiatives to stabilize areas affected by Boko Haram. The Lake Chad Basin crisis represents the changing nature of conflict, which is more complicated and intractable. The regional strategy recognizes that the need for regional engagement is informed by three separate but interrelated and mutually reinforcing crises: a structural and persistent development deficit; a breakdown of the social contract; a violent extremist insurgency; and finally, unfolding environment disaster. A key lesson here is that countries affected by the crisis have deep-rooted linkages across borders, and the mutually reinforcing trends identified above are relatively common across the countries, which calls for an equally multidimensional response starting from the sub-regional level.<sup>73</sup>

Since youth represent the majority of the population of the sub-region, this strategy identifies the need to make them an integral part of the implementation, and engages a CSO network through the Regional Stabilization Facility.

### ***The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region***

The United Nations Strategy<sup>74</sup> is anchored on 10 pillars aimed to “foster trust and confidence among countries and communities, to further efforts towards socio-economic development and shared prosperity and to promote

inclusive, equitable, just and resilient societies and institutions”.

The Strategy further notes that by doing so, its goal is to help to address the root causes and drivers of instability at national and regional levels. It advocates “a shift in narrative beyond the traditional focus on conflict-related challenges, embracing a forward-leaning view that identifies opportunities for peace, security and people-centred development”. A key lesson from this example is the need for balancing political and programmatic interventions given the changing face of violent conflicts and crises. Also, recognizing youth as a core segment of the population, the Strategy places a strong emphasis on engaging youth in the peacebuilding processes.

June 2022 – Kwale County, Diani Beach, Kenya. Interfaith Youth football tournament. Hamad Tenguri, UNDP Kenya



73 [African Union. Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. UNDP. Regional Stabilisation Facility for the Lake Chad Basin](#)

74 [Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes.](#)

## Examples of government efforts to further strengthen focus on peace.

### *Ethiopia: Ministry of Peace*

In 2018, a new ministry, the Ministry of Peace, was established to lead the development of a national peacebuilding strategy, and strengthen capacities in Oromia, Somali and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region states to resolve community conflicts, including in the Gedeo-Guji and Oromia-Somali border zones.

Powers and duties of the Ministry of Peace are as follows:

- Work in cooperation with concerned Federal and Regional State government organs aims to ensure the maintenance of public order, develop strategies, and undertake awareness creation and sensitization activities to ensure the peace, security and freedom of the country and its people.
- In collaboration with relevant regional organs, facilitate the provision of proper protection to citizens living in any part of the country.
- Work in cooperation with relevant government organs, cultural and religious organizations, and other pertinent bodies to ensure peace and mutual respect among followers of different religions and beliefs, as well as nations, nationalities and people.
- In cooperation with the relevant actors, work towards the creation of national consensus on critical national issues; propose recommendations to the government, and upon approval, follow up their implementation.
- In cooperation with concerned bodies, promote the enhancement of cultural exchange, civic education, and artistic works that build national unity and consensus.
- Develop awareness creation and sensitization strategies to foster a culture of respect and tolerance among individuals and groups, and follow up on their implementation.
- Identify factors serving as causes of conflicts among communities; submit a study proposing recommendations to keep communities away from conflict and instability, and implement same upon

approval; and register religious organizations and associations;

- Oversee and follow-up on national intelligence and security, as well as on the information network and financial security functions.
- Supervise and follow-up on the proper execution of functions related to the Federal Police.
- Lead and follow-up on citizenship, national identification cards, immigration, passports and vital events registration or issuance functions.
- Lead and follow-up on the affairs of immigrants, political asylum seekers and returnees.
- Make appropriate preparations for natural man-made disasters; lead and follow up on national disaster risk management; and more.

*Source: 2020 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Peacebuilding Fund.*

## Challenges to youth-led peacebuilding

In 2019, UNDP identified the need to increase youth participation in the review of SDG 16 as part of the High-Level Political Forum. To ensure participation of youth in this review, in partnership with the Major Group of Children and Youth, UNDP hosted an online consultation in advance of the preparatory conference on SDG 16 involving 270 young people from 80 countries across all regions of the world. Some of the key messages from this exercise offer critical insights into the challenges that youth face in youth-led peacebuilding as follows:

- 1 The lack of participation, especially of youth, in decision-making is the main barrier to the implementation of the SDGs, particularly SDG 16.
- 2 The main gaps and barriers to youth empowerment for peaceful, just and inclusive societies are exclusion from decision-making, development and peace processes and the lack of recognition of youth-specific needs.
- 3 Support for young people can be improved through increased access to funding, capacity development and partnerships.
- 4 Young people are taking the lead in implementing, monitoring and following up on SDG 16 by mobilizing and organizing youth, engaging in evaluation and monitoring, advocating, raising awareness and partnering with stakeholders.
- 5 The unrestricted participation of women in politics and society must be supported, and spaces to enable this must be fostered.
- 6 Partnerships and spaces for dialogue with all stakeholders, particularly with local and national governments and grassroots organizations, are important for peaceful, inclusive societies.
- 7 Support for young peacebuilders will increase trust and foster inclusivity.
- 8 Civic space needs to be protected and promoted.
- 9 Supporting accountability platforms and efforts led by civil society is important for building just societies.
- 10 Inclusive policies should be prioritized as should listening to the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized.<sup>75</sup>

Based on the above analysis, this report notes that youth are engaged in peacebuilding and are not passive spectators. As noted from the insights presented above, they play a unique role in peacebuilding and possess the ability to contribute across a spectrum of peacebuilding spaces. In addition, there is growing recognition of the changing face of violent conflict within the three sub-regions, whereby increasingly, fewer conflicts involve countries and are being replaced by more complex narratives of conflict and violence involving multiple forms, variants and players. To meet these complexities, the RECs, AU and the United Nations are developing comprehensive strategies and partnerships. According to this report, the role of youth-led peacebuilding is an extremely critical one that needs further support to supplement this renewed thrust.

From a youth-led peacebuilding perspective, the following key sub-regional narratives are identified as vital to further unravel role of youth as agents of peacebuilding:

## Sahel

Youth population growth	The Sahel's youth population is expected to grow further, with population projections indicating that Africa will continue to grow at a rapid pace. Creating economic opportunities for the growing population, especially young women and men, is a key economic dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative of the sub-region. Economic transformation that can accommodate growing populations has been slow across the different countries of the sub-region.
Changing livelihood zones	Youth population growth is unfolding within the context of changes to livelihood zones and contestations over the most valuable natural resource – water. Changing livelihood zones is a key livelihood dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative. Increased farmer-herder contestations with implications beyond the country's borders have roots in changing livelihood zones.
Climate variabilities and food production	Young women and men are involved in various food production systems within the sub-region. Given the high reliance of food production systems on the climate, climatic variability is impacting food production systems. Climatic variability and extremes are a key climatic dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative.
Governance	The youth population is increasing within the context of weak governance systems observed across countries in the sub-region. Increased influences by extremist ideologies within the context of pre-existing structural weaknesses and exploiting grievances is a key governance dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative.
Low human capital formation	The youth population is increasing within the context of severely constrained human capital development due to binding constraints on education and health outcomes. Low human development progress in some of the countries within the sub-region has implications for wider peace and stability. The low human development dimension is one of the key driving factors shaping the youth and peacebuilding narrative.
Food insecurity	The growing youth population exerts further pressure on the demands of food, and the sub-region is witnessing a growing youth population within the context of increasing food insecurity. Increasing violent events is concentrated on specific geographies that are experiencing higher levels of food insecurity.
Gender imbalances	The youth population is growing within the context of existing gender imbalances, which is a key driver reducing the productivity of the sub-region. Limited access to economic rights – land, technology, capital – by youth in general, and young women in particular, is a fundamental limiting factor. In addition, vulnerability to gender-based violence and lack of opportunities to safe education and reliable health services reinforce patriarchal systems. Extremist narratives targeting women and girls is a critical impediment. Gendered dimensions are one of the key driving factors shaping the youth and peacebuilding narratives of the sub-region.
Political transitions	There have been unconstitutional changes of governments and transitions in many countries. Political context within which the youth population engage in politics is a key political dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative.

## The Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa

Historical legacies	The main root causes of instability are often linked to grievances over historical legacies dating back to the colonial era and the post-independence period. This includes borders, which in many instances have separated ethnic communities. <sup>76</sup> As a result, some actors have instrumentalized political gains. Reinforcing narratives of historical legacies and deepening ethnicity for political gains is a key historical dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative.
Political transitions	Countries have experienced unconstitutional changes in government and political processes which in turn have led to civil unrest and insecurity. The context within which youth engage in decision-making is a key political dimension driving the youth peace and security narrative
Youth population growth	The region is home to a large section of a educated middle-class with a high youth population. <sup>77</sup> For instance, Uganda ranks as the world's second youngest nation. Just as in the Sahel, the youth population is expected to grow further, with population projections showing that Africa is expected to have continued population growth rates. Creating the economic opportunities for the large cohorts of the youth population is a key economic dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative. Great Lakes is one of the fastest growing regions in Africa over the past few years; however, COVID-19 is delivering a devastating impact.
Access to land, power and resources and borderlands	Grievances over exclusion from access to land, power and resources is a key root cause <sup>78</sup> for conflict patterns and is one of the key sources for cross-border skirmishes. Youth across borderlands are particularly vulnerable. Access to economic resources together with services is a key 'borderland dimension' driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative.
Climate variabilities and food production	Young women and men are engaged in various food production systems within the sub-region, and given the high reliance of food production systems on climate, climatic variability is impacting food production systems. Climatic variability and extremes are a key climatic dimension driving the youth and peacebuilding narrative.
Low human capital formation	The youth population is increasing within the context of severely constrained human capital development because of binding constraints to education and health outcomes. Low human development progress in some of the countries within the sub-region has implications for wider peace and stability. The low human capital dimension is one of the key driving factors shaping the youth and peacebuilding narrative.

76 [United Nations. 2020. Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.](#)

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.



## Reflections on sub-regional level infrastructures for peace

This report recognizes that countries in the three sub-regions have experience putting in place formal or informal infrastructures for peace. United Nations system interventions, such as the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, as well as the United Nations Horn of Africa Strategy provide an institutional push for the development of infrastructures for peace. Given the changing nature of conflict involving more non-state actors, the growing importance and traction of youth roles in peacebuilding processes, and the opportunities offered by the normative mandates of

the United Nations, the AU and the RECs/RMs, there is a need to strengthen the anchor of the infrastructures for peace at the sub-regional level. This need is based on three key facts: (i) conflict in today's world knows no boundaries, and its impact is not within the territorial limits of a country; (ii) with youth representing the largest growing segment of the population, they can be a key resource for peacebuilding; and (iii) there is increasing recognition within the United Nations, the AU and the RECs/RMs of the need for institutional responses matching the changing face of conflict.

November 2022 - Rural community of Miti, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo. Woman participating in the intergenerational dialogue on youth, peace and security. UNDP DRC



## Conclusions

RECs/RMs should be effectively leveraged because they offer unique comparative advantages in responding to the changing face of conflict and increasing youth inclusion in peacebuilding interventions. In this regard, recalibrating the RECs/RMs' conflict prevention tools by taking a more youth-focused approach provides an opportunity to respond to the needs of youth and facilitate their inclusion within peacebuilding interventions. This would entail effective recalibration and consolidation of the existing capacities and resources to respond to the need for effective and dynamic peacebuilding interventions that leverage youth as a crucial resource.

It is important to unlock the potential of youth, since it is extremely central to social cohesion and peacebuilding. In this regard, it is important to work in close coordination with the RECs/RMs to further consolidate the gains made in conflict prevention and institute effective sub-regional peace instruments is a key entry point for the United Nations to further explore and strengthen sub-regional engagements in peacebuilding. Some of the more recent examples from the Lake Chad Basin and Great Lakes as discussed above provide key entry points for consolidating sub-regional capacities focused on youth. Similarly, the United Nations continues to implement the Regional Strategy for the Horn of Africa which focuses on regional peace and security, resilience and socio-economic development, inclusive and responsive governances, and sustainable natural resource development and climate resilience. This framework, which is implemented in coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy, recognizes youth as a critical segment within all related activities.

The United Nations further implements a comprehensive Regional Project for Preventing and Responding to Violent

Extremism in Africa with the overall objective of supporting and building capacity of member states, policymakers, practitioners and key stakeholders in conflict and transition settings to respond effectively.

The AUC's proposal as part of the Africa Common Position on UN Peacebuilding Architecture offers a vital entry point to further consolidate youth's role in peacebuilding:

*Political cooperation among neighbouring countries should entail developing and implementing concrete strategies for tackling regional peacebuilding challenges through sustained and early engagement to deal with transnational issues such as transboundary resource management; supporting inclusive dialogues on national and regional issues; and institutional reforms within some of the organizations implementing regional responses. The UN, AU and the RECs/RMs should offer pertinent proposals in these areas.*

With youth representing the largest segment of the population across countries within the sub-regions of this report, fostering their participation in peacebuilding as well as developing policy and programmatic responses to domesticate UNSCR 2250 will be essential. There is also a need for similar efforts at the sub-regional levels with more investment channelled towards increasing youth-centric

## infrastructures for peace and regional programmes to foster youth action.

Discourse needs to move beyond mainstreaming youth in national development planning and financing, including with the United Nations, since they are the core segment of the population in most African countries. Youth must be effectively represented as equal partners with influence at all stages of governance, political and economic processes rather than mainstreamed solely for fulfilment of a metric or quota. It is even more important given that the projections and trends show that fragile countries will remain relatively low-income and comprise higher levels of poverty within their population. It is thus critical to adopt a multidimensional approach towards linking youth to the wider sustainable development priorities and to do so systematically at all levels.

### Youth Programmes and Peacebuilding

An analysis conducted by UNDP South Sudan on youth subcultures revealed several areas in which peacebuilding and youth programming can add greater value. In summary, some of the key programming insights requiring a multidimensional approach towards linking youth to sustainable development are as follows:

7. Create education curriculum that promotes critical thinking, civic education and peacebuilding as key life skills.
8. Move beyond the provision of vocational training to provide youth with resources and mentorship in order to consolidate and expand their own businesses, and build the technical capabilities to manage them.
9. Address traumas and promoting reconciliation.
10. Build bridges between youth across all political, ethnic and geographic divides.
11. Systematically and inclusively address issues faced by young women and girls, which are at the core of many of the effects of violent conflict.
12. Apply more evidence-based, coordinated and long-term programming involving youth in responding to issues of social cohesion, peacebuilding and economic development.

*Source: Understanding Youth Subcultures in South Sudan: Implications for Peace and Development UNDP South Sudan Country Office.*

There are many views on the concept of infrastructure for peace. As identified in this report, there is a need to consolidate infrastructures for peace at the sub-regional level using a youth-responsive lens towards effectively addressing the complex nature of violence prevention and peacebuilding. The first recommended step in this regard would be to engage with the RECs in developing a deeper and clearer concept of infrastructures for peace that is promising at the sub-regional level to enhance the role of youth within them. Second, in order to shape youth's contribution to peacebuilding within the three sub-regions, it will be necessary to link the current early warning systems at the sub-regional level with appropriate formal and informal infrastructures for peace that place youth as a central and critical component.

All countries within the three sub-regions have a strong element of climate as relevant for peacebuilding. Youth networks and organizations have a special place in responding to this 'threat multiplier' (as discussed above) through implementation of targeted climate interventions that effectively leverage and mobilize youth. Furthermore, building institutional and community-level capacities in order to respond to the effects of climate change at the country level is an area of focus for government as reflected in national plans and strategies. However, given the transnational nature of impact and using the entry-points created through the existing normative frameworks, it is key to reinforce a similar focus at the sub-regional levels on climate change mitigation.

There is a growing correlation between regions experiencing food insecurity and regions experiencing violent conflict; breaking this nexus by engaging youth is pivotal. As countries are experiencing higher population growth rates, building sustainable solutions to food insecurity in all its dimensions is the cornerstone for building resilience. The role of youth in addressing food insecurity lies in responding to the vicious cycle of instability where food insecurity emerges in most cases as a consequence of repeated rounds of conflict. This role is mainly shaped by the fact that a large segment of the youth population is engaged in subsistence agriculture. However, there is a limited productivity of youth in this sector, which is caused by a combination of factors such as limited purchasing power



March, 2023 – Comoros. Ensuring climate resilient water supplies in the Comoros Islands (GCF). UNDP Comoros

of youth, current trends (in sub-Saharan Africa) where only 10 percent of the economically active population is covered by statutory social security schemes, secured land rights, technological inputs and access to markets. Unlocking the potential of youth to respond to food insecurity relies on strengthening institutional response towards improving their access to economic and financial resources, addressing weak governance, especially at the local level, strengthening local institutions, and mitigating the ever-increasing risks of climatic extremes.

Based on the number of violent conflict events involving borders, it can be deduced that special focus needs to be placed on the borderlands. Youth and women are currently playing a pivotal role in responding to the needs of local communities within border areas using predominantly traditional and informal structures and processes. Reinforcing youth capacities to cope with the multiple socio-economic, political and security challenges by focusing on these traditional and informal systems could be a crucial step forward towards increasing their capacity to engage in peacebuilding.

The effective participation of youth in electoral processes is another key component for enhancing their role in peacebuilding. Youth participation in governance starts with participation in elections. Historically, however, youth participation in electoral processes has been low. The main barriers to youth empowerment for peaceful, just and inclusive societies include their exclusion from decision-

making, development and peace processes, and the lack of recognition of their needs; responding to these issues would provide a viable path to changing this trend. In 2022, UNDP is implementing a sustaining peace during electoral processes (SELECT) project to build the capacity of both national electoral stakeholders and international partners to: (i) identify risk factors that may affect elections; (ii) design programmes and activities specifically aimed at preventing and reducing the risk of violence; and (iii) implement operations related to the electoral processes in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Youth's role in transition processes is critical for making the transition process legitimate. For instance, in Guinea, civil society actors together with youth have defined the contribution they wish to make to the transition process, which have been incorporated into the advocacy plan towards ensuring that their ideas and aspirations feature in the overall transition process.

Given the unique and significant contributions that youth can make, they represent a crucial factor in peacebuilding. However, the existing interventions aimed at peacebuilding at the national and sub-regional levels do not adequately respond to the increasing need for youth's inclusion in the relevant processes. The report therefore recommends a more targeted approach that leverages existing resources, capacities, and partnerships at the sub-regional and national levels towards facilitating the effective inclusion of youth in peacebuilding.

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