THEME 2 FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE

Youth Empowerment and Participation in Peace and Sustainable Development

1. **Empowerment and Citizen Participation in Social Cohesion and Peace**

2. **Economic Empowerment and Participation in Sustainable Development**

Title	**Youth Empowerment and Participation in Peace and Sustainable Development**
Thematic and best practices forum	The engagement of young people as actors of social transformations for conflict prevention and sustainable development
UNESCO focal point	Yvonne Matuturu, UNESCO Yaounde Regional Office Programme Specialist in Social and Human Sciences and Coordinator for Central Africa
Geographical area	Africa
Synopsis and objectives	In Africa, the recruitment of young people into terrorist and extremist violence or socio-political violence is partly the result of instrumentalization (religious, communal, or political). This instrumentalization can be attributed to the challenges of finding and/or keeping steady employment, poverty, and the absence of social support. The recruitment strategies of terrorist and extremist groups are presented to young people as solutions to their economic difficulties. However, despite the socio-economic challenges, many African youth do not turn to violence to make their voices heard or to demand inclusion. There are several initiatives "*by young African women and men who are dedicating their time, energy and resources to promote various peace and security initiatives at the community, national, regional and continental levels.*" [1] Among them, the *National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding*, which uses the arts to promote peace and coexistence, in North Kivu, DRC. In CAR, the *Interfaith Platform for Central African Youth* (PIJCA) has long been involved in promoting dialogue to end inter-communal violence. As part of the fight against religious-based violent extremism, the *Center for Equality and Equity* in Nigeria offers online courses for youth (ages 18-29) to engage the promotion of an interfaith dialogue. In Kenya, the *Open Governance Institute* builds the capacity of youth to participate in budgetary and decision-making processes of local and decentralized governments. In South Africa, the *Mandela Institute for Development Studies* provides young people with civic education on elections and governance to encourage their greater political participation. Unfortunately, the positive and constructive contribution of youth to peacebuilding and development is often ignored or underestimated by their governments and societies[2].

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[1] *A Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa. An Independent expert's report commissioned by the African Union Peace and Security Council*, June 2020. See also the article by Peter Biar Ajak, "African Youth Engaged in Peace and Security" (online: https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/la-jeunesse-africaine-engagee-pour-la-paix-et-la-securite/).

[2] *Study on the role and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa*, commissioned by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

Scope of intervention and theory of change	**Axis 1:** **Empowerment and Citizen Participation in Social Cohesion and Peace**
	In the face of the frustration that young people show regarding the consideration of their needs by policies in many countries of the continent, this axis aims to promote their inclusion and participation as one of the essential solutions in mitigating the risks of social, economic, and political marginalization and the risks of violence that often result from it.
	Axis 1 Results: 1.1 The Engagement of Youth in Democracy, Peace and Security 1.2 Harnessing the Potential of Games and Sports for Health, Social Cohesion, and Peace
	Axis 2: **Economic Empowerment and Participation in Sustainable Development**
	The aim of this project is to encourage the political and socio-economic participation of young people in order to give them the opportunity not only to make their voices heard, but also to be real stakeholders in the choices that affect their respective societies. Involving young people also means taking advantage of their capacity for creativity and innovation for the overall development of societies and economies. This project intends to contribute to the implementation of : • Article 17 of the African Youth Charter (AYC)[3]; • UN Security Council resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535[4]; • The *AU Roadmap on taking full advantage of the demographic dividend by investing in youth*[5].
	Axis 2 Results: 2.1 Strengthen the capacity of youth and their organizations to participate in both economic and public governance 2.2 Build policy and legal ecosystems which support economic empowerment and participation of young people

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[3] Article 17 recognizes the "*important role of youth in the promotion of peace and non-violence*" and calls on States Parties to, inter alia, "*strengthen the capacity of youth and youth organizations in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution through the promotion of intercultural education, education for citizenship, tolerance, human rights, democracy, mutual respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and the importance of dialogue, cooperation, responsibility, solidarity and international cooperation*.

[4] « [.... *youth should be actively involved in building sustainable peace and working towards justice and reconciliation, and that the demographic importance of today's youth is an asset that can contribute to sustainable peace and economic prosperity*; and call upon "*all relevant actors to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth in conflict prevention and resolution, including when negotiating or implementing peace agreements, in order to involve youth and take into account their views as appropriate, recognizing that the marginalization of youth is detrimental to building sustainable peace and countering violent extremism as a precursor to terrorism*.

[5] Adopted, in 2016, in anticipation of the proclamation of 2017 as the Year of Youth, this roadmap identified four thematic pillars, namely: (i) Employment and Entrepreneurship; (ii) Education and Skills Development; (iii) Health and Wellness; and (iv) Youth Rights, Governance and Empowerment.

Partners associated with axes 1 and 2	- United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBSO) - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) - YouthConnekt Africa (YCA) Hub - European Union (EU) - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - OCP Foundation - United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) - World Health Organization (WHO) - African Confederation of Traditional Sports and Games - Confederation of African Football (CAF) - ROTARY CLUB - African Development Bank (AfDB) - OECD - Danish Government Peace and Stabilization Fund W. K. Kellogg Foundation - Tony Elumelu Foundation - Western Union Foundation - Ford Foundation