

Digitally-enabled Peace and Security: Reflections for the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda

SecDev Group¹
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1. Introduction

In less than a single generation billions of people who had no access to the Internet were connected to global cyberspace. The majority of these new digital citizens are youth between 18-29. Already, two thirds of global Internet users are under the age of 35 and half are under the age of 25. Youth across the globe represent the largest demographic group online, and this is particularly true in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where they are connecting in record numbers.² Virtually all of North America and Western Europe are already wired. The next wave of digital connectivity will occur in less developed and conflict-affected countries such as Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, and Somalia.³ Myanmar's story is particularly interesting. The number of Facebook users in January 2017, in Myanmar was zero. In September 2017, just eight months later, they numbered more than 11 million.⁴

The Internet and social media have brought with them a new form of empowerment that is fundamentally altering the relations between citizens and states that has an impact at both global and local levels. The Arab Spring demonstrated how social media can be a powerful platform and tool to facilitate the spread of protest movements, often led by a new digitally connected youth. ICTs have also emerged as [tools to support more effective humanitarian response](#), to [improve peacekeeping](#) and serve as an information platform to support refugees in crisis. In refugee camps, [social media is often the only source of news and information](#) that refugees have access to. Many refugees have come to depend on apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube to fill the information gap.

The dramatic spread of digital technologies and the Internet in fragile and conflict affected contexts has opened new possibilities for political, economic and social transformation. Access to social media and other forms of cyber-enabled communications facilitates new avenues for civic participation and engagement. Millions of youth have taken to the Internet to promote

¹ This report was written by Raouf Farrah, John de Boer and Robert Muggah.

² See World Bank Group (2016)

³ See Internet World Stats (2017)

⁴ See Internet World Stats - Asia (2017)

peace and help construct a new future for themselves and their countries. Today, there are hundreds of 'Peacetech' initiatives with millions of active users in some of the most complex and challenging contexts. These initiatives include crisis mapping, crowdsourcing platforms, peace gaming, blogs, podcasts, WhatsApp groups, online petitions, tech first responder programs and GIS based security applications. These mediums are transforming relationships between warring parties, and digitally savvy youth from around the world are at the center of this change.

Not all youth are benefiting equally, however. As the 2016 World Development Report indicated, "there also are persistent digital divides across gender, geography, age, and income."⁵ Some 4.2 billion people still lack access to the Internet and the majority reside in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It is the poorest households that are systematically excluded and women are most frequently left behind.⁶ In fact, women in Africa have on average 34 percent less access to the Internet than their male counterparts.⁷ In an increasingly connected society, where digital literacy is essential, a lack of access to the Internet and ICTs by young women will have important long-term consequences that affect their prospects in terms of access to education, jobs and rights.⁸

The Internet and social media also have a dark side and can pose risks for youth in particular. Information stored on cell phones, laptops and social media accounts can – if stolen, lost or inadvertently leaked – expose sensitive and extremely private information to large audiences. In larger part because they are the dominant users, youth are on the front lines of being exposed to these breaches in privacy. These threats can be exacerbated in fragile and conflict-affected settings where repressive state authorities and non-state armed groups – including criminal and terrorist organisations - monitor online activity using coercive means to quell dissent and terrorise populations. This puts digital activists, many of whom are young people, at risk of being detained, tortured and even killed for their online activities. Such crackdowns are not unique to conflict affected states and have been witnessed across the globe in places such as Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, Hong Kong, Iran, Mauritania, Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey.⁹

Violent extremists, organised crime and gangs are often early adopters of online technology to perpetrate crime, spread hatred, violence and terrorism.¹⁰ Such organizations have an active online presence that has grown increasingly sophisticated ranging from text based discussion forums to interactive websites, [custom-built secure messaging systems](#) and social media platforms. They use these mediums to recruit, spread their narratives, plan and even execute operations. According to some sources, in 2015 ISIS operated 70,000 twitter accounts and

⁵ See World Bank Group (2016)

⁶ See International Telecommunication Union (2017)

⁷ See World Bank Group (2016)

⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁹ See Deutsche Welle Freedom (2017)

¹⁰ The SecDev Foundation has created a research portal with numerous resources on Violent Extremism and Social Media. See <https://preventviolentextremism.info/>

tweeted 200,000 times per day.¹¹ Mexico's Sinaloa cartel's Twitter account has more than [34,000 followers](#). A Latin American gang called the *Mara Salvatrucha 13*, or MS-13, [has over 40,000 likes](#) on Facebook and communicates with its members across the Americas online.¹² Social media is also emerging as a platform where [white supremacy groups](#) spread their racist ideologies and where [hate speech propagates](#).

Disinformation, propaganda and cyber-bullying online are other negative manifestations of behaviour on the Internet that can have devastating consequences on individuals and communities. As the debate over Internet freedoms, privacy and national security unfolds, trust in our institutions is also eroding. According to Pew, most Americans for instance have a [“pervasive sense”](#) that they are under surveillance and very few feel they have control over their data. In an environment where data security breaches are commonplace, few feel confident in their government’s ability to safeguard their private records.¹³

Deliberate disinformation campaigns by malicious actors (including governments) are also targeting electoral processes. This has sewn mistrust in corporations and institutions of governance around the world. By their own admission, [companies like Twitter, Facebook and Google are having difficulty stopping the use of social media](#) as a tool to sow division and discontent in society. With more than 2 billion users worldwide, social media has a particularly powerful impact on youth, many of whom use social media as their primary source of news. According to a 2017 [Intercultural Trends Survey](#) of the Anna Lindh Foundation, online and social media are the second most trusted source of information, behind television, for young people in the Southern Mediterranean. Distinguishing between real and “fake” news on social media is becoming increasingly difficult.

With the emergence of the Internet and social media, the world has entered a new era. These technologies and platforms offer tremendous potential to promote peace and resolve pressing problems. Yet, they also give rise to complex risks and vulnerabilities. Digitally enabled youth are on the frontlines. They can be powerful agents for peace, but can also be exposed to and influenced by predatory agents. For the Youth, Peace and Security agenda to be successful, engaging youth and supporting their contribution to peace both offline and online is essential. To that end, this background paper highlights a number of promising Peacetech initiatives and approaches to harnessing technology to support the YPS agenda. It also underscores a number of fundamental constraints and challenges that deserve attention from international and national actors.¹⁴

¹¹ See Zaman, K. (2015)

¹² See Way and Muggah (2016)

¹³ In 2015 only 6 percent of Americans felt confident that government agencies would keep their data safe. See Mary Madden and Lee Raine (2015), “Americans’ Attitudes about Privacy, Security and Surveillance,” Pew Research Center. See: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/05/20/americans-attitudes-about-privacy-security-and-surveillance/>

¹⁴ See United Nations Youth Peace and Security (2015). Also see Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth (2015)

2. Findings

The Internet and social media are powerful tools and spaces for peace promotion, but they are not a panacea. The rapid spread of the Internet and social media have made them vehicles for peace promotion, particularly by youth.¹⁵ They are effective platforms that can empower, enhance awareness, build connections and resilience among youth to promote positive change. Online platforms are being used to analyse, report on, warn of, and prevent violence. They are also being mobilised to build communities of peace, promote alternative non-violent narratives, and facilitate virtual exchanges between youth all around the world. These mediums can help foster dialogue between populations in conflict and contribute to more positive interactions between communities caught up in conflict. The digitization of services ranging from finance to education and healthcare, also provides opportunities to build a more inclusive and equitable world where previously excluded populations can now access these services digitally through their connected devices. Yet, the digital divide remains real, making integrated approaches that combine multiple media platforms (radio, print, television and online media) with offline engagement necessary. It was precisely the [interplay between traditional and new media](#) that made mass mobilization across the Arab world in 2011 possible and this combination will likely be an important feature moving forward.¹⁶ In a world where [youth are increasingly disengaged from formal political participation](#), providing alternative channels that facilitate their civic participation is essential.¹⁷

Reaching out to young women to bridge the digital divide is key. If current projections hold, by 2020, over 75 percent of women living in the least developed countries will not have access to the Internet.¹⁸ Persistent practices and discriminatory measures that prevent young girls from accessing education and exercising their rights and freedoms further widens this divide, placing many at an increasing disadvantage when it comes to entering a digitalised society. Young girls and women are also often prime targets of predatory behaviour online. Yet, as UNSC resolution 1325 outlined, women are essential and effective contributors to peace globally. The Internet and social media is also driving a stronger women's rights movement globally by empowering and accentuating women's voices and creating greater awareness about the role of feminism in promoting peace and security and tackling violent extremism. To be effective, a holistic, gender sensitive and multi-channel approach is needed. Also required are programs that enhance e-literacy among young women to counter violent and divisive narratives and amplify their voices. Such initiatives need to be grounded in a fine-tuned understanding of the specific risks

¹⁵ See Larrauri and Kahl (2013)

¹⁶ See for instance Asiem El Difraoui and Leoni Abel (May 2016). "The Web 2.0 Revolution and the Arab World: The role of the new media as political infrastructure: an assessment." Available at: <http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/leoni.pdf>

¹⁷ See Spencer, C. and Aldouri, S. (May 2016). "Young Arab Voices: Moving Youth Policy From Debate into Action," Chatham House (<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/research/2016-05-13-young-arab-voices-spencer-aldouri.pdf>)

¹⁸ See Ramesh and O'Donnell (2017)

facing young women and capitalize on the particular assets that they can mobilize to promote peace and security online and offline. Enhancing the role of young women in the Peacetech community has to start by bridging the digital gender gap.¹⁹

The Internet and social media also create vulnerabilities for youth who can be exposed to predatory actors. The list of potential risks faced by youth online is long and include cyber bullying, blackmail, political persecution, threats from organised crime and violent extremist groups, as well as endangerment and recruitment into a life of crime and violence. As the volume of interactions over the Internet and social media increases, so too does the risk. These threats are becoming increasingly difficult to contain and youth are some of the most at risk.²⁰ To guard against this inherent vulnerability of the Internet, an in-depth understanding of online risks posed to youth online is essential. Also important are e-literacy campaigns that educate youth to enhance their awareness of and defence against predatory threats online. Organisations such as [UNESCO have long championed such initiatives](#) to overcome disinformation, stereotypes and intolerance. At the core of these efforts is education on the norms, responsibilities and rights of digital citizens as well as promoting a free and independent media.²¹

Peacetech has evolved since its inception in the early 2000s, and now represents a diverse variety of activities and platforms. What started as a push to create a more inclusive “Information Society” that actively engaged youth in innovative ICT-based development programmes,²² has now evolved into a wide variety of initiatives where youth are centre stage, revolutionizing the art and practice of peacemaking.²³ While excluded from most official peace processes, youth are central agents of change online and offline and they are innovating like no other demographic group. Whether it be through peace gaming, entertainment and memes, early warning SMS, crime mapping vocational training or online journalism, the level of dynamism exhibited by engaged youth cannot be matched. Examples include the [Innovation Youth Labs](#) piloted at the Euro-Mediterranean level by the [Anna Lindh Foundation, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and Facebook](#).²⁴ These labs leverage the creativity of youth to promote alternative narrative campaigns to prevent violent extremism. The initiative has demonstrated how networks of connected youth across the Mediterranean can leverage new technology to tackle some of the most pressing challenges.

¹⁹ See the Young Feminist Fund <https://youngfeministfund.org> or AkiraChix in Kenya <http://akirachix.com/about-us/>

²⁰ See Farrukh, Sadwick and Villasenor (2014)

²¹ See Singh, J. et al. (ed.) (2016). *Media Information Literacy: Reinforcing Human Rights, Countering Radicalization and Extremism*,” MILID Yearbook 2016, UNESCO. (See: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002463/246371e.pdf>)

²² See World Summit on the Information Society (2005)

²³ See Mancini (2013)

²⁴ More information on the Labs is available at: <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/YouthCAN-Labs.pdf>. Information on the pilot programme at the Euro-Mediterranean level: <http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/news/youth-counterspeech-lab-partnership-facebook-and-institute-strategic-dialogue>

Local Peacetechn initiatives are growing at a fast pace, yet face tremendous challenges.

Hundreds of Peacetechn organisations have emerged over the last decade (see Annex A for some examples). Their range and scope is impressive, representing a variety of approaches and objectives. Some are focused on preventing violence in their communities, others on preventing youth from joining violent extremist groups and others on documenting and raising awareness of sexual harassment. Some initiatives focus on promoting positive inter-racial, inter-cultural or inter-faith dialogue. Yet, despite their dynamism and importance, most struggle to sustain themselves. A key challenge for many Peacetechn initiatives is the lack of sustainable funding. Many receive “seed funding,” which then dries out as they are on the cusp of maturing.

3. Key Trends

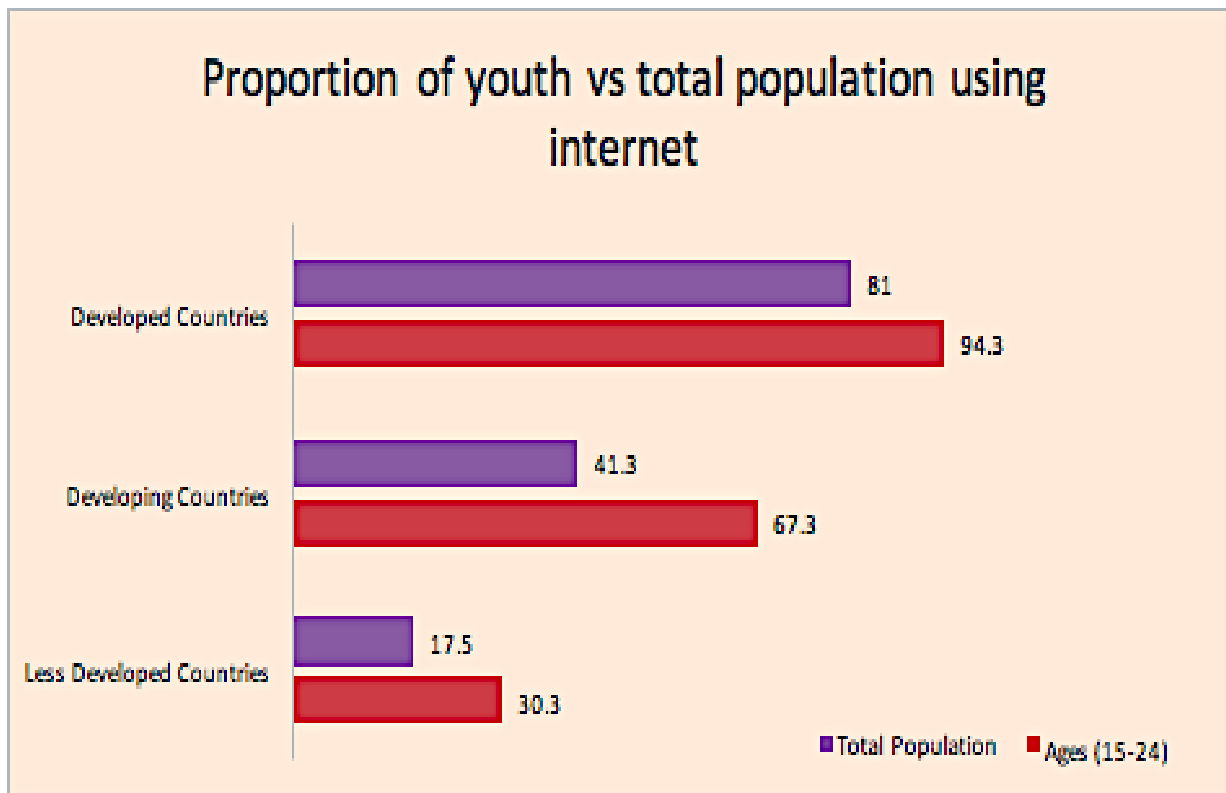
Generation D: Digital Natives

Youth represent the single largest demographic population on the web. In 2017, there were 3.74 billion Internet users and two thirds of them were under the age of 35. Fifty percent of them were under the age of 25.²⁵ With respect to social media, there were 2.79 billion active users of social media in 2017. More than 75 percent of them were young people. This is Generation D: digital natives that are highly connected to Internet and social media through their mobile devices. A generation that is as much online as they are offline.²⁶ Globally, 92 percent of young people report going online at least once a day and 56 percent go online several times a day. Youth’s connection to social media and online platforms is generating new communication channels and innovative paths for social interaction. The rapid spread of digital technology has also contributed to financial inclusion and economic growth.²⁷

²⁵ See International Telecommunication Union (2017)

²⁶ See Stevens (2017)

²⁷ See World Bank Group (2016)



Source: Adapted from ITU Database

Yet, the persistent digital divide is undermining the potential digital dividend for youth. Many segments of the youth population, especially young women and those living in the countryside remain excluded.²⁸ As the 2016 World Development Report observes: “there are persistent digital divides across gender, geography, age, and income.”²⁹ Some 4.2 billion people still lack access to the Internet and the majority are in the LDCs. It is the poorest households that are systematically excluded and women are most frequently left behind.³⁰ In fact, women in Africa have on average 34 percent less access to the Internet than their male counterparts.³¹ In an increasingly connected society, where digital literacy is becoming essential, a lack of access to the Internet and ICTs by young women will have important ripple effects that affect their prospects in terms of access to education, jobs, security and rights.³²

While there is a growing body of evidence documenting the link between [the potential of technology to promote upward social mobility](#),³³ much less is known about the relationship between rapidly growing ICT penetration and dis-empowerment. While the Internet and social

²⁸ See International Telecommunication Union (2017)

²⁹ Op cit.

³⁰ See International Telecommunication Union (2017)

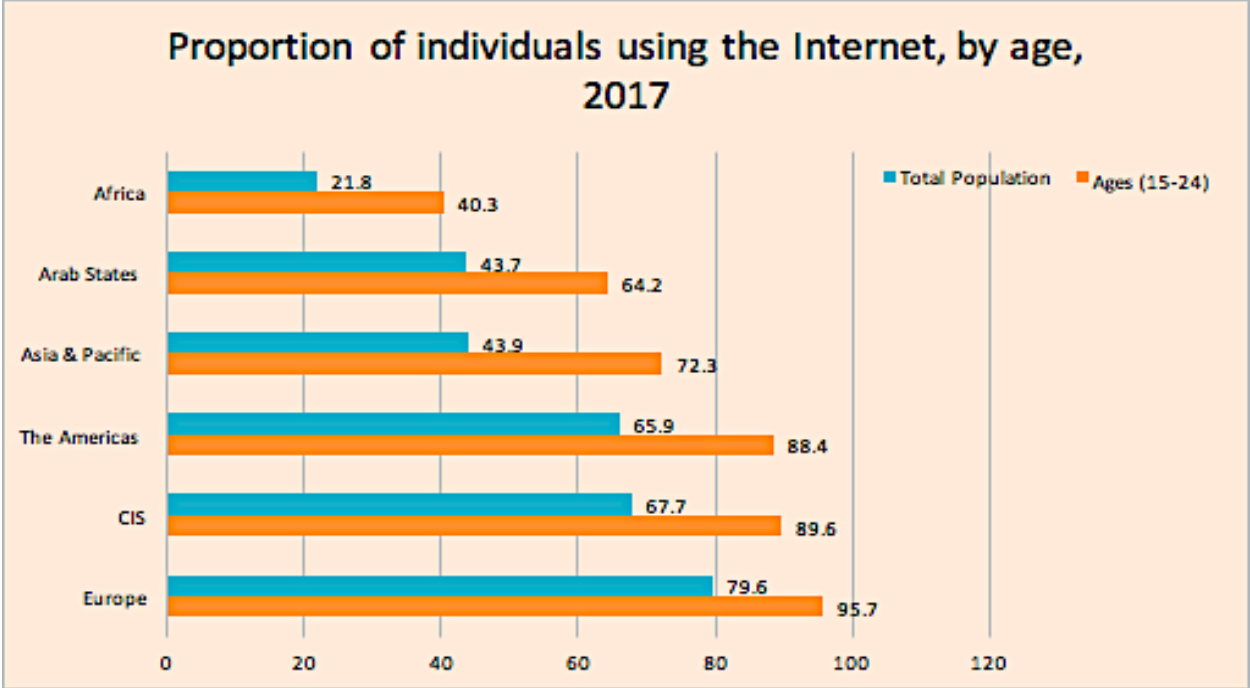
³¹ Op cit.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See Painter, A. and Bamfield, L., “The New Digital Learning Age: How we can enable social mobility through technology,” RSA – (available at:

https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/power_to_create_the_new_digital_age.pdf)

media has given some young people a “sense of belonging” outside of their communities, for others it has exposed massive divides in affluence and privilege that the majority of youth will never be able to access. The Internet and social media can magnify these inequalities vividly, reinforcing and possibly exacerbating established patterns of inclusion and exclusion.



Source: Adapted from ITU Database

The Demographic Shift

Young people aged between 15 to 24 represent some 1.8 billion of the global population and more than two-thirds of the world’s population are under 35.³⁴ Much of this growth is concentrated in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where Internet adoption rates are fastest and where violent conflict is concentrated.³⁵ This youthful population represents tremendous potential. However, in fragile and conflict affected contexts few of them have viable options for non-violent pathways to earn a livelihood. Africa is the world’s most youthful region, but is also suffering from extremely high levels of unemployment and according to the ILO, there are few signs of this trend changing.³⁶ Youth unemployment in North Africa hovers at around 30 percent. With prospects grim in many parts of the continent, the number of youth seeking opportunities abroad is growing fast. Youth in Africa demonstrate the highest willingness to move permanently to another country of any region in the world.³⁷ Their connectedness to the Internet, which brings home the vast discrepancies between what youth have access to abroad versus at home only feeds this hunger more.

³⁴ See United Nation Fund Population (UNFPA) *Adolescent and Youth Dashboard* <http://www.unfpa.org/data/dashboard/adolescent-youth>

³⁵ See Uppsala Conflict Data Program <http://ucdp.uu.se/>. Also see The Commonwealth Youth Development Index (2016)

³⁶ See International Labor Organisation (2016)

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

The Euro-Mediterranean region, which has been particularly affected by the recent migration crisis, has seen barriers erected to prevent the entry of people seeking refuge and opportunity. In a context where conflict is raging, living conditions are dire and where barriers to mobility are mounting, digitally-enabled spaces and virtual exchanges could provide options for young people to feel a sense of connection, document the realities that they are experiencing, access psycho-social support and possibly education. A relevant example of such an initiative is [SalamaTech Syria](#), which is supporting Syrians (particularly women and youth) devastated by conflict communicate safely, promote peacebuilding and prevent their social media accounts from being hacked.

Empowering young people in these contexts is possible by harnessing the power of ICTs. McKinsey reports that the Internet can potentially add \$300 billion a year to Africa's GDP.³⁸ According to the Cisco Visual Networking Index on Global Mobile Data, by 2020, there will be more than 700 million smartphone connections in Africa - more than twice the number in North America.³⁹ For youth, the biggest impact will likely be felt in education, jobs, financial inclusion and political participation where technology will bring dramatic transformations. With 11 million youth expected to enter the labour market in Africa alone every year for the next decade,⁴⁰ growth in the digital economy represents a great opportunity to harness the talents of some of these youth through e-entrepreneurship, e-commerce, e-education and e-government.⁴¹ Yet, for this potential to be realized, specific policies and investments that prioritise youth need to be promoted.

The Predatory Behaviour of Violent Extremist Groups Online is Hard to Stop

Violent extremist (VE) groups such as Al Shabaab (Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidiin), Al Qaeda's affiliate in the Horn of Africa, and other terrorist organisations such as Da'esh (ISIS) are well established in cyberspace. While VE groups primarily operate on the "dark web", many also use social media platforms and communication apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and Whatsapp to organize strategic communications.⁴² Groups such as Al Shabaab are particularly adept at using the Internet for recruitment, planning and real-time operations management.⁴³

Their messaging resonates among multiple groups including disenfranchised youth, often melding with local grievances. One consequence has been the emergence of new and increasingly networked VE groups as well as so-called "lone wolves" who have violently acted on the calls for global action. Domestic factors, including weak democratic electoral practices

³⁸ See Manyika et. al. (2013)

³⁹ See Rice-Oxley and Flood (2016). See also Cisco (2017)

⁴⁰ See World Bank Group (2014)

⁴¹ See World Bank Group (2016)

⁴² The use of social media by organised crime has been well documented in Latin America. See for instance Muggah (2015). Also see Andrews, Brewster and Day (2016); See UNODC (2012); Also see United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) (2016).

⁴³ See for instance Menkhaus (2016)

that lead to political exclusion and electoral violence are also a strong catalyst for the increasing appeal of violent extremist ideologies. Political interference in the security sector, poorly-functioning law enforcement, and a tendency to apply hard counterterrorist measures, can all work to exacerbate local frustrations and undermine confidence in the governing systems and norms. As the promises of fair, free and protective governance face challenges, radical alternatives gain traction.

The appeals of VE groups, especially because they tend to be social media savvy, can drown out peaceful alternative voices. Tough measures to curb and “control” VE social media presence from the outside is difficult and rarely works. Regulations to remove violent content and shut down accounts are also notoriously difficult to enforce effectively, and the blanket nature of such regulations often conflict with human and civil rights including the right to reasonable privacy (freedom from surveillance), access to information and the right to communicate. Moreover, even if some accounts are removed, social media platforms allow for the rapid creation of new accounts that are established faster than a takedown order can be enforced. It is not just VE groups that are active online but criminal and hate groups as well, who often target youth for recruitment and exploitation.⁴⁴

These threats can be mitigated by building the capacity of youth to enhance their digital literacy and promoting norms, rules and duties of digital citizenship that are broadly shared and observed. Increasingly, Peacetech programs are working with youth, through the school system, community groups and youth associations to improve their understanding of community norms and scaling the positive effects of individual action through improved digital hygiene practices. These initiatives can help raise public awareness through campaigns that target youth on issues of cybersecurity, cybercrime, privacy, protection of data, harmful content, and disinformation to help equip them with a better means to reduce harm. According to the 2017 Intercultural Trends Survey, which surveyed some 13,000 individuals from the Euro-Mediterranean region, 80 percent of respondents agreed that education and youth led e-initiatives would be effective mechanisms to prevent radicalization. Such initiatives could include non-formal education platforms such as the [Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges](#), which facilitate discussions, increase intercultural awareness and extend the competencies of youth to prevent radicalization and promote social inclusion.

The New Social Contract will be Written by Youth Online

The digital revolution provides new ways for people to challenge existing power structures and articulate new alternatives. In this context, new technologies are revolutionizing the notion of citizenship. Social media has given youth the opportunity to belong to communities beyond where they came from. This is creating a whole new universe of digital citizenship, where a new social contract is being constructed by the online community of users.⁴⁵ In fact, the Internet has created a new ecology of relationships that is transforming society and its institutions.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See Muggah (2015)

⁴⁵ See Digital Citizenship <https://www.common sense.org/education/digital-citizenship>

⁴⁶ See ICT4Peace (2015)

Through online mediums, those who had little opportunity to voice their views now have a way to cut through traditional barriers. A widening constellation of actors are using cyberspace to pursue political change, express discontent, and undertake progressive forms of collective action. Generation D is leading this movement of tech enabled open empowerment to achieve their goals.⁴⁷

This new reality has massive potential to help realize the key objectives of UNSC Resolution 2250. The Internet and social media can be leveraged to increase the inclusive participation and representation of youth in decision-making at all levels to prevent and resolve conflict. It can also help protect civilians and help denounce sexual and gender based violence. The Internet can foster an enabling environment in which young people are recognised and provided adequate support to prevent violence and promote a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural/interreligious dialogue. The Internet and social media can facilitate partnerships between communities of youth in a way that has sustained impact. Finally, through ICTs, relevant local communities and non-governmental actors can develop effective strategies that promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration that is tailored to the interests and capabilities of youth in a gender-sensitive way.

4. Key Risks

The Internet is fundamentally rewiring the way in which groups and individuals engage with politics, economics and social action. The pace and scale of change is evident in the sudden rise of the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movements in 2010 and 2011. It is also apparent in new constellations of actors such as Anonymous, the Syrian Electronic Army, Yosoy132, and Blog de Narco are transforming modes of protest, subversion and conflict around the world. At one end of the continuum, citizens are using cyberspace to pursue political change, express discontent, and undertake progressive forms of collective action. At the other end, social media is being leveraged by malicious actors to extort, intimidate, torture and even kill.⁴⁸

Censorship and surveillance

The SecDev Foundation reports that currently some 650 million people live under some form of state-imposed internet censorship. While many have hailed the power of the Internet to promote social, political and economic inclusion, the Internet has also been used as a tool to monitor and censor. Some have referred to this as the “[duality of the Internet](#),” which can be used to promote both democracy and authoritarianism.⁴⁹

Recent trends are worrisome. Freedom House, which monitors press freedom, indicated that [press freedom is now at its lowest point in 13 years](#). The rise of civic activism online has also

⁴⁷ See Muggah and Rohozinski (2016)

⁴⁸ See Way and Muggah (2016)

⁴⁹ See Elizabeth Stoycheff and Eric C. Nisbet (July 20, 2016), “Is Internet freedom a tool for democracy or authoritarianism?” *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/is-internet-freedom-a-tool-for-democracy-or-authoritarianism-61956>)

corresponded with a surge in retribution and coercion from state and non-state actors. Populations that have pressed for political change, human rights and denounced corruption and criminality have in some cases suffered forms of online and offline suppression. [Egypt's mass arrest of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender \(LGBT\)](#) people in October 2017, were coupled with an information blackout that banned all "positive reporting on homosexuality."⁵⁰ In Syria, individuals are regularly thrown in jail and even [tortured for their Facebook or Whatsapp activities](#).⁵¹

Even in democracies, state and corporate censorship and surveillance practices can be pervasive. Revelations by Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden have highlighted how the US government deployed a "massive system of secret surveillance."⁵² It is not just governments that engage in censorship, due to the fact that most prominent social media and Internet platforms are in private hands, censorship is also exercised by private corporations. Google, Facebook and Twitter embed their censorship practices in what Marjorie Heins describes as "vague, broad terms of service ... with no transparency and no clear avenues for appeal."⁵³ While these practices are often intended to prevent abuse and violence, they can have unintended consequences that suppress legal and legitimate freedom of expression.

New means of surveillance have promoted activist groups to develop alternative forms of expression, protection and anonymity. These include innovative ways of sharing information that get around the traditional gatekeepers and avoid "information blackouts", such as those regularly experienced in [Egypt](#), [Tibet](#) and [Myanmar](#) during protest movements or in contexts of political crisis. Examples include [Qual.net](#), which enables individuals to create a spontaneous network through wireless-enabled computers and mobile devices. Qual.net enables users to send text messages, file share and call independent of Internet and cellular networks. These technologies have tremendous promise for promoting peace, dialogue and even humanitarian response in the wake of natural disasters where critical infrastructure is damaged or wiped out.

Gangs, organized crime and violent extremism online

Drug cartels and gangs are also active online, taking many of their activities into cyberspace. At first, this might seem odd, even counter-intuitive. After all, organized crime thrives in the shadows, away from the public gaze. Traditionally, they invested heavily in reducing their public

⁵⁰ See Human Rights Watch (6 October 2017), "Egypt: Mass Arrests Amid LGBT Media Blackout," <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/06/egypt-mass-arrests-amid-lgbt-media-blackout>

⁵¹ Salamatech has documented numerous incidents of torture and imprisonment due to online activity of individuals. See for instance, "Facebook Prison: Testimonies from Syria," SecDev Foundation, 25 September 2015 (<https://secdev-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/FlashNote-6-FacebookPrison-Salamatech-sept-231.pdf>). For more cases from around the world see: <https://secdev-foundation.org/our-publications/>

⁵² See Heins, M. (2014). "The brave new world of social media censorship," *Harvard Law Review* (http://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/vol127_Heins.pdf)

⁵³ See Heins, M. (2014). "The brave new world of social media censorship," *Harvard Law Review* (http://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/vol127_Heins.pdf)

profile. The Internet is changing all that. In fact, some narco-cartels are active users of various digital platforms. Take the case of Mexico's Sinaloa cartel's Twitter account has more than [34,000 followers](#). Or consider the *Mara Salvatrucha 13*, or MS-13, [has over 40,000 likes](#) on Facebook and communicates with its members across the Americas online.⁵⁴

While cartels and gangs have been around for generations, they are expanding their power, prestige and profits in cyberspace. In the process, violence is going virtual, with some groups targeting bloggers, snitches and competitors. There's also been an uptick in kidnappings of software engineers and programmers as organized crime groups reinforce their digital capabilities. The explosion of online activity by cartels and gangs is not just resulting in more killings. It is also undermining basic freedoms, including the [independence of the press](#). They are generating a chilling or self-censoring effect on news media from across Mexico, Central and South America.⁵⁵ More than 50 journalists were assassinated in Mexico over the past decade, with [citizen journalists prominently among them](#).

More positively, citizens are also fighting back online and off. They are using their networks to curate and disseminate information to protect themselves. A good example of this are so-called [narco-tweets](#): new research suggests that about 1.5% of all Mexicans have tweeted about the drug war – or almost 5% of the country's online population. Likewise, self-defense groups are also rising up against cartels and their associates. Entities such as the militia organization Valor por Michoacan have targeted another narco cartel group called the Knights Templar. Valor had over 184,000 followers on Facebook before being taken offline (though retains an [active Twitter account](#)).

These examples reveal how citizens are fighting back against criminal groups and using social media to broadcast their views, organize themselves, and improve their security. Citizen journalists and digital collectives are also highly vulnerable. Governments, non-governmental organizations and corporations can and should help create ways to empower journalists and citizens speak out and communicate without fear and intimidation. This includes creating safe spaces to share verified information anonymously, protecting journalists and whistleblowers and speaking out against intimidation tactics.

The reality is that most legal regimes are only at the beginning stages of adopting appropriate laws, building necessary institutions and developing countermeasures to combat online criminality. There are no international standards. At a regional level these efforts are being coordinated through organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the Organization of American States (OAS) and include efforts to harmonize national legislation and adopt more comprehensive strategies to combat cybersecurity threats. Meanwhile, countries are starting to adopt new legislative frameworks, create specialized law enforcement agencies, and form [Computer Security Incident Response Teams and Centres](#). These initiatives bring together public and private sector organizations, researchers, non-governmental organizations and

⁵⁴ See Way and Muggah (2016)

⁵⁵ See Muggah and Dudley (2015)

community representatives to promote information sharing and best practices to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from cyber incidents.⁵⁶

The reality is that the role of civil society - and particularly youth - in cyber-security governance has been undervalued and under-invested in. While some [corporations](#) and [governments](#) are starting to prioritize education as a way to enhance cybersecurity and promote youth to devote their skillsets to prevent cyber-threats from manifesting, these efforts are still in their infancy and need to be scaled.

5. Opportunities - reversing the narrative

Youth as agents of change

Too often, youth are considered as either passive and uninterested actors or as groups at high risk. However, youth are also an active asset to promote peace, development and security.⁵⁷ To enhance this potential, it is important that the UN and other norm setters promote a narrative that positions youth as essential and effective partners in promoting peace and sustainability. That means taking a holistic approach to engaging youth in a way that considers them as beneficiaries, partners and leaders in promoting peace and security.⁵⁸ It also means providing them with access to spaces and channels to voice their opinions, share their experiences and jointly plan for a better future.⁵⁹

Although there exist multiple networks that promote youth as peacebuilders, few are actually led and shaped by youth themselves. One initiative that is fully youth led is the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY).⁶⁰ The UNOY is a global network of youth peace organisations with 80 member organisations in 50 countries working to strengthen youth participation in peacebuilding. Another important initiative is the “[No Hate Speech Movement](#)”, which is a youth campaign linked to the Council of Europe that promotes online youth engagement forums to combat hate speech.

Technology offers new ways to engage in peacebuilding. The rapid adoption of ICT tools, especially smart phones and mobile technologies, have positioned the Internet and social media as key resources by which youth can actively participate in and contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.⁶¹ Whether through digital media channels, big data tools that collect, organize and analyse data, youth are driving initiatives that promote peace.

⁵⁶ See the Canadian Government’s Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre Partnership <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrct/cbr-scrct/ccirc-ccric-prtnrs-en.aspx>

⁵⁷ See Ginwright and James (2002)

⁵⁸ See UNDP (2014)

⁵⁹ See Kassam (2015)

⁶⁰ See United Network of Young Peacebuilders <http://unoy.org/en/>

⁶¹ See Cottray and Larrauri (2017)

Many youth-led Peacetech initiatives employ an interactive approach that creates a virtual reality aimed at breaking down barriers that divide communities (including culture, race or religion).⁶² Peacetech can allow users to break free from politics of exclusion and division and explore new modes of engagement. A great example is the [Junub Games](#), a free online gaming platform developed in South Sudan.⁶³ The objective of this free, online game was to facilitate a space where warring communities could build bridges by playing online video games. One of its online offerings, Salaam Game, which has been downloaded over 3,000 times, has contributed to changing the narrative from killing the other side to saving lives by rewarding players who thwart bombs from detonating. Such simple, yet powerful games, can change mindsets and behaviour by promoting empathy.⁶⁴ For young minds, these messages can have a long-term impact pushing them along a non-violent trajectory.

Virtual communication tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Telegram can also be used as mechanisms for promoting peace. When violence shuts down formal communication channels, social media communication tools offer other avenues for reaching out to the other side.⁶⁵ A prime example is a Facebook-based movement called [YaLa-Young Leaders](#) in the Middle East.⁶⁶ In a highly divided context where political leaders have halted dialogue, this platform is spreading a regional vision of peace and cultivating a cadre of young leaders who are keen to promote peace.⁶⁷

ICTs can empower communities to transcend differences, combat genocide and promote peacebuilding.⁶⁸ This is being witnessed in Rwanda where a new program called [Aegis](#) is promoting the values of peace in a country marred by genocide through a digital platform where students, teachers and parents interact to discuss and share ideas on how to build a more peaceful society.⁶⁹ Technology is being harnessed around the globe to promote alternative narratives and build bridges in societies where formal channels of communication and dialogue have broken down or are at risk of disintegration.

Peacetech initiatives: what are they?

Peacetech represents a community of individuals who are leveraging technology to promote peace. Peacetech can incorporate traditional media and tools such as radio, television as well as smartphone apps, messaging services, games, social media platforms, and even drones.⁷⁰ The majority of these platforms are led by youth who naturally migrate to social media and other shared platforms.⁷¹

⁶² See Larrauri and Kahl (2013)

⁶³ See Ritzen (2017)

⁶⁴ See Ore (2017)

⁶⁵ See Bock (2012)

⁶⁶ See YaLa-Young Leaders <https://www.facebook.com/YaLaYL/>

⁶⁷ See YaLa Academy <http://www.yalaacademy.org/>

⁶⁸ See Tellidis and Kappler (2016)

⁶⁹ See Aegis (2017)

⁷⁰ See London School of Economics (LSE) and Build Up (2016)

⁷¹ See Cottray and Larrauri (2017)

There are a wide-variety of Peacetechnologies. This paper proposes that such initiatives can be broadly classified in six categories.

1. **Data Collection, Processing and Analysis:** This category of Peacetechnologies actors were some of the first to appear. It includes the collection of data to produce a series of online tools that support conflict early warning, promote greater transparency in decision-making and enhance confidence in important processes such as elections. Most of these platforms use SMS data collected through crowdsourcing techniques to promote awareness of key developments and trends. The startup Ushahidi from Kenya is a prime example of this model.⁷² Other examples include the UNICEF sponsored [U-Report](#) or [Edu-Trac](#) initiatives that use global social messaging platforms to promote positive social activism through SMS based community polling and monitoring on issues ranging from health, safety to education as well as [digital humanitarian initiatives](#).
2. **Peace Gaming:** Another category of Peacetechnologies initiatives involves peace gaming. These range from simple online games to more complex role playing games that model real-world experiences. An example is, [Peace Maker](#) where players are required to assume either the role of the Israeli Prime Minister or the Palestinian Prime Minister and play out scenarios based on events in an attempt to broker peace.⁷³ Peace gaming represents a growing community of people who believe that online games present a radical new way of promoting an alternative narrative and mutual understanding between people in conflict.
3. **Digital Citizen Journalism:** Blogging, YouTubing and online journalism represent a growing genre of Peacetechnologies. While there is significant diversity in this genre, some such as #18daysinegypt, represent a new way of understanding and portraying historical developments. In this case, using a #, the developers are able to collect multiple narratives and interpretations of the 2011 uprising in Egypt and produce a documentary that weaves these multiple narratives together. Other examples include citizen journalism endeavours such as [Groundviews](#) based out of Sri Lanka, which uses a range of media to highlight alternative perspectives on governance, human rights and peacebuilding. Through such approaches youth are uncovering previously unknown and untold stories to promote a more diverse and pluralistic vision of society.
4. **Online Activism and Open Source Software:** Online petitions, e-surveys, open-source software and social forums represents another active category of Peacetechnologies initiatives. These platforms enable activists to create movements and mobilize like-minded young people to promote democracy, community engagement, or prevent corruption and illicit flows. Examples of these include [Avaaz](#), [LiquidFeedback](#), or [Ning](#).
5. **Cyber Defence and E-Literacy:** This category of Peacetechnologies refers to initiatives that emphasize skills training and enhancing digital literacy. Examples include [SalamaTech](#), which is training and equipping human rights defenders in Syria with cyber defence to support communities of peace on the ground in conflict zones. Another example is the

⁷² See Ushahidi platform <https://www.usahidi.com/>

⁷³ See Peace Maker Game <http://www.peacemakergame.com/>

[UK's Digital Reach](#) program that seeks to develop the digital skills of vulnerable young people in the UK. The emphasis for these programs is on equipping young people with the know-how and skills to protect and empower themselves.

6. **Virtual Mapping:** This category of Peacetechnology leverages Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to combat violence and promote peace. Indicative initiatives include [HarassMap](#) in Egypt, which uses SMS technology to document sexual harassment 'hotspots'. The initiative aims also to help women and law enforcement, identify where there is an elevated risk of sexual violence and highlight where police resources could be concentrated. The overall goal is to raise awareness and mobilize against sexual harassment by leveraging mobile technologies.

Table 1- Peacetechnology Initiative Matrix (See Annex A for detailed descriptions)

Objectives/ Functions	Violence Prevention & Security	Awareness Raising & Collaboration	Inclusion	Understanding & Exchange	Social Change & Advocacy
Data Collection and Processing	Voix des Kivu Uwiano Peace Platform Social Peace Index Observatori o Proxi Elva Platform	CRMA	Policentrico Ventana Por la Paz		Syria Tracker Satellite The Sentinel Project Groundviews
Peace Gaming	PeaceMaker Games for Peace Peace Park	Junub Games World PeaceGame Vitalz		PeaceMaker Games for Peace Peace Park Games for Peace	Vote Compass
Digital Citizen Journalism	Georgia Early Warning YouthMobil e Cure Violence	#18 Days in Egypt	Samasource Annona	Peace Factory Shoot your Identity Umuzi Photoclub PeaceTXT YouthMobile	I Paid a Bribe Footage Peace Factory Groundviews

Online Activism and Open Source Software	Salama Shabab Salama Tech YouthMobile	Mahallae KiraChix MasterPeace Salama Shabab	Soliya HarassMap NairoBits	Crack in the Wall	Turning Tables Salama Tech Digital Democracy KiraChix
Cyber Defence & E-Literacy	Salama Tech Aegis Education for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda CyberSAR	Soliya YaLa-Young Leaders KiraChix	DigitalReach programme Juentic Ventana Por la Paz IHub Kenya Samasource NairoBits	YaLa-Young Leaders	Digital Democracy Vote Compass Nat Pha Yar Ma Institute
Virtual Mapping	HarassMap Ushahidi Elva Platform				HarassMap Elva Platform

6. Key Recommendations

The Internet and social media have the potential to amplify the voices of youth through Peacetechnology. By investing in Peacetechnology initiatives, the UN and other entities could strengthen the Youth, Peace and Security agenda substantially. As this study documents, there is a wide range of initiatives, each of which have a demonstrated track record of success. To take advantage of the potential, this paper recommends the following:

Recognize the role of social media and the Internet in scaling youth participation for peace:

The widespread and rapid adoption of ICTs, particularly in conflict affected contexts, makes social media and the Internet essential vehicles to advance the YPS agenda. The YPS should leverage and build on the initiatives highlighted above to amplify the voices of Peacetechnology participants by promoting and helping to sustain their activities.

Promote digital citizenship and E-literacy: The YPS agenda should support digital citizenship and work to help cultivate a new progressive social contract that leverages technology for peace. To do so it should create alliances with private and public sector entities at the global, national and local levels to support greater literacy among users, particularly in conflict affected contexts, on the importance of using technology to promote narratives of peace and to enhance the voice of youth for change. This should include supporting individuals and organizations protect themselves against cyber attacks through cyber security education and literacy campaigns such as [CyberSAR](#), which provides at risk human rights organizations with training to protect their data, identities and operations online, and to confidently use

communications devices to report on human rights abuses. In an age of propaganda, fake news and disinformation, a key component of e-literacy campaigns should also be to provide youth with tools to determine what is credible information and what is not.⁷⁴

Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships for ICT based peace initiatives: Virtually all social media and Internet platforms are privately owned. This makes collaboration with private tech companies essential. The YPS agenda should place special focus on working with the private sector to develop effective approaches that protect youth at risk to predatory behaviour online. In the preventing violent extremism space, important lessons can be learned from recent innovations aimed to combat child pornography. One example is [Project Arachnid](#), which aims to reduce and track the availability of child abuse images on the Internet and report them to relevant service providers and law enforcement. In doing so, the initiative brings together governments, civic groups and ISP providers to facilitate the takedown of this content and promote prosecution at efficient rates. Other relevant examples include work undertaken by [ICT for peace foundation and the UN's Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate](#), which have been promoting private sector engagement to respond to violent extremist content online. Such partnerships should be further promoted and specifically engage youth in the design of these initiatives.

Foster Peacetech initiatives that help bridge the digital divide - particularly for young women and sexual minorities: It is essential that the YPS play an active role to empower the security and agency of young women and sexual minorities online. Women and sexual minorities around the world are often confined physically, culturally and/or politically. In such contexts, the online environment can represent a window of freedom through which marginalised groups can be recognized and express their views. Any strategy to counter and prevent violent extremism and hate speech must integrate at its core a focus on the role of women, girls and sexual minorities. Doing so in a way that protects and promotes their agency will require specific investments that support their access to the Internet and mobile technologies, enhance their technical capacities and e-literacy, as well as provide meaningful avenues to leverage their skills for meaningful social, political and economic advancement. This may entail supporting Peacetech initiatives that specifically focus on promoting the roles of young women and sexual minorities, it will also require working with society at large across multiple medias to reach all segments of society.

7. Conclusion

The progress study on Youth, Peace and Security aims to document youth's positive contribution to peace and recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels. The Internet and social media are central vehicles through which this objective can be realised. The rapid advance and adoption of information communication

⁷⁴ For more ideas on how media and Internet literacy can contribute to preventing violent extremism see: Singh, J., Kerr, P. and Hamburger, E. (eds) (2016). "Media and Information Literacy: Reinforcing Human Rights, Countering Radicalization and Extremism." UNESCO, UNITWIN, UNAOC and GAPMIL. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002463/246371e.pdf>

technologies (ICT) by youth all over the world has positioned the Internet, social media and interactive digital gaming spaces as key mediums through which youth can actively participate in and contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.⁷⁵ Already, games such as [PeaceMaker](#), [Games for Peace](#) and [Peace Park](#) are bridging gaps between young people living on multiple sides of conflict. Internet based Voting Advice Applications (such as [Vote Compass](#)) are making it [more likely for youth to participate in elections](#). Initiatives such as the [PeaceTech Lab](#) and [SalamaTech](#) are supporting voices of resilience in conflict zones such as Afghanistan and Syria.

Simultaneously, this technologically-empowered leap comes with vulnerabilities and risks. Information stored on cell phones, laptops and social media accounts can expose sensitive and extremely private information making individuals and groups susceptible to a host of digitally savvy hostile actors (criminals, terrorists and repressive regimes). A [growing body of research](#) on the links between social media, crime and violent extremism has begun to document how criminals and violent extremists leverage Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and other ICT vehicles to recruit and radicalize youth. Work by the [SecDev Foundation](#) has also documented how Syrians are being captured, tortured and killed because of their online activities. In many contexts, the risks are [particularly high for young women](#) who in many cases have to flee their families, communities and countries because of information found on their mobile phones or Facebook posts by the men who control them.

States and institutions are also responding - often through laws calling for stricter content regulations on the Internet, censorship, and ever more pervasive surveillance. Data collected from social media platforms, and other online systems, represent the central commodity of the digital era - whose status, and legal and normative terms is being determined in real time. Ensuring a balance between community safety and security, digital citizenship, and the protection of individual rights is a central tenant of the emerging global digital economy. The decisions made today will impact and shape the future of global citizenship in the digital era.

This paper has sought to outline on how the YPS progress report can help responsibly amplify the voices of young people through information communication technologies to support global peace and security. It has done so in a way that has highlighted innovations as well as associated risks. The study has also offered concrete policy recommendations on how the YPS can leverage virtual platforms to harness the positive and resilient contributions of young people within a framework of global digital citizenship. There is much promise in leveraging youth and technology for peace, but to realise that objective, investment is required.

⁷⁵ Ideas are already being proposed by the UNOY. See for example the Youth ToolKit for UNSC 2250: <http://unoy.org/en/2250-toolkit/>

Annex A: Indicative List of Peacetech Initiatives with Descriptions

[Salama Shabab](http://www.salamshabab.com) (Iraq & MENA) is television program and a social networking website (www.salamshabab.com) that enables Iraqi youth to connect and share their peacebuilding experiences. Salam Shabab has earned international acclaim, notably through the UNESCO Prize for Intercultural Dialogue. The online community has grown to reach youth in Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Libya.⁷⁶

[Ventana Por la Paz](#) (Colombia) is a social enterprise that seeks to empower youth affected by the civil war by promoting economic tech entrepreneurship. The organisation has developed many economic innovative programs for communities affected by the conflict in Colombia, including a virtual marketplace that fosters micro-tech youth enterprises.

[Mahallae](#) (Cyprus) is an online community of people and organisations working to promote peace on the Island. It a unique platform that use new technology and innovative online tools to promote collaboration.

[Junub Games](#) (South Sudan) is gaming platform for youth that aims to build bridges between communities and enhance peaceful behaviours. Junub Games has developed video games and board games to promote unity and combat sectarianism in a country shaken by civil war.

[YaLa-Young Leaders](#) (Middle East) is a Facebook-based movement of youth in the Middle East that promotes a new regional vision for peace, freedom and prosperity. The platform supports online discussions, interactive events and projects in order to bring to light the untold stories of younger generations in the Middle East.

[Juventic](#) (Colombia) is an organisation that aims to improve educational and labour opportunities or young Colombians. Juventic offers training in advanced ICT skills to vulnerable youth affected by the conflict.

The [Peace Factory](#) (Palestine (MENA)/Israel) is a Facebook based platform that encourages people to post messages of friendship between countries in conflict (Israel-Iran, Palestine-Israel, Pakistan-Israel, America-Iran).

[Crack in the Wall](#) (Israel, Palestine) is a Facebook community promoting dialogue between families who have lost a family member as a result of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

⁷⁶ See United States Institute of Peace (2013)

[Salamatech](#) (Syria) is a project that aims to build the capacity of Syrian civil society actors to communicate safely and effectively online. It provides emergency tech support, digital safety training as well as real-time remediation.

[Observatorio Proxi](#) (Spain) is website that aims to collect, understand and monitor anti-migrant speech in Spain. The organisation offers online training to combat hate speech.

[Policentrico](#) (Colombia) is a company that supports development, social innovation, democracy and peacebuilding in Colombia through technology.

[Groundviews](#) (Sri Lanka) is a website for citizen journalism offering alternative perspectives on governance, human rights, and peace building.

[HarassMap](#) (Egypt) is an SMS reporting system for women experiencing sexual harassment in Egypt to help raise awareness and prevent sexual harassment.

[Elva Platform](#) (Libya) combines a range of data collection tools like SMS, Smartphone and web reports with versatile data analytics and intuitive visualizations. The [Social Peace Index](#) is one of its tools, which surveys perceptions about safety across municipalities in Libya.

[KiraChix](#) (Kenya) is a not for profit organisation that aims to equip women with technological skills to change Africa's future. The organisation offers training programs, tech camps as well as community building programs.

[The Peacetech Lab](#) is a global organisation that works to reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data to accelerate and scale peacebuilding efforts. The Peacetech Lab brings together engineers and activists, policy makers and conflict experts, social scientists, data scientists, and other innovators to develop effective peacebuilding solutions based on new technologies.

[Build Up](#) is a social enterprise dedicated to supporting the emergence of alternative infrastructures for civic engagement and peacebuilding. It organizes an annual global conference that brings together practitioners, activists, artists and technologists from around the world to share experience and ideas on using technology for peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

[#PeaceHackathon](#) is a global hackathon that aims to foster peace by offering opportunities for youth and young adults with different skills and backgrounds to promote peace.

[Digital Democracy](#) is an organisation that empowers marginalized communities to use technology to defend their rights. It aims to help communities achieve transformative change using the Internet and new technologies.

[YouthMobile](#) is a tech initiative launched by the UNESCO to foster digital empowerment and lessen the digital divide, especially for young women and girls.

[Tech Against Terrorism](#) is a UN-mandated project that aims to build on the capacity of tech companies to prevent their platforms from being exploited by terrorists and violent extremist groups. It was jointly launched by the United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate and the ICT4Peace Foundation. Tech against Terrorism recently helped organise the U.S. launch of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT).

[Soliya](#) is an international nonprofit organization preparing the next generation of youth with the skills, attitudes, and commitment to engage in peacebuilding.

[PEACEapp](#) is an initiative that organizes workshops on digital literacy.

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