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YOUTHS AND PEACEBUILDING: A SHIFT IN NARRATIVE

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Ruth Abiola Adimula

Abstract

This study investigated the involvement of youth as perpetrators of insecurity, examined the provisions of UN Resolution on Youth Peace and Security and also identified how youth can build sustainable peace locally and globally, vis-à-vis the five keys pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration. The study adopted secondary sources of empirical research and narratology to investigate the roles of youth as perpetrators of violence and insecurity and also recently as peacebuilders as narrative structure. The study found that extremist groups often look to raise fresh recruits among young people living in desperate conditions, under exclusionary regimes, or within fractured societies to perpetrate fear and insecurity, though the UN Resolution provides that young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. However, Studies have demonstrated that including and partnering with young people helps foster a more sustainable peace. The conclusion showed that, despite continued support from the U.N., and grassroots efforts to encourage inclusive representation of youth in decision-making, there remain structural barriers that prevent youth from contributing to Youth Peace and Security on national, regional, and local levels. Recommendations were hinged on how young people can play a greater role in peacebuilding by supporting youth visions of peace, creating space for youth to engage in political processes, facilitating and supporting dignified livelihoods, supporting education and capacity-building for peace and facilitating inter-community dialogue.

Keywords: Peace, Peacebuilding, Security, United Nations Resolution, Youth.

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Introduction

There was a narrative of youth as drivers of conflict and creators of instability as opposed to partners of peace (Rabens, 2016). Youth to the United Nations (2005) reflects the age group of people between 15-24 years, subject to socio-economic-cultural contexts (Aluclu, Yesir, and Pillai, 2021). Strength, Bravery, Fearlessness, Self-confidence, Impetuousness, and Impressionability inter alia, are words that best define this special class of the world's population (Salas, 2022). Some of the youths are harnessed and explored for their youth power, being recruited by both the government and other groups that perpetrate or defend violent conflicts. The assumption is that grievances lead to frustrations and aggression. The Grievance-based logic explains that socio-economic and political grievances as a result of 'injustice, unfairness and unaddressed deprivations,' and non-representation, under-representation and outright exclusion and marginalization in the decision-making process prompt the youth to get involved in violent conflicts. It takes strength to fight and once the population wielding this power are convinced by whatever means, that there is a worthy cause, such convictions are sufficient to spur them to action and the rest of the population can only debate on the rightness or wrongness of their actions.

Youths are very useful and profitable in all aspects of a nation's economy and to all classes of persons regardless of race, age, gender or social standing, if harnessed properly, but equally potentially dangerous and deadly when handled wrongly.

The contemporary reasoning associates youth with conflict and violence whether as perpetrators or as victims. For example, Halstead (1992) identified structural issues that set the socioeconomic context of youth as perpetrators of violence to include economic marginalization of young people, shifting family patterns, and lack of income support. He examined youth as victims in terms of their availability and effectiveness. He noted that groups that seem to be at the highest risk of victimization are homeless youth, aboriginal youth, and young offenders. These groups are often the least prepared to access the protection of the law when they are victimized. According to Halstead, predictors of victimization include the customary congregation of young people in public places, high levels of public transportation usage, alcohol and drug misuse, inexperience in negotiating disputes, and a lack of alternatives to delinquency and violence.

Analysing the youths as victims of violence, Irfan (2022) noted that violent conflicts are responsible for massive displacement and an increase in refugee crises around the world. This is the case in many parts of the Middle East and Africa where violent conflicts abound. He cited a press release by UNICEF (2022) which revealed that more than half of the country's population of children in Ukraine estimated at 7.5 million have been displaced. Over 1.8 million have crossed to

neighbouring countries as refugees and about 2.5 million are now internally displaced inside Ukraine. It is feared that the ongoing violence across the country has created a child rights crisis that could last for generations (UNICEF, 2022).

In another context, peacebuilding is the process of working with two or more conflicting parties to resolve differences peacefully. While Peacemakers help improve communication between parties to end or prevent violent conflict, peacebuilding seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and lay the foundations to prevent future violence (Conciliation Resources, 2023). The U.S. Institute of Peace has identified steps to peacebuilding which include acknowledging how damaging long-term violence can be, the importance of local involvement in the peace process, and the need to revisit and revise peace plans over time (study.com, 2023).

Usually, peace strategists collaborate with localized organizations and governments (including youths where applicable) to study the core causes of conflict, assess the impact of war on the affected area and plan for the potential of certain groups or individuals to oppose peace initiatives in the process of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is important to ensure people feel safe in their communities since maintaining peace allows for economic and social development; and peacebuilding can include conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation. Study.com (2023) while citing an example of peacebuilding noted that, the United Nations was involved in a peacebuilding effort in Liberia at the end of its civil war. The UN sent military troops and diplomats to ensure the conflicting parties were maintaining their part of the peace plan.

However, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) was a milestone in the international community's affirmation that youth play a significant role in realizing global peace and security (United States Institute of Peace- USIP, 2020). While youths have previously been depicted as victims, targets, or perpetrators of violent conflict, the Resolution represented a shift in discourse toward youth as peacebuilders and agents of change capable of preventing, mitigating, and resolving conflict in their communities (USIP, 2020). Young people today often constitute the majority population in countries with ongoing peace processes. Across the world, young people are actively working to build peace and prevent violence. They want their voices to be heard and to matter in ongoing peace negotiations. Preventing the conflicts of tomorrow means changing the mindset of youth today- noted by Graca Machel.

In Nigeria, SARS brutality became a proximate trigger of the nationwide protests,

a constellation of growing poverty, unemployment, and shrinking space for inclusive participation of youth in government policymaking. Hillman *and* Manak, *(2023) reported that,* in response to the #End SARS youth protests against brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigeria Police Force, the Federal Government announced the disbandment of SARS and introduced some reforms in the security agencies. The violent protests snowballed into demands for systemic reforms, particularly to address the socioeconomic challenges facing Nigeria's youth. The objectives of the study therefore were to investigate the involvement of youth as perpetrators of insecurity and victims of violence, examine the provisions of the UN Resolution on Youth Peace and Security and identify how youths can build sustainable peace locally and globally, vis-à-vis the five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration.

Conceptual Clarification

Youth

There is no universally agreed international definition of the youth age group. For statistical purposes, however, the United Nations—without prejudice to any other definitions made by Member States—defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, youth denote the time of life when one is young especially the period between childhood and maturity; the early period of existence, growth, or development. Usually, youth is associated with power and strength and this is susceptible to different groups with whatever objectives they have, more of harnessing this youth power and redirecting them to a particular cause. The fact that Youth Power can be harnessed at all makes it as valuable to mankind as any natural resource on earth, and because of their characteristics of impressionability and impetuousness. To harness youth power profitably could be through youth empowerment. The term Youth Empowerment is used by governmental and nongovernmental organizations alike in diverse forums to develop and empower the youth population to be productive, responsible, self-reliant or to fight for a worthy cause

Peacebuilding

Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2023) defines peacebuilding as the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict. Peacebuilding can include conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation. The Oxford Languages Dictionary (2023) simply defines peacebuilding as the implementation of measures intended to create or sustain peace, especially in an

area affected by conflict. Peacebuilding is a long-term process of encouraging people to talk, repairing relationships, and reforming institutions (Conciliation Resources, 2023). It is a process that promotes the resolution of conflicts and provides a means to prevent future conflicts by establishing open communication between conflicting parties to create a lasting peaceful state (Study.com, 2023). Whereas peacemaking is the act of resolving conflict and bringing about peace which can begin at any moment throughout a conflict, regardless of whether it has escalated to violence. Strategic peacebuilding connects people and groups "on the ground" (community and religious groups, grassroots organizations, etc.) with policymakers and powerbrokers (governments, the United Nations, corporations, banks, etc.) It aims not only to resolve conflicts, but to build societies, institutions, policies, and relationships that are better able to sustain peace and justice (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2023)

The primary goals of peacebuilding programs are to prevent disputes from escalating, to detect concerns before they become conflicts, and to formulate long-term plans to maintain a defined peaceful environment. This means that, for positive change to last, everyone affected by a destructive conflict has to be involved in the process of building peace. Transforming relationships is key to putting an end to violence. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict(Study.com, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Over 1,000 peace agreements have been signed globally in the last two decades (Altiok, and Grizelj, 2019). While broader inclusion has been shown to positively impact the sustainability of peace agreements, no comprehensive studies have assessed the role and impact of young people during, and in the lead-up to, these peace agreements. Peace negotiations remain central to decision-making in a peace process, yet it is a key phase during which young people continue to be politically marginalized, excluded, and undervalued. However, limited efforts have been invested to systematically map and understand how young people shape and influence the sustainability of peace processes and agreements. Young women and men continue to be marginalized, undervalued and unrecognized for their capacity to build peace.

The political agency of young people in the context of peace processes is often associated with stereotypes of perpetrators or victims of violence; these are gendered perspectives, where young men are treated as violent actors who can be potential spoilers and destabilizers of peace processes and dissidents to peace agreements, while young women are seen as passive victims of violence.

Youth are confronted with the biological and psychological growth processes that

characterize youth and adolescence and formidable external pressures such as poverty, disease and violence. The eruption of war further compounds the adversities many face.

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015)- formalized the youth, peace and security (YPS) Agenda, is a significant shift towards recognizing young people and their roles in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. YPS explains the five pillars of Youth involvement in peace process- viz: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the youth bulge theory to underpin its discussions. The term "Youth Bulge" was coined by German social scientist Gunnar Heinsohn in the mid-1990s. The theory contends that societies with rapidly growing young populations often end up with rampant unemployment and large pools of disaffected youths who are more susceptible to recruitment into rebel or terrorist groups. Countries with weak political institutions are most vulnerable to youth-bulge-related violence and social unrest. Beehner (2007) noted that the presence of idle and unemployed young people in the developing world, is emerging as a catalyst for internal violence.

Gavin, (2018) explained that while this kind of frustration and competition for jobs do not directly fuel violence, they do increase the likelihood these unemployed youths will seek social and economic advancement by alternative, extra legal means. She said: "If you have no other options and not much else going on, the opportunity cost of joining an armed movement may be low," And because young people have fewer responsibilities, like families or careers to tend to, that makes them more prone to taking up arms.

Population Action International (2020) noted that, youth bulge is mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, southern Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands, where two-thirds of their populations are under the age of thirty (and less than 6 percent are above the age of sixty). Countries that fit this profile include Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. However, Gavin explained that, with the right investments and continued progress through the demographic transition, in time large youth populations can become large, economically-productive populations that can drive economic gains—a phenomenon known as the demographic dividend. "If you can educate young people and create jobs for them, they can be a boon for development," She also believes it is possible for youth bulges to help shape politics for the better, citing, for example, the role that South Africa's large youth population played in the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s.

Therefore, though the youth can fuel civil conflict because of their youth power if idle or grieved, but they can also be a boon to socio-economic and political development of a nation and can engage peacebuilding processes in conflict ridden communities.

Methodology

The study adopted secondary sources of empirical research and narratology to investigate the roles of youth as perpetrators and victims of violence as well as peacebuilders. Information was sourced from United Nations websites, United States Institute for Peace (USIP). Journal articles and publications in the relevant topic were also cited to explain the shift in narration of youth and peacebuilding. Dictionaries, political commentaries, newspaper editorials and opinion pieces were also used in the narrative structure.

Youth As Perpetrators of Violent Conflicts and Insecurity

Following the explanation of the Youth Bulge logic for youth engagement in conflict, it is evident that the youth will find more strength and confidence in their numbers to achieve whatever goals they set their minds to.

Hilker, (2014), noted that:

> *On the one hand, there has been a strong focus on children as victims of violence with the dissemination of images, stories and data about the suffering of children . . . at the same time, there has been an increased focus on youth - especially young men - as the perpetrators of violence and a threat to security and stability. In the media and popular literature, boys and young men are often portrayed as cheap, ruthless manpower, manipulated by warlords or extremist groups and induced by drugs, alcohol, spiritual or material rewards to commit atrocities. Some commentators have warned that a "surging" youth population or "youth bulge" - combined with high unemployment and rapid urbanisation - is leading to increased violence and insecurity, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Indeed, most recent analyses of violent conflict identify some form of "youth factor" in the generation or perpetuation of violence.*

Essentially with the requisite motivations (positive or negative), especially to reflect grievances with existent systems, the youth can take it upon themselves to initiate opposition to systems thereby creating conflict. For example, Iranian youth have staged a protest since September 19 2022, after a 22-year-old student died some days after being arrested by the country's morality police for not meeting Iran's modest dress code rules. Protesters have cried out for an end to the

said rules. Dozens of people are reported to have been killed since the protest turned riot began and many injured, (Motamedi, 2022) Violence may sometimes be the strategy and other times it may simply be a ripple effect of the conflict initiated. Either way, the youth can also be perpetrators of violent conflicts.

Youths as Victims and Targets of Violent Conflicts Globally

Youths as Victims of Conflict

In armed conflicts, grave violations are committed against children and youth in over twenty war-affected countries from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa to Latin America. Girls and boys are killed, maimed, orphaned, abducted, deprived of education and health care, sexually violated and left with deep emotional and physical scars (Factsheet of the United Nations)

Joining military- violent conflict to help defend the peace for future generations and try to protect the existing one. Also, the risk of loss of life, physical injuries or permanent disabilities and the psychological trauma attached to wartimes will all too soon in life, be a reality for these youngsters.

More so, many terrorist groups and perpetrators of violent conflicts globally also use the youth population to their advantage. For example, in Nigeria, since 2009, about 8,000 children have been recruited and used by Boko Haram in Nigeria (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNHCHR, 2015). Some boys have been forced to attack their own families to demonstrate loyalty to Boko Haram, while girls have been forced to marry, clean, cook and carry equipment and weapons. Some boys and girls were increasingly being used as human shields and to detonate bombs- In May 2015, for example, a girl about 12 years old was used to detonate a bomb at a bus station in Damaturu, Yobe State, killing seven people. Similar incidents were reported in Cameroon and the Niger. During attacks by Boko Haram, abducted boys were used to identify those who refused to join the group, as well as unmarried women and girls (UNHCHR, 2015).

Children who have been recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups are victims of violence at multiple levels. They are often victims of extreme violence during their association with the group; which includes ferocious recruitment methods, enslavement, and sexual exploitation, exposure to constant fear, indoctrination and psychological pressure. They are often injured or killed in combat. This depicts that the "wrong" people can also harness *youth power* adversely. The Youth may not be the originators of violent conflicts but *youth power* is definitely requisite to sustain them.

On the other hand, even where the youth are not on the fighting end of the conflict, the youth population, whom society ought to shape for a better future is greatly affected by the terrible socio-political and economic climates created by violent

conflicts and wars that ravage their society. This shows that regardless of what angle you look at violent conflicts, whether as a victim of forced participation or merely being a member of a torn-apart society, the youth is a victim of violent conflicts.

Youth as Target in Armed Conflict

The 2003 Youth Report of the United Nations contains the following:

> *Youth are often a targeted group during conflict. Young people's participation in armed hostilities is facilitated through the trade of small arms and light weapons. The dearth of opportunities in their communities often leads them to gravitate towards violent conflict and acts of terrorism. Many are successfully mobilized through the ideologies of war. As victims and witnesses, they cannot help but be affected by the grim realities surrounding them.*

Young people today encounter greater and more unique challenges than ever before. During a crucial phase of their development, not only are they confronted with the biological and psychological growth processes that characterize youth and adolescence, but they must also grapple with formidable external pressures such as poverty, disease and violence. The eruption of war further compounds the adversities. Young people have much at stake, yet they have little say in the policies and activities that pertain to their lives. According to an old English writer Wyndham Lewis "a hundred things are done in the divine name of the Youth that if they showed their true colours would be seen by rights to belong to rather old age" (Lewis Quotes).

Similarly, youths are often a targeted group during conflict. Young people's participation in armed hostilities is facilitated through the trade of small arms and light weapons. The dearth of opportunities in their communities and economic hardship often leads them to gravitate towards violent conflict and acts of terrorism. Also, IDPs and Refugee Camps have proven to be fertile recruiting grounds for extremist or militant groups who too often promise economic and other benefits among other motivations (USAID, 2005).

Reasons for Youth involvement in violence

Ismail and Olonisakin (2021) have identified grievance-based logic, economic logic and demography-environment logic as the main reasons why youth get involved in violence. The authors noted that the Grievance-based logic explains that socio-economic and political grievances as a result of 'injustice, unfairness and unaddressed depravations,' prompt the youth to get involved in violent conflicts. The authors note in the following words: "It is also about the non-representation, under-representation and outright exclusion and marginalization

in the decision-making process. The assumption is that grievances lead to frustrations and aggression."

Also, Gavin (2008), in his research proved using Ivory Coast and some other African countries as case studies that political exclusion especially was a motivation for youth to engage in political violence.

Economic logic sees violence, including the participation of youth, as a means of redressing economic or political grievances (Ismail and Olonisakin). Economic issues such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and political exclusion especially were a motivation for youth to engage in political violence (Gavin, 2008). In Nigeria, neglect of primary socialisation system and institutionalisation of corruption, among others are predisposing factors of youths violent conflicts in Igboland (Iheriohanma, 2010)

Further, demography-environment logic or "Youth Bulge" might be a cause for participation in violent conflict; a "surging" youth population or "youth bulge" - combined with high unemployment and rapid urbanization - is leading to increased violence and insecurity, especially in Africa and the Middle East.

Like the scenario in Iran, if the youth populations are convinced that their governing systems are a source of grievance, they can revolt against it. Also, when the means of livelihood or survival of the youth are threatened, they become more susceptible to engaging in conflicts that could get violent. To exemplify this, the authors reference a study by Bloomberg, Hess and Thacker (2006), using data from over 152 countries between the years 1950 and 2000, which reveal that economies with selfish leaders and lower gains from capital formation are more susceptible to engaging in avoidable conflicts which in turn hinders investment and future growth (Blomberg, Hess and Thacker, 2006).

Closely related to the above was a report by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which explains that IDP and Refugee Camps have proven to be fertile recruiting grounds for extremist or militant groups who too often promise economic and other benefits among other motivations (USAID, 2005), supporting the claim that economic hardship is a factor for motivating participation of youth in violent conflicts.

The Provisions of UN Resolution on Youth Peace and Security

The Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda, established by UNSCR 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions, recognizes young people's inclusion and participation as a key dimension of building and sustaining peace and security for all. Resolution 2250 notes that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known, young women and men often form the majority of the population in countries affected by violent and armed conflicts. The resolution identifies five

pillars for action, being: Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnerships and Disengagement and Reintegration.

Youths as Potential Tools for Resolution of Violent Conflicts, Peacemaking and Nation Building

A lot has been said about the downside to youth participation in violent conflict, however it should still be noted that Youth Power may just be the ultimate human resource for the rebuilding of broken-down systems. When geared towards the right direction the power of the youth can be a potent tool in resolving violent conflicts, promoting peace and rebuilding nations.

A joint United Nations–World Bank Group study (2018) suggests that enhancing the meaningful participation of youth in decision-making, as well as long-term policies to address the aspirations of women and young people are fundamental to sustaining peace. The study also suggests addressing grievances around exclusion from access to power, opportunity and security that usually lead to violent conflicts with strategies tailored for each country.

Youth and Sustainable Peace Building vis-à-vis the Five Key Pillars

Young people's contribution to peace processes includes monitoring the implementation of ceasefire agreements, mediating intra-ethnic disputes, supplying legal and logistical support for peace negotiations, providing psychosocial support for former combatants, and using mass media and online social platforms to promote peace messages to the broader public constituencies. These positive roles of young people are usually well-known by the negotiating or mediating parties of armed conflicts.

Five Pillars of United Nations Youth, Peace and Security

PILLAR ONE - Participation

This pillar takes youth´s participation and views into account in decision-making processes, from negotiation and prevention of violence to peace agreements. It promotes and supports meaningful youth participation in all phases of informal and formal peace, security and political transition processes, from pre-negotiation to implementation.

It covers national- and local-level dialogues, constitution-making, transitional justice, conflict resolution and other political and governance processes.

PILLAR TWO – Protection, Justice and Human Rights

The second pillar is towards ensuring meaningful cooperation between young people and national human rights mechanisms, and increasing access to legal aid and the justice system for young people. It facilitates an inclusive, safe, enabling and gender-responsive environment in which youth actors, including youth from

various backgrounds, are recognized and provided with adequate support and protection to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion. The pillar promotes and support awareness-raising, campaigns and engages with national human rights institutions and enhance human rights processes on and with youth, and youth access to legal aid and the justice system

PILLAR THREE- Prevention

This pillar supports young people in preventing violence and in promoting a culture of tolerance and intercultural dialogue. It promotes and supports inclusive and enabling environments in which young people, including youth from different backgrounds, are recognized and provided with adequate support to implement conflict and violence prevention activities, including support for social cohesion and reconciliation.

Not only that, pillar three supports youth-inclusive and youth-responsive public policies and legislative frameworks (sectoral policies, planning and inter-ministerial coordination), it promotes equitable formal and non-formal education and learning for peace.

PILLAR FOUR- Partnerships and Disengagement

Partnership is key towards engaging young people during and after conflict when developing peace-building strategies along with community actors and United Nations bodies. It establishes new and strengthens existing partnerships with and on youth, with a broad range of stakeholders, prioritizing partnerships with youth organizations, movements and networks. It encourages partnerships that support the funding of youth-inclusive and youth-led initiatives; promotes and support coalitions that engage a diversity of YPS actors; create opportunities for networking and collaboration among young leaders and youth-led organizations and movements as well as between youth, decision-makers and international organizations.

PILLAR FIVE- Reintegration

This pillar invests in youth affected by armed conflict through employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies, and education promoting a culture of peace. It promotes and supports actions that ensure that the needs, concerns and aspirations of young former combatants – in all their diversity – are taken into account in reintegration processes and that young women and men can play a positive role in co-leading or implementing disengagement and reintegration processes.

Findings

The study found that previously all that was seen about the youth was the perpetration of violence associated with insecurity. The extremist groups often

look to raise fresh recruits among young people living in desperate conditions, under exclusionary regimes, or within fractured societies to perpetrate fear and insecurity

However, the UN Resolution provides that the young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, demonstrating that including and partnering with young people helps foster a more sustainable peace.

Conclusion

Youth and youth power are seen as an advantage for heinous purposes for criminal minds. However, the society at large must see the need to re-orientate, protect and guide this major sector of societal population as failure to do that will continually give rise to anarchy and exploitation of the powers that the youths possess.

Despite the pursuit of the UN through the five pillars, continued support from the U.N., and grassroots efforts to encourage inclusive representation of youth in decision-making, there remain structural barriers that prevent youth from contributing to Youth Peace and Security on national, regional, and local levels.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that governments should support youth by facilitating dignified livelihoods, education and capacity-building for peace; facilitate inter-community dialogue to enable young people to play a greater role in peace building; support youth visions of peace, creating space for youth to engage in political processes.

Also, a drastic transformation of the attitude of youth can be achieved through massive sensitisation and reorientation of youth towards successfully building and sustaining peace and achieving the peace, justice and inclusion goals set forth by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Further, there is a need for government at all levels and the UN to enhance the impact of peace and security policies and peace building programming, through a deep understanding of young women's and men's particular lived experiences of violence, injustice and exclusion, both in situations of violent conflict and in contexts of inequality, insecurity or uncertainty outside conflict settings.

Moreover, a new, more inclusive, approach to youth, peace and security (YPS) should recognize the important role that young people play in the prevention of violent conflict and building peace and thus should be deliberate in involving youth in peace building processes.

More importantly, the UN, NGOs and government at all levels should deploy

efforts to foster equal participation of marginalized young people with less access to formal political processes to give them a sense of belonging. This can reduce youth involvement in violence.

In addition, the inclusion of young people during all phases of peace processes increases the sustainability of the agreements. Since young people possess capacity to socialize, defend, and protect peace agreements in formal and informal political platforms through innovative and alternative practices.

Furthermore, the study recommends an urgent need for greater investment of resources to research and documentation of youth participation in peace processes as well as their impact on sustaining peace to reposition the thoughts and disposition of the populace against the youth as perpetrators of violence.

Above all, youth inclusion and participation in peace processes should not be considered a new agenda in competition with other inclusion agendas. Greater efforts are needed to understand how women and youth organizations work in collaboration and build alliances to combat exclusion in the context of peace processes.

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