



Youth Speak Out !

Participatory analysis of their engagement for peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire

A contribution to the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)

In partnership with



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Thanks to the support of





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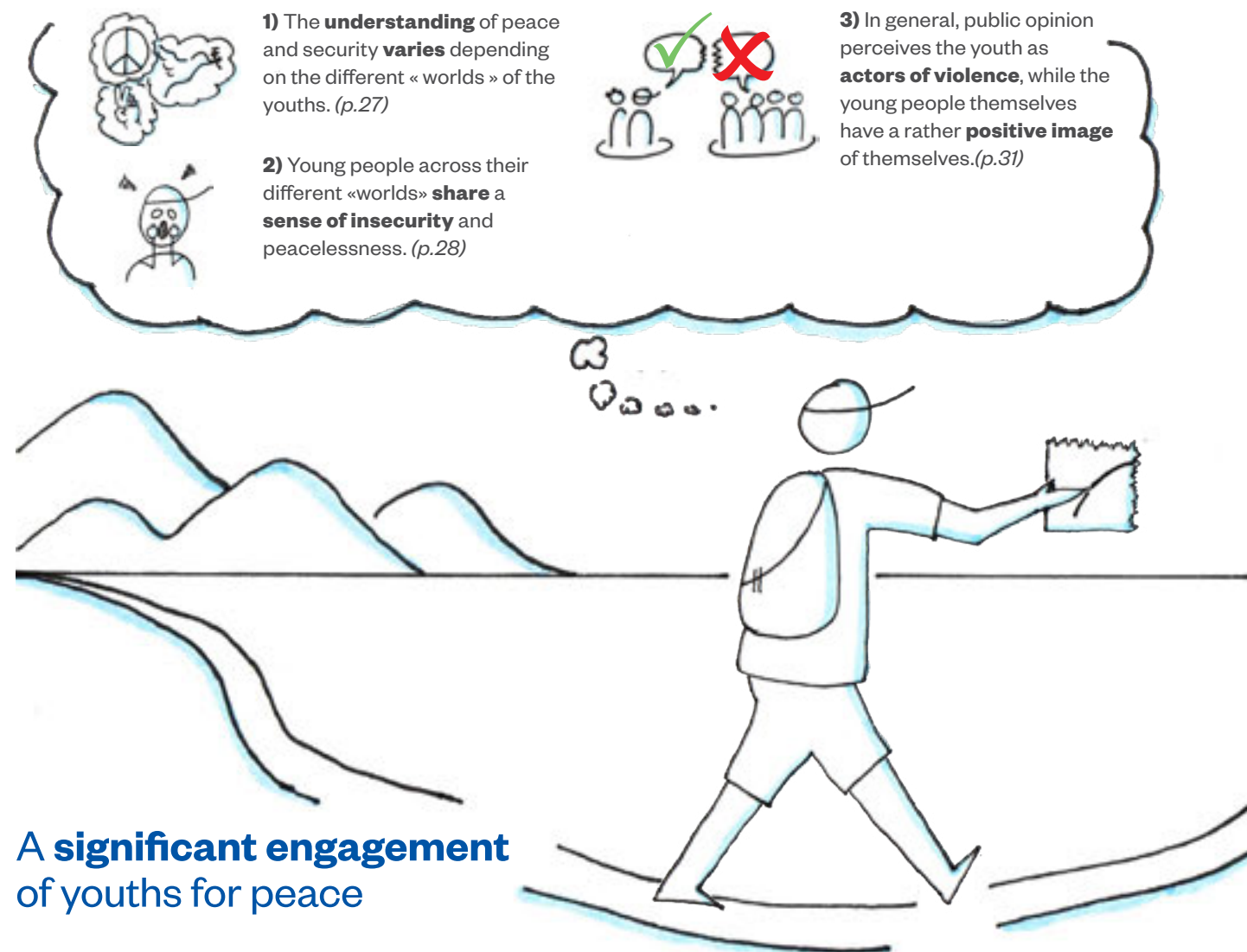
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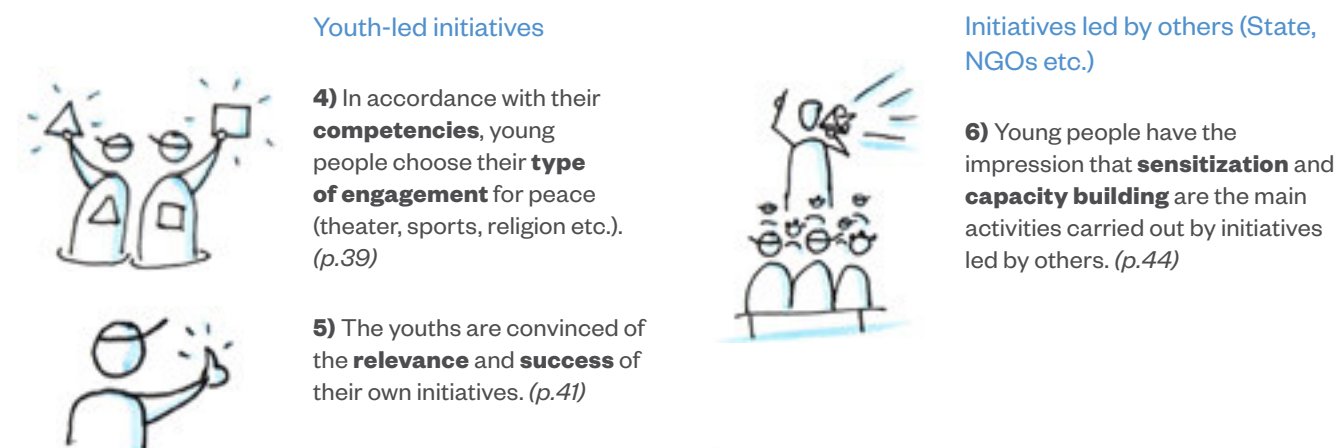
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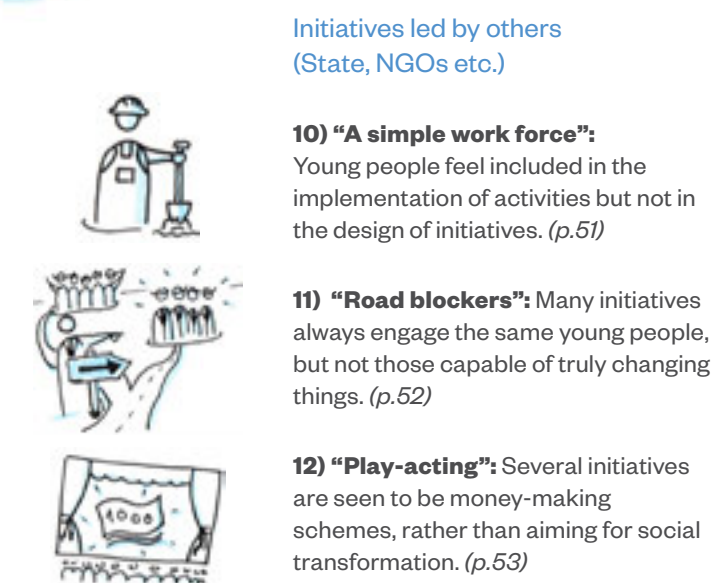
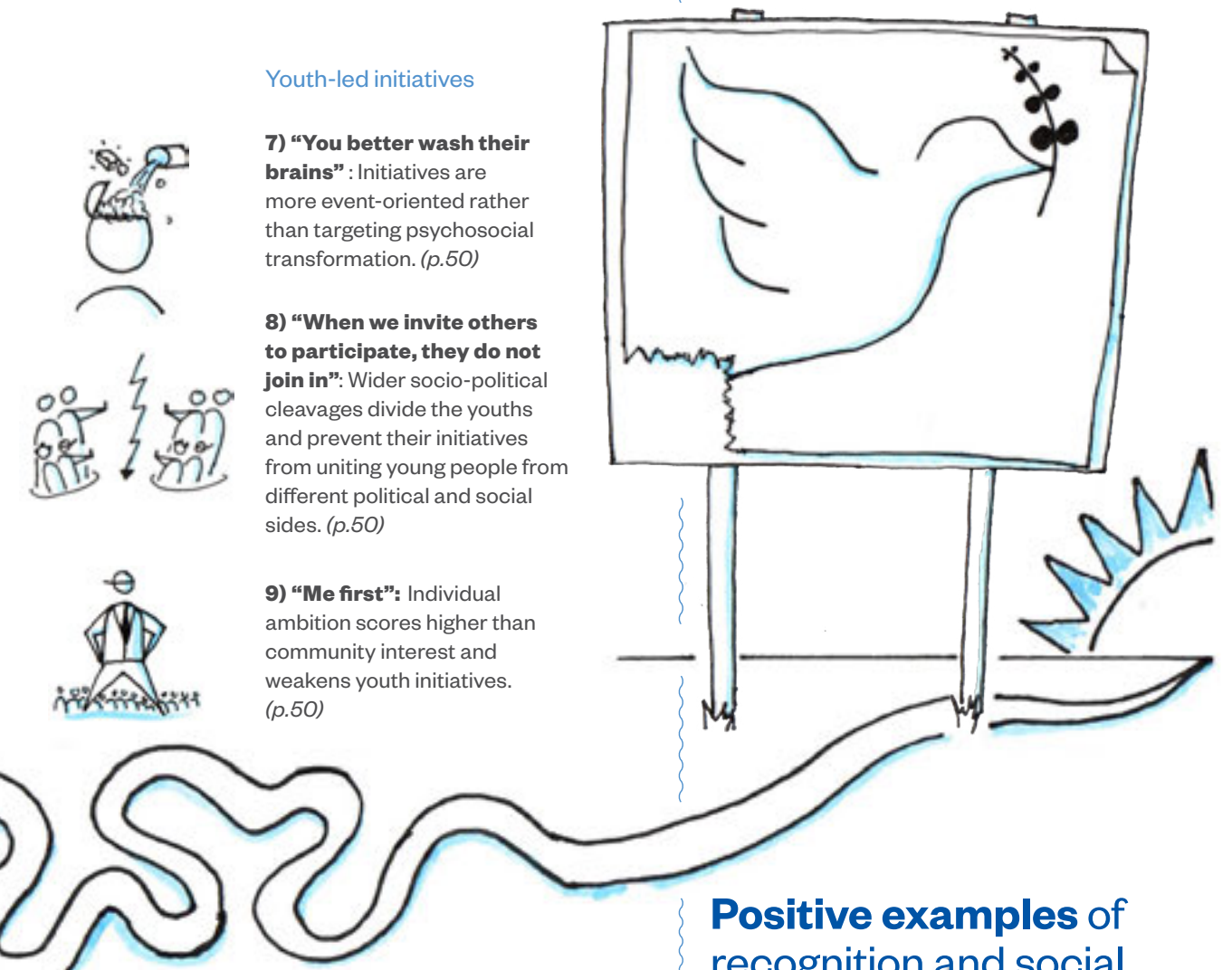
A significant engagement of youths for peace



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KEY MESSAGES

The main challenges of youth engagement for peace



Positive examples of recognition and social transformation



ILLUSTRATED RECOMMENDATIONS

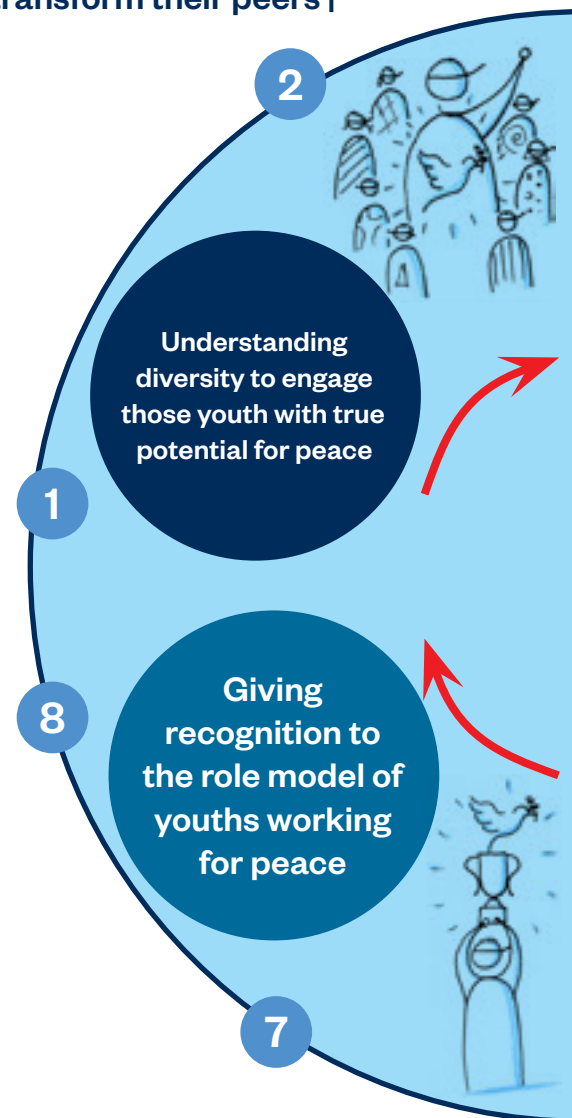
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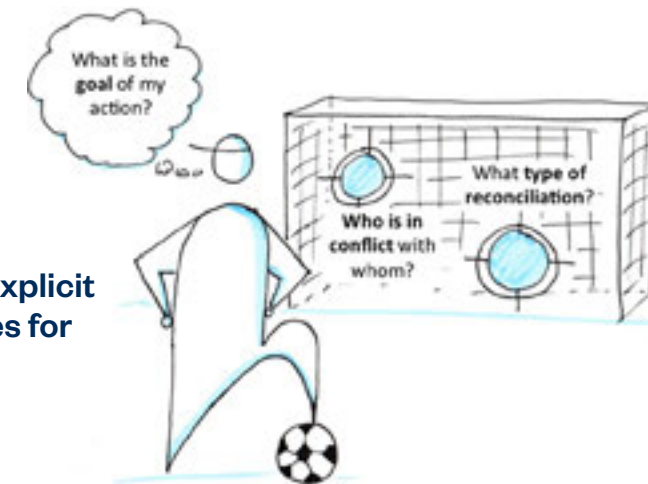


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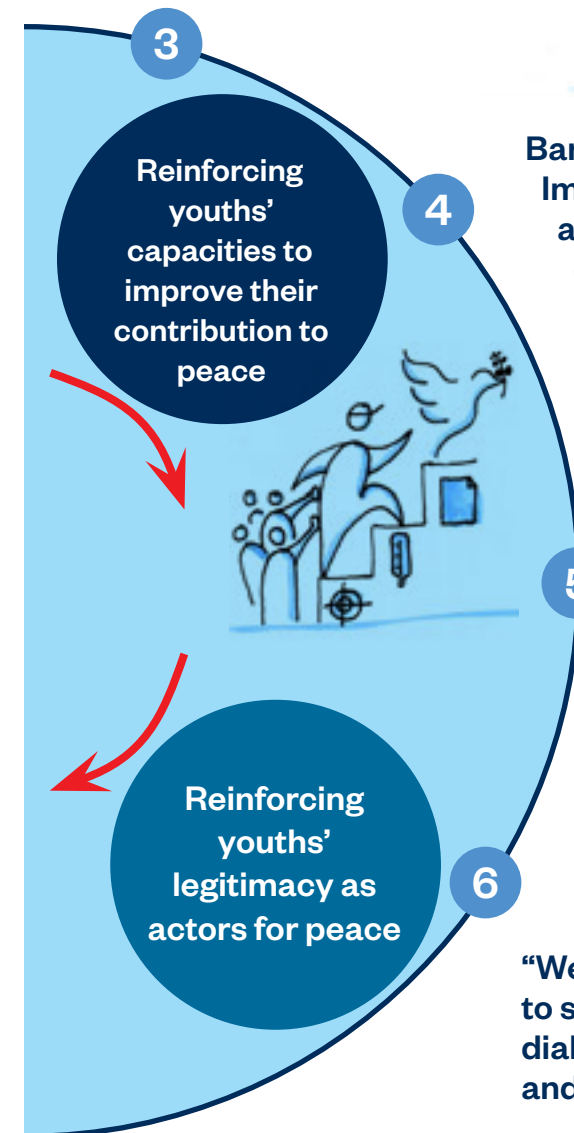
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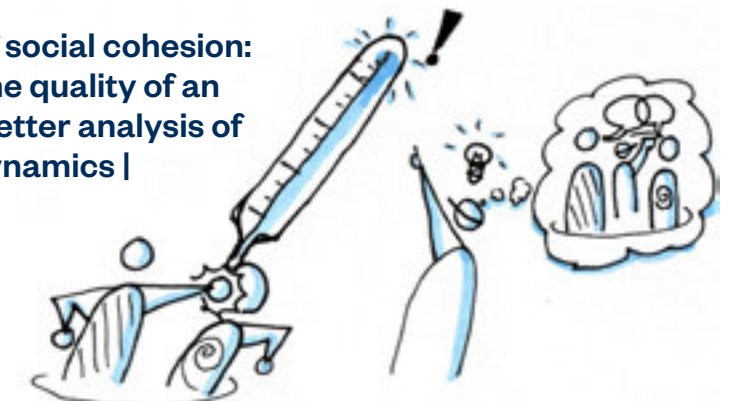
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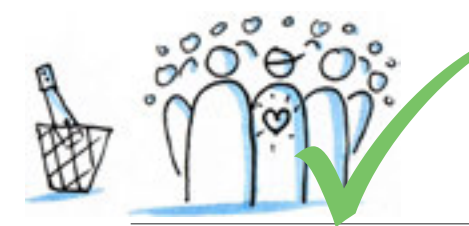
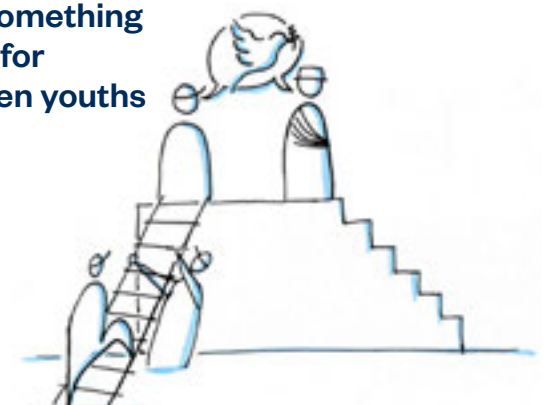
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Youth participants of the Participatory Video workshop filming during their fieldwork

VIDEOS ACCOMPANYING THIS CASE STUDY REPORT

This case study report is accompanied by the following two videos:

Ivorian youth under the “talking tree” 10-minute video produced by Ivorian Youth themselves demonstrating their positive contribution to peace and security

A 10-minute video which was produced by the team of seven young people who took part in a two-week participatory video process (conducted in partnership with InsightShare). In this process they consulted their peers in different neighbourhoods of Abidjan via video (see pictures in this report). They then edited the film autonomously, content and form reflecting their personal analysis and choices. The video was screened for and validated by the youths who had been consulted. This film represents the main tool with which these youths were able to directly demonstrate their voices on their positive contribution to peace and security issues in their country. Sub-titles are available in French and English.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SBLISoiNpc>

The methodological report which documents the process of participatory videos in the framework of this project is available via the following link :

www.youth4peace.info/featured-resources

Youth Speak Out ! Policy recommendations to strengthen their engagement for peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire 3-minute clip with recommendations for political decision makers

The audio-visual material, recorded by the seven young participants to the participatory video process as well as by Interpeace and InsightShare, was used to produce a 3-minute video with the purpose of carrying the key messages and recommendations from the Ivorian youth to the policy makers in Côte d’Ivoire and the United Nations.

vimeo.com/245744634 (English)

vimeo.com/245722825 (French)



« Passionate and determined to succeed », a Youth participant of the Participatory Video workshop

CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A case study commissioned by resolution 2250

In December 2015, the Security Council of the United Nations adopted resolution 2250 pertaining to « Youth, Peace and Security ». This resolution highlights the positive role of youths in promoting and consolidating peace and security in their respective countries and indeed worldwide in spite of their lingering reputation as actors of violence and peacelessness. Thus, with a view to making meaningful recommendations to all of its member states, the Security Council solicited the General Secretary of the United Nations to conduct a global study of youths' contributions to the various processes for consolidating peace and resolving conflict within their national and local contexts. Implementation of this global study privileged a participative approach informed by a number of case studies from all over the world, including Côte d'Ivoire¹.

The need to transform the negative image of Ivorian Youth

Côte d'Ivoire provides a useful case study for the global study, revealing the nexus of youth and peace and security concerns. According to official data, youths account for the majority of the Ivorian population, with more than 3 (three) out of 4 (four) individuals registering at less than 35 years of age². Considering their demographic weight, youths are a segment of society which must be taken seriously by anybody seeking to understand the structural and social dynamics of peace and security.

For more than twenty years now, Ivorian youth has played an active role in the successive socio-political crises that the country has endured. This has largely contributed to a quite negative reputation in matters of peace and security. This negative aspect of youth activism³ has been abundantly documented, namely at university campus level with its student unions⁴ as well as political violence instigated by political party youth organisations⁵, not to mention youth criminality as exemplified by the phenomenon

¹ <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>

² According to the most recent Côte d'Ivoire census, 77.3% of the Ivorian population is under 35 years of age, i.e. 3 out of every 4 individuals. INS, *Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat (RGPH)*, 2014

³ Interpeace/Indigo CI, *Obstacles à la cohésion sociale et dynamiques de violence impliquant les jeunes dans l'espace urbain*, 2015

⁴ Banégas, R., *La politique du « gbonhi ». Mobilisations patriotiques, violence milicienne et carrières militantes en Côte-d'Ivoire*, Genèses, 2010/4 (n° 81), p. 25-44. DOI: 10.3917/gen.081.0025. URL: <http://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2010-4-page-25.htm>

⁵ Koné, G., *Sociogenèse et dynamique du mouvement «jeune patriote» en Côte d'Ivoire*. PHD thesis, Université Alassane Ouattara, 2011

Fofana, M., *Ethnographie des Trajectoires Sociales des Jeunes Enrôlés dans la Rébellion en Côte d'Ivoire*. New system thesis. University Alassane Ouattara, 2012

known as “microbes”⁶ which has become recurrent⁷. More recently, a report published by the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission known as CDVR (Commission Dialogue, Vérité et Réconciliation), which was created with the goal of shedding light on the 2011 post-electoral conflict, revealed the degree of Ivorian youths’ participation in events, making this age group an important actor of the crisis⁸. Put together, all these elements have contributed to the globally negative image of Ivorian youth.

However, as this study shows, a sizeable minority of young people exert themselves on a daily basis in their community in favour of peace and security. Among these are a number of youths with a violent background, who have converted from violence to peace in spite of remaining a target for stigmatization (e.g. youths known as “microbes” and ex-combatants).

Although youth-inspired initiatives for a positive contribution to peace and security in their communities are numerous and very diverse, they are frequently unsupported and go unnoticed. Most of these initiatives remain anecdotal and receive little to no media attention. Moreover, this youth engagement is poorly documented⁹, and publications drawing attention to youths’ activities endangering peace and security are far more numerous. These factors are a hindrance to transforming the image of Ivorian youth from actors, and victims of violence to actors for peace and security. The added value of the present study of the Ivorian context is to highlight youths’ positive contribution to peace and security without ignoring the challenges of such an engagement.

A study *with*, not *about* youths

The objective of resolution 2250 is to include youths. Consequently, this global progress study demands the implementation of an inclusive, participatory methodology¹⁰. This is why this study has not been designed to *talk about* youths or to extract information from them but rather to **give them the opportunity to make their voices heard** and to reinforce their engagement for peace and security in their communities.

6 A phenomenon of urban criminality characterized by bands of youngsters and adolescents, in general armed with all types of blades, who roam the roads of lower-class neighbourhoods perpetrating violent street crimes.
7 Interpeace/Indigo CI, *Exister par le "gbonhi" : Engagement des adolescents et jeunes dits ‘microbes’ dans la violence à Abobo (Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire)*, 2017
8 The collective authors represented a broad variety of constituents: FRCI military, gendarmes, young Kroumen, young Guéré, young Dioula, young Bété, organized young patriots, FESCI unionists, police, prisoners, MPCl, combatants who had crossed the border from Liberia, various militia groups, FDS military, highway bandits, military personnel representing Forces Nouvelles, Garde Républicaine, FANCI, communities protected by traditional dozo hunters, migrants from Burkina Faso, unidentified individuals, self-defence groups. CDVR, *Rapport final Commission Dialogue, Vérité et Réconciliation (CDVR)*, 2014
9 Search for Common Ground/UNICEF, *Étude de base du Projet ‘Promouvoir une culture de la paix en milieu scolaire en Côte d’Ivoire’*, 2013
10 Page 5, Global Study Concept Note, 2017

A variety of tools for expression and action

With this objective in mind, diverse tools were used to facilitate youths’ free expression of ideas through various channels and to interconnect them in order to encourage action.

Focus groups served to facilitate the dialogue of 15 to 20 youths at a time and to stimulate debate, critical comments, and controversy, especially as participants were free to orient the discussion in the direction of their choice. The focus group format allows for expression of emotions, while easily making room for other points of view and establishing contacts. Focus groups were conducted according to the methodology defined for the global progress study on youth, peace and security.

The participatory video produced together with InsightShare was not only the occasion for youths to take ownership of the video, it also offers youths as peace and security activists the occasion to engage in participatory discussion and reflection with their peers and initiate contacts and relations beyond their usual geographic, socio-economic and sectorial limits.

The U-Report platform was created by UNICEF and operated together with the Ivorian Ministry for Youth Promotion, Employment and Civil Service. U-Report consists of three phases, with the first devoted to surveying youths from varied backgrounds, environments and locations via text messaging (SMS), thereby inviting broad participation and expression of opinion about questions asked¹¹. These survey participants also registered as youth reporters (U-Reporters) willing to contribute their opinion in following surveys. Participation in U-Report is free, open to all, not only to young people and adolescents (self-selection principle), and entirely anonymous.

- Completed activities:
- Three (3) focus groups with a total of 33 youths (young women 30%, young men 70%; 17-25 old 36%, 26-35 old 64%)
 - Seven (7) youths consulted approximately 30 additional young people in selected Abidjan neighbourhoods, summarizing the study results in a 10-minute video which they directed and produced autonomously
 - Approximately 7400 youths answered five (5) questions via SMS (young women 17%, men 35%, unspecified 48%)

11 Two other U-Report phases, i.e. information exchange (allowing youths to ask questions and to report events observed in their community), and discussion (allowing for exchanges with other youths on their opinion during following surveys) were not implemented specifically within the framework of this study.

Participation: a study conducted by and for youths

Youth participation was at the core of the process of this study. One could say a study conducted by youths, with youths and targeting an audience of youths. Much like the participants' demographic, the operations teams of Interpeace, Indigo Côte d'Ivoire, InsightShare and UNICEF are almost entirely composed of under 35-year-olds.

In addition, seven young leaders who distinguished themselves by their personal engagement for peace took the lead in its implementation. To start out with, in relation to the participatory video process (duration of 12 days), these seven leaders trained to acquire the basics of directing and producing a film and also received a training in the participatory discussion and consultation process using the video technique. They then consulted their peers in other neighbourhoods in the course of discussion groups, interviews etc., which they themselves recorded on video (see pictures in this report). They then edited the film autonomously, content and form reflecting their personal analysis and choices. The video was screened for and validated by the youths who had been consulted or who had shared their stories about peace. The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SBLISoiNpc>

The methodological report which documents the process of participatory video in the framework of this project is available on the following website :

www.youth4peace.info/featured-resources

Secondly, they contributed to the identification of youths susceptible to efficiently contribute to the two focus groups, thereby adding further, previously unidentified “youth worlds”, privileging some “worlds” over others, or modifying their label.

Furthermore, a number of youths contributed to formulating and choosing the questions for the U-Report survey, which were sent to 42'660 U-Reporters. Finally, they acted as the voice of Ivorian youths when talking to State actors during a workshop for the presentation and discussion of the study's results.

Inclusiveness: connecting youths' various “worlds”

The inclusion of various youth “worlds” ensured that the study benefitted from a variety of perspectives. It would be stultifying to think there was a uniform entity of “youths”, considering the many differentiating specificities and subtleties of a demographic where individuals socialize without necessarily belonging to the same social sphere, sharing identical realities or belonging to the same crowd. Opportunities, constraints and perceptions differ from one sphere to the next, thus partitioning these different “worlds”. Within the context of Côte d'Ivoire and the subject of peace and security, and for the purposes of this study, the following diverse “worlds” inhabited by youths are of interest: youths in political movements and parties, civil society activists, so-called “fundamentalist/ engaged” muslims, so-called “microbes”, student unionists, demobilized veterans, small business owners, etc. (see Annex 1).

By engaging youths from diverse “worlds”, the project created the ground for mutual exchange between individuals who commonly do not listen and talk to each other. This

allowed all participants to gain a better understanding of other “worlds” inhabited by other youths outside their immediate environment, allowing them to integrate these points of view in the development of their own peace and security activities.

The engagement of marginalized, not easily reachable youths, in particular young and adolescent “microbes”, was obtained thanks to the confidence established between these “worlds” and Indigo Côte d'Ivoire and thanks to the close participation of seven young “leaders” representing these “worlds”. On the other hand, due to male dominance within these “worlds” and the still timid engagement of young women for peace and security (see Part 2 of this report), identification and mobilization of young women for this study remained a difficult task.

Impact: taking the messages directly to political decision makers

True to its *Track 6* approach, Interpeace aims to provide a space for dialogue between different levels of society, furthering mutual understanding and, in due course, mutual confidence. Within the framework of this study, the objective was to establish a connection between the political decision-making and youth community levels in order to ensure that the latter's points of view are clearly understood and taken into account by Ivorian policy makers. Two tools proved essential to enabling such a direct (non-intermediary) dialogue, ensuring that youths' messages are authentic, presented in their own words.

Tool number one was a joint workshop between State representatives and the youth participants in the participatory video process, which provided the occasion to discuss key message and recommendations developed through the process of this study. This allowed the representatives of four government ministries a degree of ownership of these messages and recommendations while contributing their own perspective.

The second tool was audio-visual recording of focus group discussions and individual interviews. It provided the raw material for both the participatory video, which the youths themselves edited into a 10-minute film and a 3-minute video clip edited by Interpeace and Indigo Côte d'Ivoire (the later is available at vimeo.com/245744634 (English) and vimeo.com/245722825 (French)).

These videos made it easy to transmit the youths' standpoints and voices to national and international authorities without watering down their message and preserving its dynamics and emotional impact. All youths shown in the video consented to this use of their image, nevertheless wherever necessary their true identities were masked for security reasons.

PEACE AND SECURITY,
A VERY REAL CONCERN
FOR YOUTHS

1

PART 1: PEACE AND SECURITY, A VERY REAL CONCERN FOR YOUTHS



Youth participants of the Participatory Video workshop planning their fieldwork

In the course of the numerous socio-political and military crises and the insecurity they brought to Côte d’Ivoire, disrupting the population’s tranquillity over the past decades, Ivorian youths have realized that peace and security are essential to their fulfilment. Moreover, youths frequently tend to see peace and security through their individual prism, formed by daily realities and their aspirations and expectations. By all accounts, whatever the youths’ individual perceptions of peace and security, they are united by one constant: in general youths do not feel that they live in peace and security.

1.1 As many understandings of peace and security as there are different youth “worlds”

These interactions with youths within this study for the Youth, Peace and Security process reveal that the perception and understanding of peace and security is shaped and connoted differently depending on the individual’s social sphere, the “world” she/he lives in. However, the most widely shared assertion appears to establish a close link between peace and security and peaceful coexistence with others, known as living together in harmony.

“To live in peace means to have peace of mind, to have no issues with other people, in particular my neighbours ... living together peacefully with people who share my daily life.”¹²

Another widespread opinion concerns the tie between peacefulness and security. Many definitions collected among youths in this case study evidence a very strong correlation of peace and security, making it virtually impossible to distinguish the two. Thus, to live in peace means to feel secure, and vice versa.

“Peace is coupled to security; it’s the feeling of being secure, the feeling that you can go out without having to fear for yourself, feeling that your life is not in danger.”¹³

“Being at peace is to be able to go out feeling sure that you will return home without experiencing aggression, and above all that you will wake up the next morning without being summoned to the police station, not having any problem with the police and returning home without worries.”¹⁴

For some, peace is inseparable from satisfying minimal living conditions and well-being. The reality of daily life has a strong impact on consolidating

¹² Political actor, Bingerville, focus group, July 2017
¹³ Sales person, Yopougon, focus group, July 2017
¹⁴ Show business (coupé-décalé) personality, Abobo, focus group, July 2017

peace and security, as phrased in a well-known Ivorian saying: “A hungry man is not a free man.” The implication is that it is impossible to attain peace without providing the population with the vital minimum.

“Peace is the result of people being independent and earning their daily living.”¹⁵

Thus, for school pupils and university students in particular peace rhymes with an adequate living and studying environment. In Côte d’Ivoire’s college and university “world”, characterized by constant turmoil, repeated demands for the improvement of living and studying conditions form the background of recurrent unrest.

“Peace is the absence of undue constraints, living under constraint is not conducive to peace. Take the example of Côte d’Ivoire’s public universities: most of the time people think that student protest, ransacking and violence are arbitrary, while the real reason is that they do not live in peace. Peace means enjoying adequate, minimum daily living and studying conditions ...”¹⁶

Another group of study participants also links the feeling of peace and security to the absence of stigmatization and to mutual acceptance. This is the general point of view of youths who live on the margins of society or are labelled as “microbes” or “ex-combattants”, responsible for criminal violence or having participated in the country’s violent internal conflict.

“For me, peace means accepting others for who they are and accepting youths who have turned their backs on violent activities.”¹⁷

On the other hand, for a number of young women, peaceful coexistence and security concerns aside, true peace cannot be dissociated from gender issues. Their capacity to feel at peace and secure strongly depends on their self-fulfilment as women.

“For us as women, for example, to be at peace means not to have to deal with harassment.”¹⁸

The preceding statements show that youths’ understanding of peace and security varies. It is formed by the constraints they perceive according to their social condition and the social sphere in which they move. Nevertheless, the fact remains that regardless of their “world”, the vast majority of youths who participated in the study do not feel secure or at peace, as the following section shows.

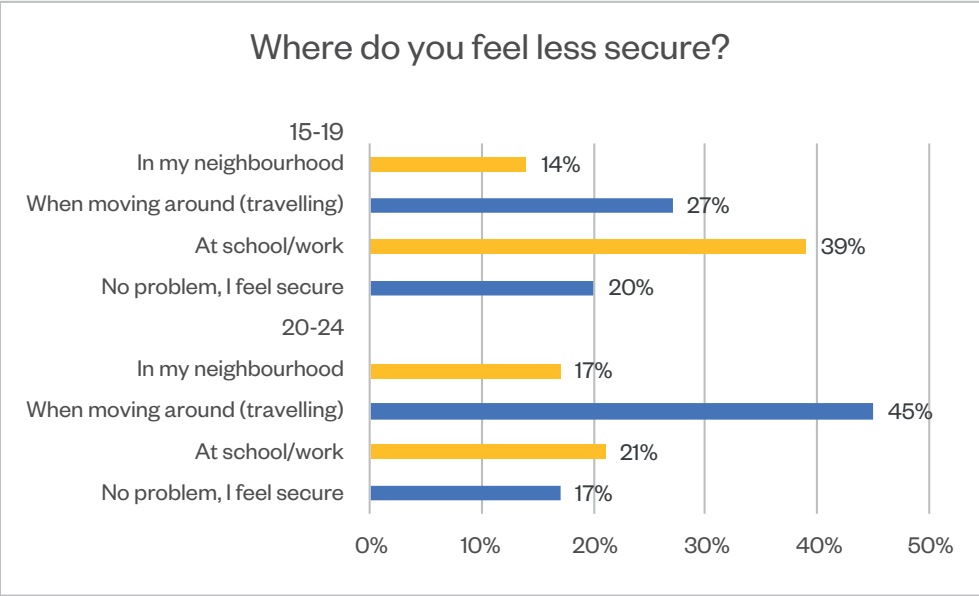
1.2 Beyond a diversified understanding of peace and security, a shared sense of insecurity and peacelessness

The country’s security situation contributes to the anxiety of youths engaged in this process in various ways. The minimal consensus is that the security situation is toxic.

A large number of youths surveyed by U-Report feel concerned by insecurity (8 out of 10 surveyed). For most youths under 19, school or the workplace are the least secure environments (4 out of 10). For the majority of 20-year-olds and over, the greatest source of insecurity is moving around town/traveling (4 out of 10).

15 Educator, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
16 Student union leader, Cocody, focus group, July 2017
17 Reformed “microbe”, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
18 Student, Cocody, focus group, July 2017

Table 1 Where do you feel less secure?

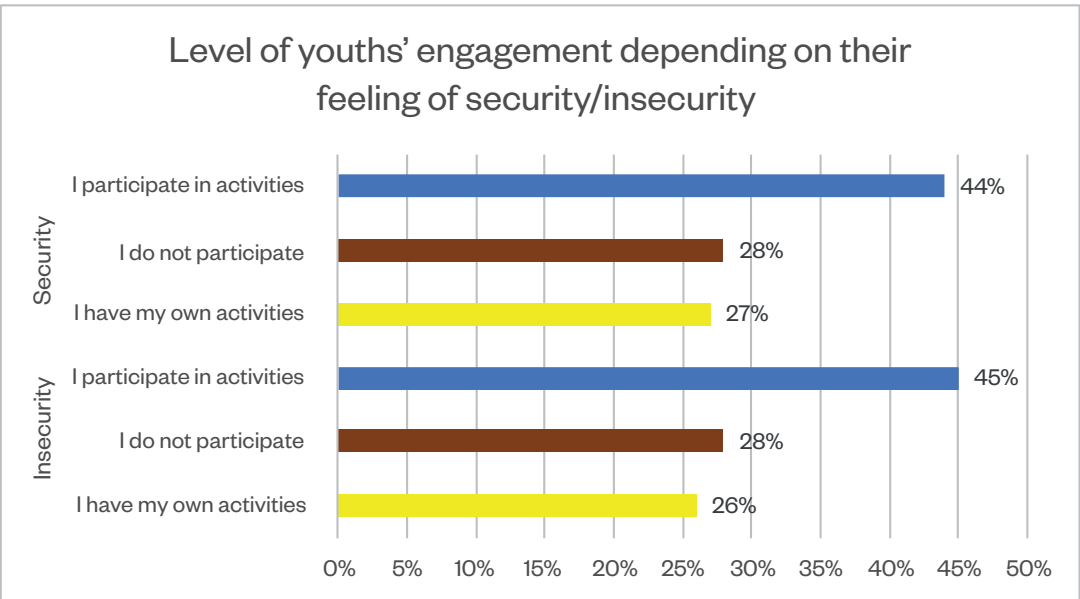


7571 respondents out of 42 660 surveyed
Source: <http://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

The U-Report survey also shows that there is no significant difference in their level of engagement for peace and security between youths who testify that they feel “safe” and those who identified a source of insecurity in their environment (neighbourhood,

school/workplace, moving around). This result suggests that the young people’s feeling of insecurity is not a prerequisite for engaging in pro-peace and security activities.

Table 2 Level of youths’ engagement depending on their feeling of security/insecurity



1.3 Ivorian youth facing societal tensions

For many youths, the much praised ideal of living together in harmony is a delusion. Sectarian divides are clearly evident. Everyone appears to indulge in stigmatizing stereotypes.

“There is no peace. In the past we’ve had a ‘physical war’ but now ‘war is being fought in people’s minds’. I’m Baoulé¹⁹ but I converted to Islam in 2003. So, I have a foot on both sides, although at the moment I’m closer to Muslims. When I’m together with Muslims, I’m with them, when I go to see my family, I don’t feel like I’m with them. You’re in your own country but there is distrust. When you tell people you’re Baoulé and Muslim, they label you ... they want to stick a label to your forehead, so in the end I’m on my own.”²⁰

Frequently, this stigmatization is so severe that it foments hostility within the population, leaving people feeling more vulnerable, especially those already at the margins of society.

“Often, when we are extracted from violence we are not accompanied, not helped to re-enter society, we stay together as a group ... life is a mess, we have to make ends meet ... For me, this means that the population refuses to assist those who are stuck in violent behaviour.”²¹

“We’ve been categorized, we’ve been made into an outsider group.”²²

Although there may be many causes for the pervasive divisions in Ivorian society, the crisis which originated in the events of 2002 and reached its peak during the post-electoral episode of 2010-2011 has served to amplify existing tensions.

“The crisis we’ve gone through made things worse. After the crisis, people returned to everyday life with the same bitterness and hostility. People who lacked the means to leave Abobo stayed behind, they distrust others. Some do whatever they like, they attempt to lay down their law. As a result, those who had left and have returned do not feel safe.”²³

“Before the events, in my neighbourhood things were fairly safe. Forget about that. In middle-class areas things worsened after 2010, they have turned into the epicentre of insecurity issues.”²⁴

It is true to say that open belligerence has subsided after the end of the 2010-2011 crisis, but the fault lines of Ivorian society have remained, fuelling a sort of latent conflict.

“I, for example, live in a police estate, people supposed to protect the law, supposed uphold peace and security ... The basic problem is that they are split among themselves, one group claiming allegiance to the RHDP²⁵ and another to the LMP²⁶. ”²⁷

“People say that for us in Port-Bout there is no problem, things seem peaceful, everything is quiet. When you listen closely and analyse things, what you really here is ‘I’m waiting for the return match, watch what happens then’. That’s what Port-Bouët is really about, people have chosen sides ... We don’t feel at peace. Everyone is waiting for the spark that will reignite the fire. In Port-Bouët people are biding their time.”²⁸

In the midst of this tumult, the image of youths, actively caught up in this situation, is clearly deteriorating. Thus, youths’ reputation has been damaged to the point of pushing them to the fringes of society.

1.4 Broadly considered by society to be actors of violence, youths by and large see themselves in a positive light

Due to their active role during the successive socio-political crises of the past decades, youths are generally seen as actors of peacelessness. In Abidjan, in particular, they are directly accused of contributing to insecurity, namely the private urban transport auxiliaries, known as “syndicates”, or the so-called “microbes”, violent youth gangs who roam the streets of lower-class neighbourhoods. These actors of violence are increasingly of a young age, with the increasing phenomenon of “microbes”.

“I myself have been attacked by a child. I don’t believe he was any older than thirteen. It happened near Keniya pharmacy (in the Abidjan suburb of Yopougon) while I was in a taxi.”²⁹

This feeling of insecurity is heightened by the fact that even the presence or intervention of the police does not seem to dissuade these violent youths from going about their business.

“For example, everyone says that it is dangerous to use the Abobo bus station late in the day. You are a woman, there are ‘microbes’ everywhere even if there are police brigade trucks nearby. When the microbes attack, they pretend that it is not their job to guarantee people’s safety. They say that they’re on other business, that they are not authorized to take action. [...] For me, safety means to be able to wear whatever I like, but if you’re wearing a necklace, you will be targeted.”³⁰

The failure of the State to deal with security challenges, in particular those posed by the “microbes” youth gangs, reinforces public opinion that security is not only an illusion but that certain youths have a negative impact on consolidating peace.

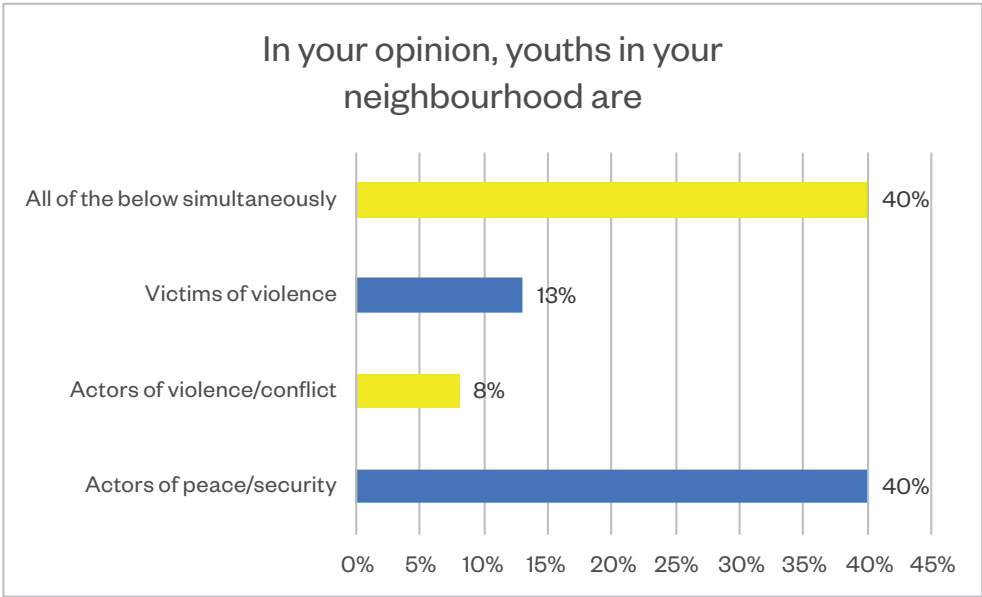
“When you reach my neighbourhood, Yopougon Toit Rouge, you notice the Fire Brigade and the old BAE³¹, the police are still there, there is a police estate nearby, just behind the Gendarmerie. When you see all that, you might assume you’re safe. There has been a very violent attack by lawless children³² in our area, a lady who was selling her ‘baca’³³ at six in the morning was murdered.”³⁴

Nevertheless, although youths’ public image is generally associated with violence and insecurity, the U-Report survey reveals that except when referring to certain categories such as so-called “microbes” or “syndicates”, only a small minority of youths themselves have a clearly negative image of youths as a whole (1 out of 10 surveyed). The dominant representations are either positive throughout, seeing youths as actors for peace and security (4 out of 10), or take into account simultaneous negative and positive aspects (4 out of 10).

19 Ethnic group with a Muslim minority.
20 Young Muslim, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
21 Reformed “microbe”, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
22 Idem
23 Surveillance committee member, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
24 Young activist, Yopougon, focus group, July 2017
25 Pro-Ouattara political coalition
26 Pro-Gbagbo political coalition
27 Young activist, Yopougon, focus group, July 2017
28 Young activist, Port-Bouët, focus group, July 2017

29 Student, Cocody, focus group, July 2017
30 Student, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
31 The Brigade Anti-Emeutes is an elite Police unit.
32 The so-called "microbes" are violent gangs of youths and adolescents who roam the streets of lower-class neighbourhoods.
33 Popular breakfast cereal
34 Young activist, Yopougon, focus group, July 2017

Table 3 In your opinion, youths in your neighbourhood are victims/actors of violence?



6852 respondents out of 7571 surveyed
Source: <http://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

This divide between the negative perception in popular public discourse and youths' largely positive self-assessment is surprising and raises the question of a possible disconnect between the way society and decision-makers see youths and the way they see themselves.

Not only does this highlight a lack of mutual understanding, the survey also shows that youths who have a markedly positive view of their age group engage in peace and security activities and volunteer in organisational capacities more frequently than those youths who express a more nuanced or negative view on youth in the survey. This raises the question of causality in determining whether it is the greater engagement with peace and security which creates the positive image or whether it is the positive image which results in greater engagement. Unfortunately, the survey data does not provide a clear answer to this question. However, we should ask ourselves whether society's negative image of its youth may influence negative self-perception among these youths. This could in turn lead to weakening their will to engage with peace and security issues. This hypothesis has yet to be explored.

Conclusion: Part One

Although they are broadly considered as actors of violence and peacelessness, the youths who participated in this study revealed that they too are very concerned by the country's toxic atmosphere. Better still, they do not see themselves in a negative light but as pro-peace actors. As is the case for Ivorian society as a whole, individually their ideas of peace and security reflect the social sphere they inhabit. However, looking beyond the plurality of views of these concepts, the majority of youths definitely feel that they are in a vulnerable situation. Being conscious of the importance of peace and security for their self-fulfilment, these youths take part in activities designed to support the dynamics of change.

Table 4 Level of youths' engagement depending on opinion of youths in general

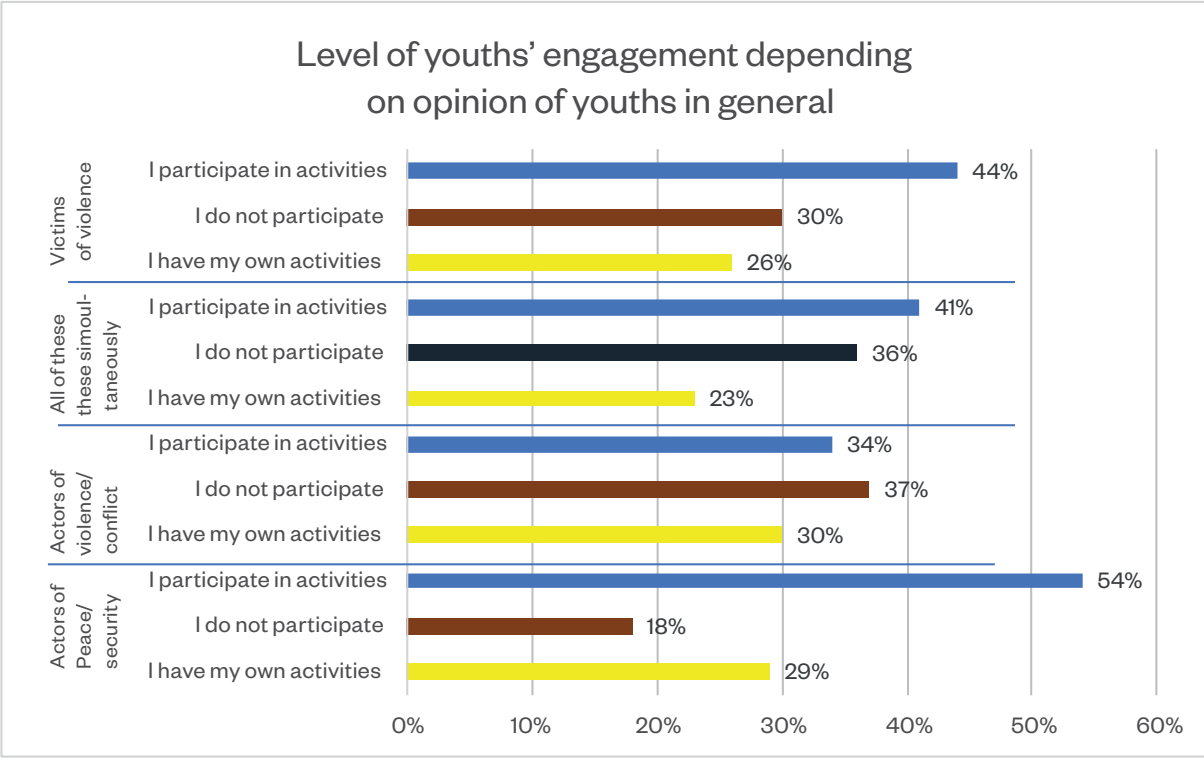
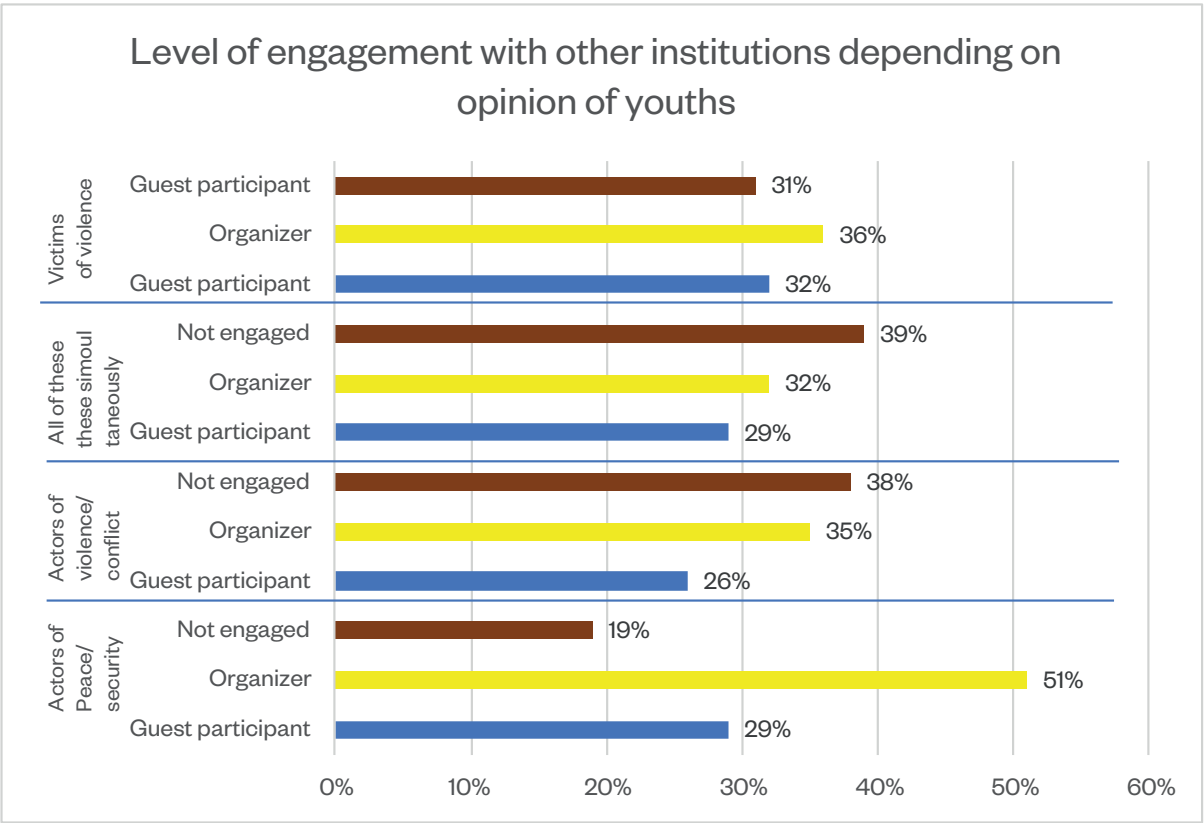


Table 5 Level of youth's engagement with other initiatives depending on opinion of youths



THE SIGNIFICANT
PARTICIPATION OF
YOUTHS IN PEACE AND
SECURITY INITIATIVES IN
CÔTE D'IVOIRE

2



Youth participants of the Participatory Video workshop filming during their fieldwork

PART 2: THE SIGNIFICANT PARTICIPATION OF YOUTHS IN PEACE AND SECURITY INITIATIVES IN CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Contrary to received wisdom, which places Ivorian youth at the centre of all sorts of incriminations as actors of violence, and more in tune with youths’ self-assessment, many youths engaged in this study are actually engaged in concrete action for peace and security. As this section will evidence, these initiatives³⁵ can justifiably be qualified as positive contributions to peace and security in the Ivorian context.

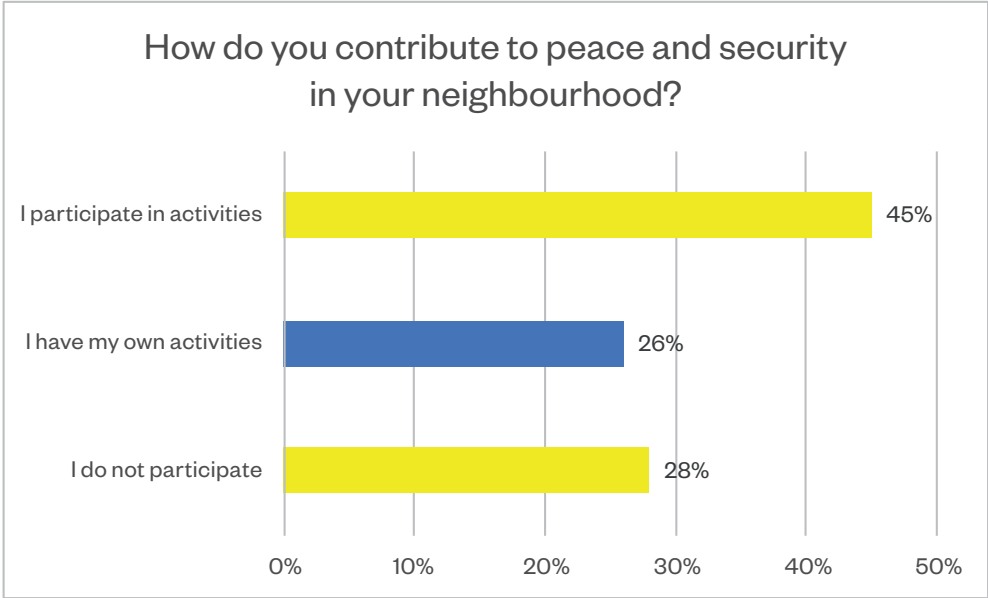
2.1 Youth-led initiatives: “We young people work for peace in our own way”

The U-Report survey carried out within the framework of this study shows that in Côte d’Ivoire, a vast majority of young people surveyed (7 out of 10 – from a total of 6415 individual respondents) state that they contribute to peace and security in their neighbourhood. A closer look at the way in which they contribute shows that about one third of the youths surveyed (3 out of 10) are very engaged and initiate their own actions for peace and security. Furthermore, nearly half of the young people surveyed (5 out of 10) state that they simply join the initiatives their peers have launched³⁶. Nevertheless, while a great number of Ivorian youths participate in pro-peace activities in their society, a minority (3 out of 10) admits to not taking part in neighbourhood initiatives.

³⁵ These initiatives include both personal actions, which youths organize autonomously, and their participation in initiatives led by national and international institutions.

³⁶ This refers to peace and security initiatives supported by national and international institutions.

Table 6 How do you contribute to peace and security in your neighbourhood?

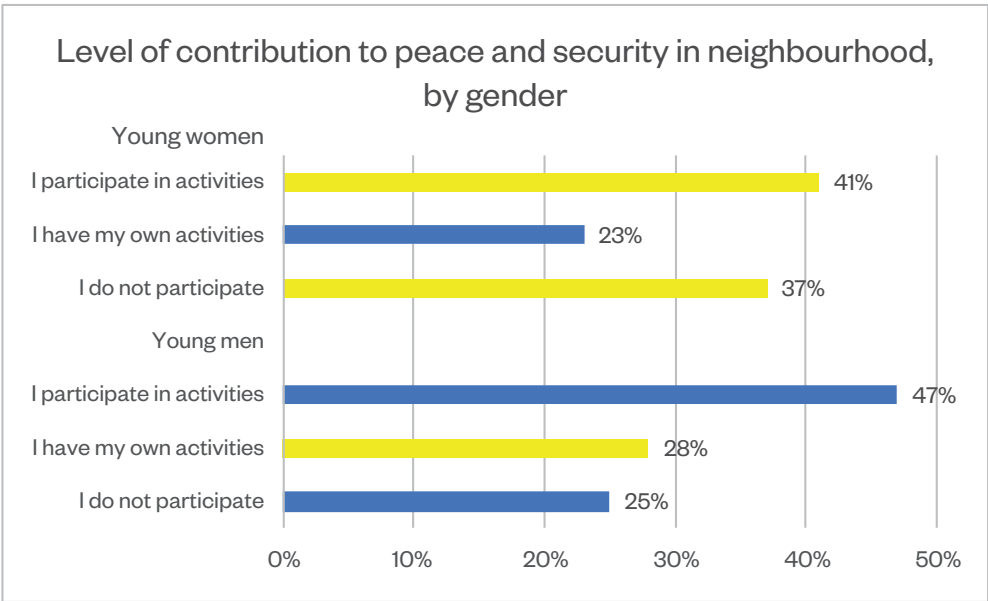


6415 respondents out of 6852 surveyed
Source: <https://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

It should also be noted that young women (25%) state that they are less engaged than men (37%). This result confirms the dynamics observed during the identification and mobilization phases for this study³⁷. Although we have not been able to include

an explanation for this phenomenon in the study, it is important to take this factor – poor engagement levels of young women – into account when designing peace and security initiatives.

Table 7 Level of contribution to peace and security in neighbourhood, by gender



Source : <https://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

³⁷ See introduction.

These U-Report results reveal that a large number of young people consulted appear to have launched peace and security initiatives in Côte d’Ivoire. On the other hand, it is impossible to exclude from this analysis the possible bias of some young people surveyed to present themselves in a positive light. But even if these results should be analysed with a measure of prudence, it is established that a large number of young participants in the focus groups and participatory video play a more or less positive role for peace and security in their neighbourhoods. The youth should therefore be recognized as important actors for peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire and their negative image should be somewhat questioned. So, what is the nature of these peace and security initiatives quoted by Ivorian youths?

2.1.1 A great variety of initiatives building on the respective competences of the young people involved

Peace and security initiatives implemented by Ivorian youths appear to be very diverse. Nevertheless, a great part of these initiatives involves leisure activities. Sports are an important focus and represent one-third of all activities in which the young U-Reporters claim to take part.

“All of us are aware that sports are a unifying factor, they bring people together. That is why we have created groups to organize maracana tournaments³⁸ as a way of getting the children and adolescents of Abobo Philadelphie to join the football, laughter, and dancing.”³⁹

These youngsters take advantage of these initiatives to begin talking about community conflicts which they are regularly confronted with in various areas of life. They often start out with very popular football tournaments, which never fail to attract crowds of youth, as well as spectators of all age

groups, of all ethnic origins who live together in the neighbourhoods.

“We didn’t wait for the government to do something during the crisis⁴⁰. We organized ECOWAS [CEDEAO] football games, getting people from all the ECOWAS countries together right until the end of the tournament. We solicited the support of parents and community leaders, played the respective national anthems, people really felt part of it all. Community events like this bring together all the communities.”⁴¹

Pursuing the same goal of contributing to peace and security in their varying social spheres, other youths have launched arts and culture initiatives. This category appeals to 18% of young people who participated in the U-Report survey. Collective theatre groups are used by some to pass on their peace and security messages.

“We chose to use theatre collectives as a participatory tool. We staged various productions which were well received by the population, and the people felt that this was about them and they became actors themselves when someone in attendance behaved poorly.”⁴²

Some young people who are interested and knowledgeable about film and video also contribute to projects. Some write screenplays and inject their own experiences into this work. They help the youths understand that they are the actors of their own story and become aware that it is up to them to change their behaviour.

“What I do in the area of movies for peace and security is first of all to write screenplays which help young people to understand the harmful nature of crises and insecurity.”⁴³

This use of leisure activities as a vector aside, there are a number of initiatives directly concern security.

³⁸ Five-a-side football (soccer) game.
³⁹ Leader of a youth association, Port-Bouët, video interview, July 2017
⁴⁰ The 2011 post-electoral crisis
⁴¹ Young politician, Bingerville, video interview, July 2017
⁴² Artist, Yopougon, video interview, July 2017
⁴³ Film-maker, Abobo, video interview, July 2017

Youths believe that in view of the growing sense of insecurity in their neighbourhoods and public spaces (beaches, terrace restaurants, markets), due to the rise in violent adolescent gang activity (so-called “microbes”), there is a need for alternative community-based security (“vigilante” self-defense groups) to be put in place with significant youth participation. According to the responses received by the U-Report survey, 15% of youth peace and security initiatives are specifically neighbourhood security-related.

“We assist the beach guards in providing security. Following the post-crisis disarmament, we realized that we could not progress individually. We used the disarmament payment among other things to pay for our identity papers to secure our legal status. It’s four years now that there has been no violence here.”⁴⁴

Pursuing the same objective but using different methods, other youths address security concerns in a different way, using discreet – non-stigmatizing – individual mentoring to draw young delinquents away from violent activities.

“I wanted to help my younger brother, and in doing so I was able to help four other youths to quit their delinquent, violent activities.”⁴⁵

According to the U-Report survey, 17% of youth’s state that most of the initiatives in which they participate are dialogue-oriented, thus facilitating the reconciliation among the community and especially the young people.

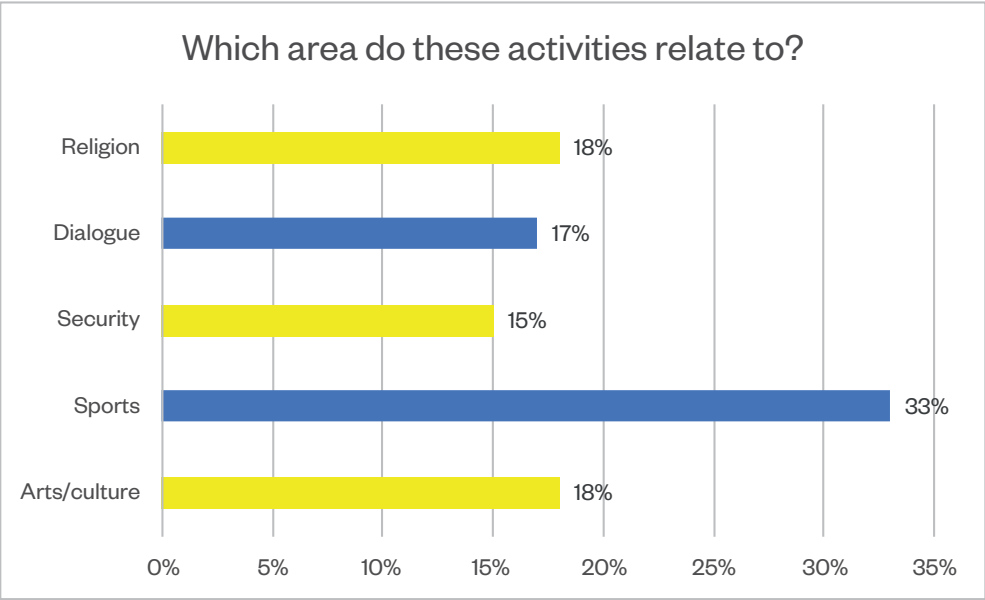
“The initiatives for peace and security which I lead together with the community aim to organize dialogue and thereby reinforce the way in which they connect to one another.”⁴⁶

Secondly, these initiatives show their youth peers how to make demands without resorting to violence.

“I founded the school Zero Violence club after witnessing a series of violent incidents in my school. We advocate peace and security and people have now begun to understand.”⁴⁷

Some awareness raising initiatives have a religious background. 18% of youths surveyed during the

Table 8 Which area do these activities relate to?



5601 respondents out of 6039 surveyed. Source: <https://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

44 Civil war veteran, Port-Bouët, video interview, July 2017
45 Leader of local association, Yopougon, video interview, July 2017
46 Leader of a local association, Port-Bouët, video interview, July 2017
47 Student, Abobo, video interview, July 2017

U-Report survey state that they generally participate in religion-related awareness raising activities with frequent involvement of religious leaders.

Generally speaking, it appears that within these diverse “worlds” of Ivorian youths who participated in this study, there is a significant engagement for peace and security. A profile analysis of initiative leaders shows that these young people chose the nature of their initiatives according to the competence they have. Civil war veterans and former “microbes” are the most strongly engaged in favour of community security. High school and university students show a preference for collective activities, such as theatre, dance or video. Young political and community leaders, on the other hand, privilege sports and community awareness raising, which reach out to a larger group of people. While this proves the diversity of activities depending on youths’ “worlds”, their narratives have in common a sense of satisfaction in talking about their peace and security activities.

2.1.2 The youths are convinced of the relevance and success of their initiatives

Asked about results, many of the youths consulted for this study consider their initiatives to be successful, as they claim to have reached their different target groups.

“Some initiatives [by other organizations] have made some impact but cannot be considered to have been successful because they only reached a small number of people. The majority of the target group did not see an improvement and was not affected by the program’s implementation. On the other hand, a number of personal initiatives (in schools, student clubs etc.) did meet with success because they were less ambitious and corresponded to their target’s expectations.”⁴⁸

48 Artist, Abobo, focus group, July 2017.
49 Film-maker, Abobo, video interview, July 2017
50 Student, Abobo, video interview, July 2017
51 Artist, Yopougon, video interview, July 2017
52 Leader of a local association, Port-Bouët, video interview, July 2017
53 Member of neighbourhood vigilante group, Abobo, video interview, July 2017

These initiatives have also been able to allow to communicate on the understanding of peace and security problems in their environment, sometimes going as far as awareness raising among the youths.

“The impact of my videos is that they show an understanding of the real problem.”⁴⁹

“Sensitization has had an effect, there is no longer any violence in schools and protests [strikes] are peaceful.”⁵⁰

Consequently, many youths who participated in this study, seeing the positive results of their activities in consolidating peace and reinforcing security in their daily environment, consider their past initiatives to have been successful.

“[Thanks to the theatre collective] we have seen a return to peaceful behaviour.”⁵¹

“[Following the dialogue] one can observe that people who used to be sceptical now have a closer relationship.”⁵²

“We put this [‘vigilante’ group] into place to ensure peace and security. Today we can see very positive results as we have been able to find work for children who had no direction [delinquents]. They have better guidance thanks to an established framework. Parents all want to be part of the program.”⁵³

Listening to them talk about their initiatives, one realizes that youths show much passion in each of their “worlds”. Nearly all of them are convinced of the relevance and positive impacts on peace and security their activities have had in their immediate environment. Nevertheless, sometimes this intimate conviction prevents them from taking a critical view of their initiatives, which would enable them to improve their quality and enhance the more positive evolution of peace and security in their environment.

2.1.3 Youths contribute to small-scale improvements, “where they live”

One of the results of this study is the recognition of youths’ active contribution to peace and security through their own initiatives. However, it is important to realize that their effects are mostly limited to the local level, reaching only the immediate environment or the neighbourhood sub-division.

From the youths’ point of view, the logic of their interventions is valid. They state that they feel less legitimate and frequently less competent to tackle certain other problems, such as security concerns, which go beyond the local level.

“Beyond football tournaments and such there are a lot of things we can’t deal with (crack houses⁵⁴, transport unions⁵⁵ etc.). We are on our own, so we do whatever we can.”⁵⁶

In their opinion, these societal challenges are for the government to take on. Young people consulted in this study see the government support as a condition for the sustainability of their initiatives beyond their immediate environment. The absence of support by the State authorities is seen as an obstacle for youths’ initiatives for peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire.

«As long as there is no support from the Government, how can youths contribute anything to peace?»⁵⁷

Some youths who are aware of this state of affairs join peace and security initiatives supported by national and international institutions. How do they contribute to these initiatives which are not of their own invention?

54 Spaces for drug consumption
55 So-called transport unions collect a tax from private operators pretexting regulation of the sector. Essentially composed of violent youths, these organizations are considered to be a threat to peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire.
56 Young Muslim, Abobo, focus group, August 2017
57 Young Muslim, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
58 By State actors we mean ministries and institutions placed under their supervision, and decentralized authorities (municipal), Ivorian and international civil society organizations involved in peace and security issues in Côte d’Ivoire.
59 Office for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Veterans
60 Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission
61 Unit for Coordination, Monitoring and Reintegration of so-called “microbes”
62 Police security operation in neighbourhoods with “microbes” activity

2.2 Initiatives launched by others: youths are a highly demanded target group

An essential aspect of the engagement of Ivorian youth in peace and security issues addressed by this study is the contribution of youths to initiatives launched by State and non-state actors⁵⁸. After decades of socio-political crisis which have been toxic for peace and security, these two types of actors have devoted themselves to rebuilding peace and security. Having been doubly perceived as one of the main actors in this deteriorating crisis, both as perpetrators of violence and victims of its collateral effects, youths have now been targeted by numerous initiatives. The State has thus formally become the leading actor of reconstruction, putting into place a number of institutions (ADDR⁵⁹, CDVR⁶⁰, CCSR⁶¹) and launching initiatives through its Ministries (indemnity of civil war victims, Operation Epervier⁶², reintegration of so-called “microbes”). It is noteworthy that subsequently civil society organizations created further initiatives to support Ivorian youth strongly stigmatized as actors of violence in the post-crisis environment. So how did youths integrate these initiatives? What do these initiatives offer?

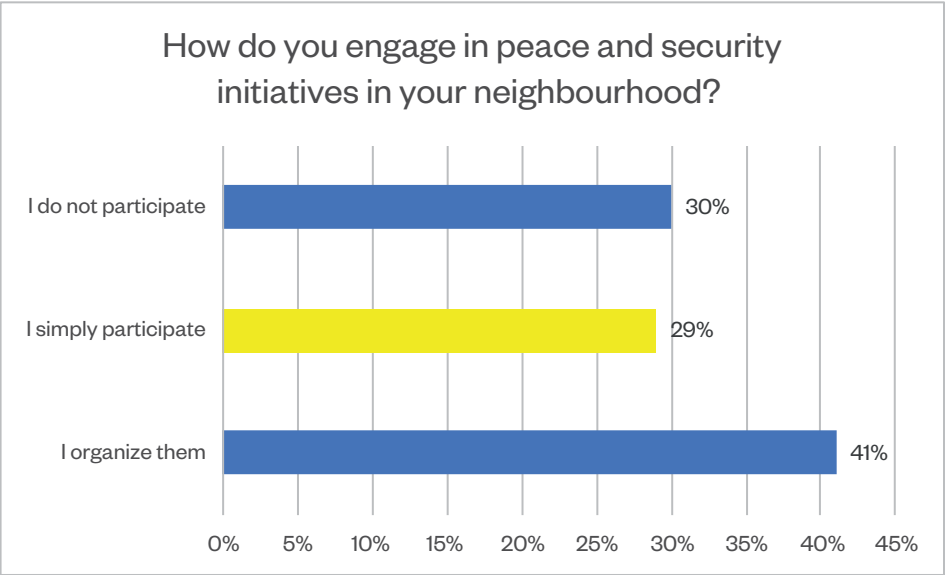
2.2.1 In general youths see themselves associated

In general, youths engaged in this study were able to show that in all its diversity Ivorian youth is an essential actor in the implementation of peace and security initiatives launched by other actors such as the Government and Ivorian or international civil society. Conscious that they are an important target group of these initiatives, they declare that they are generally well-associated in them.

In the U-Report survey, only a small section of youths (3 out of 10 surveyed) stated that they were not associated with peace and security initiatives in their neighbourhood. Accordingly, the majority (7 out of 10) declared that they participated in such initiatives

in one way or another. Moreover, it appears that more youths (4 out of 10) took on a leading role, rather than contenting themselves to simply accompanying activities (3 out of 10).

Table 9 How do you engage in peace and security initiatives in your neighbourhood?

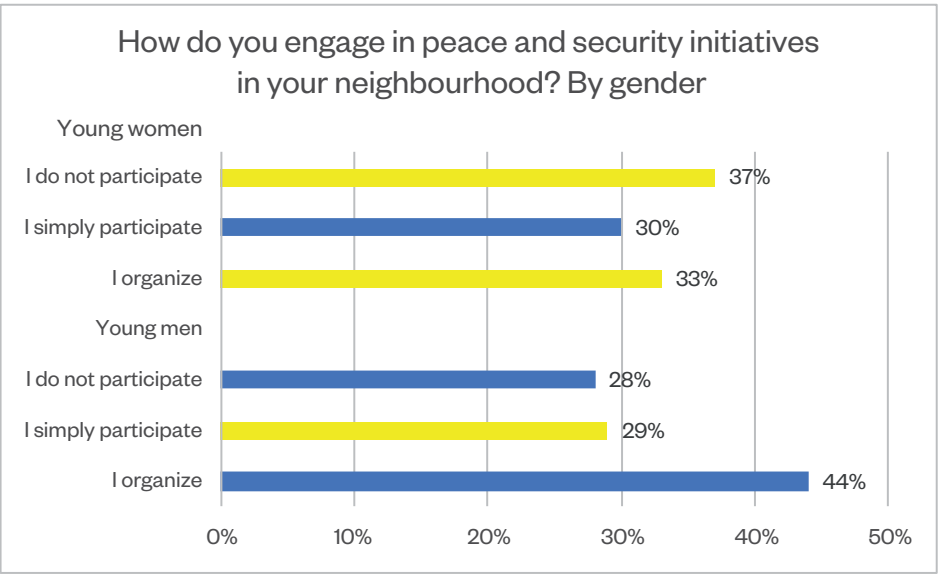


6039 respondents out of 6415 surveyed
Source: <https://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

The dynamic here is similar to other gender-related observations of this report. Young surveyed women tend to show lesser engagement in these initiatives

than young men (37% vs. 28%). And when they do feel included, they more seldom take on an organizing role than young men (33% vs. 44%).

Table 10 How do you engage in peace and security initiatives in your neighbourhood? By gender



Source: <https://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

In summary, the majority of the youths consulted feel that they are integrated into initiatives launched by other institutions and actors in their neighbourhood, although young women feel slightly more left out.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while the U-Report survey respondents were unanimous in quoting their massive engagement in these initiatives, they remain critical of the role they play in them. The young participants in focus group discussions and the participatory video process expressed serious reservations about the quality and timing of their participation (See Part 3).

2.2.2 Initiatives devoted to sensitization and capacity building

When asked to identify peace and security initiatives they had participated in, consulted youth concluded that the initiatives launched by other institutions focused mainly on training and sensitization of their age group.

According to the consulted youths, the widely preferred formal framework for know-how transfer appears to be capacity building workshops. These workshops are organized around matters of peaceful conflict management and peaceful participation in political processes. Participants are awarded completion certificates.

“The Centre [...] has implemented a number of initiatives, including the ‘Phoenix’ project for the renaissance of the political class. The goal was to train youth members of political parties. We decided to reinforce the capacities of these youths who have the ambition to be tomorrow’s political elite. We did succeed in attaining the fixed objective to the point where these youth party members with differing political ideals have since built a network. Today they can talk to each other respectfully.”⁶³

While the initiators of this capacity building framework judge this project to have been efficient in reinforcing youths’ positive contribution to peace thanks to the creation of networks, the young

participants themselves take a more critical view. Expressing themselves in this study, these youths state that these workshops enhance their résumés and help them advance their political careers. However, in their view the contents of these irregular workshops are not easily transferred to concrete action, once they are back to their daily life or organization. These youths thus consider that these training initiatives ultimately have limited impact.

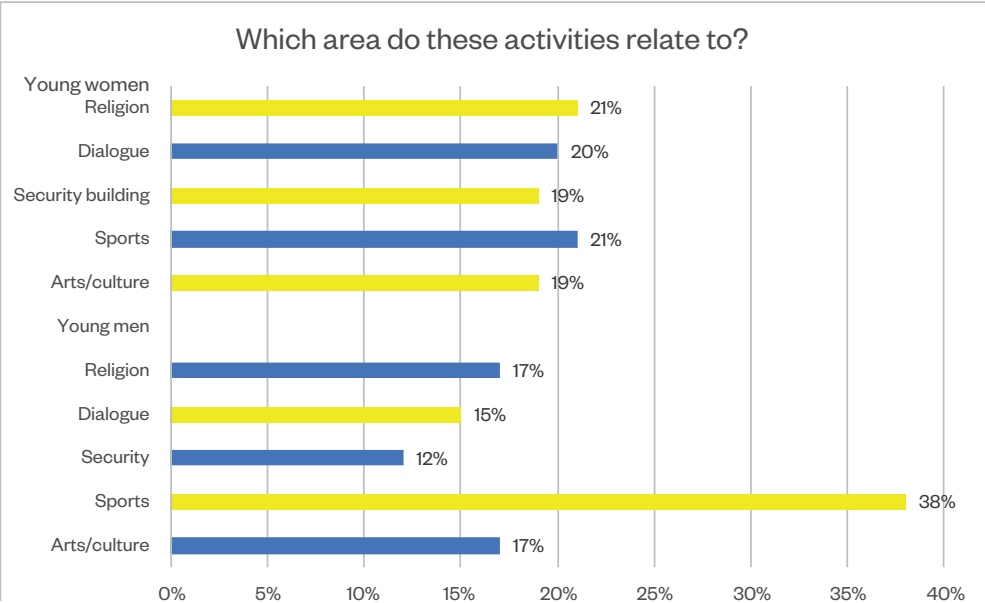
This widely quoted category of initiatives aside, other youths have taken part in mass sensitization activities. Focussing on forgiveness and living together in harmony, these initiatives opened the door to youths’ participation in the national reconciliation process launched by the Government after the 2011 post-electoral crisis. Some of these youths went on to participate in sensitization activities for non-violence leading up to the peaceful elections in 2015.

“Between 2010 and 2015 we toured the country with post-sensitization parades for peace. Participation was reserved for young women and girls so that they could show their engagement for peace in Côte d’Ivoire. We were able to execute these sensitization activities before and after the elections.”⁶⁴

Taking a closer, gender-based look at neighbourhood initiatives which associate youths for peace and security, U-Report reveals that all activities are successful in mobilizing young men and women in fairly equal proportions. The only noteworthy exception are sports activities, which do not categorically exclude young women, but do show significantly lower participation of young women compared to young men (2 out of 10 versus 4 out of 10). Consequently, gender does not appear to be a discriminating factor for youth participation in peace and security activities, but sports tend to privilege male participation.

63 NGO member, Cocody, video interview, July 2017
64 NGO member, Yopougon, video interview, July 2017

Table 11 Which area do these activities relate to? By gender



5601 respondents out of 6039 surveyed
Source: <https://cotedivoire.ureport.in/poll/2183/>

Conclusion: Part Two

Clearly, consulted youths are convinced of the pertinence and the success of many of their personal contributions. With little media coverage, this engagement is largely ignored by the general public. However, in order to ensure the continuity of an

effective and more structural impact by Ivorian youth engagement for peace and security, it is essential that we analyse the limits and positive achievements of this local experience.

EXAMPLES OF THE
CHALLENGES TO YOUTHS'
ENGAGEMENT AND HOW
TO OVERCOME THEM

3



Young people on a traditional wooden boat

PART 3: **EXAMPLES OF THE CHALLENGES TO YOUTHS' ENGAGEMENT AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM**

Thus, many consulted young people consider Ivorian youth to be strongly engaged for peace and security. Above, Part 2 of this paper detailed how, on the one hand, this engagement shows the considerable number of youth-inspired peace and security initiatives, which reflects youths' diversity through sports, arts, dialogue and individual mentoring. On the other hand, youths increasingly invest themselves in peace and security initiatives launched by government institutions and national and international NGOs.

Generally speaking, young study participants consider that engagement for peace and security is a positive thing. For some of them, however, the lack of perceived impact of these initiatives is discouraging. In this section of our report, we shall identify interesting aspects which help not only to understand the challenges but also show how they can be overcome, by highlighting the positive experiences of juvenile engagement.

3.1 The challenges of youths' positive engagement: from improbable collective action to neglected social change

The youth consulted by this study identified a series of major obstacles which in their opinion limit their positive engagement in peace and security initiatives. Firstly, the initiatives launched by youths themselves have difficulties in operating social change. Secondly, youths consider that their contribution to peace and security initiatives launched by diverse institutions and actors who solicit their participation is inadequately recognized.

3.1.1 Youth initiatives have limited capacity to mobilize youths around social change

3.1.1.1 “Brainwashing”: initiatives are more event-oriented rather than targeting psychosocial transformation

In spite of the many initiatives launched and implemented by consulted youths, the peace and security situation in their neighbourhoods and sub-divisions has not shown significant progress. According to the critical views of some participants, this is due to the fact that certain activities essentially focus on group events such as football tournaments, theatre and beach outings. As these events are seen as an occasion for fun and games, with an accent on the sensational or emotional side of things, these activities have a limited impact. According to the consulted youths, these events ignore an essential, impactful component: the individual mentoring capable of initiating psychosocial transformation.

“To impact young minds, we need to position the psychological component at the centre of our activities. If we can use psychology to change the way their minds work, they will become more self-aware and action will follow.”⁶⁵

Another youth from a violent background puts it this way:

“They need their brains washed.”⁶⁶

If insufficient attention is paid to changing the mind-set of youths caught up in the dynamics of violence, these initiatives will have great difficulty in bringing about social change and transforming their non-peaceful and insecure environment.

3.1.1.2 “When we invite others to participate, they do not join”: youth initiatives are weakened by socio-political divides

Some young study participants, talking about the implementation of their own peace and security initiatives, noted the persistent wariness and distrust between youths themselves, particularly apparent in neighbourly relations and in school or university contexts. They point out that these attitudes basically reflect the socio-political divides experienced by Ivorian society as a whole.

“We are unable to find adequate solutions at this time. There is a real moral, psychological crisis. People are wary of one another, nobody wants to go to Abobo, there is no solidarity and people are always wondering about others’ political allegiance. As a result, initiatives cannot take root.”⁶⁷

Youths believe that these socio-political divisions continually feed distrust and the suspicion of hidden agendas behind youth initiatives. This confidence crisis among Ivorian youths is an obstacle to inclusive participation in these initiatives. Consequently, many peace and security initiatives promoted by youths in their neighbourhoods or places of study are regularly boycotted by other youths.

“Everything is politicized. So, when we invite others to participate, they refuse. All our initiatives suffer from boycotts.”⁶⁸

3.1.1.3 “Me first”: individual ambition scores higher than community interest and weakens youth initiatives

Continuing in this self-critical vein when speaking of their peace and security initiatives, young study participants have pin-pointed the role of individual interests and motivations.

According to some youths, leaders of youth movements are more interested in their personal advancement than in the community concerns.

Instead of considering community peace and security or society’s interests as the top priority, these leaders are primarily interested by their personal political ambition or social ranking. In effect, in their social environment, to lead a youth movement is to enjoy a certain degree of legitimacy. And obviously this position gives them occasion to regularly solicit the support of political operators and civil society leaders with similar initiatives.

“You don’t become the leader of a youth association by chance. You are faced in that direction by people who support you. When you propose a project, it is these people who give you the framework. Otherwise you stand no chance.”⁶⁹

There is some indication that even beyond the leaders, other young members are sometimes also part of the game of putting their personal interests above the goals of the peace and security initiatives. The following story told by a youth association leader illustrates this:

“They no longer come to meetings if they’re not given transport money, even if they can get the money on their own.”⁷⁰

In other words, some youngsters will participate in initiatives only if they can make an individual gain. According to the consulted youth, this sort of attitude or motivation is detrimental to the social change objective of their initiatives.

“Youngsters participate for the money. The initiative can’t work that way when they don’t understand what it is really about.”⁷¹

From the youth’s point of view, it seems reasonable to point out that a fair number of Ivorian youth associations engaged in peace and security face a veritable crisis of civic engagement. Consequently, some of these associations feel incapable of attracting an increasing number of fully motivated members and of uniting their different initiatives for greater impact.

“How can we draw more young people to these initiatives, get them to put their egos and parochial interests aside, if they really want peace? One needs to put small issues to the side and pull together, that is put the general interest of Côte d’Ivoire above personal interests.”⁷²

3.1.2 Third-party initiatives call upon youths without offering recognition or ensuring ownership

3.1.2.1 “Work force”: Youths are not included in the design process of initiatives

Youths who shared their opinions during focus groups or the participatory video were adamant that youths are not included in the design of peace and security initiatives launched by other institutions. In the words of one young women:

“The government initiatives [...] did not seek to speak to young people. Youths were not included in developing their project. They decide all about the initiatives at the top level and then pushes them onto youths, who are not included from the outset. We have [UN] resolution 2250, we need to include youths in conflict resolution and other issues. Currently they are implementing peace and security platforms. But how many youth associations have actually been invited to participate in these government initiatives? An issue which involves youths must be treated at youth level from the start. »⁷³

This state of affairs has led some youths to the conclusion that these initiatives are simply a “game” or “play”.

“They devise these things at the top level and then they ask the youngsters to join in, ‘to do the work’. It’s like ‘a play’.”⁷⁴

65 Artist, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
66 Former “microbe”, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
67 Young Muslim, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
68 Student union leader, Cocody, focus group, July 2017

69 Student union leader, Cocody, focus group, July 2017
70 Women’s group leader, Treichville, video interview, July 2017
71 Show-business personality (coupé-décalté), Abobo, focus group, July 2017
72 Student union leader, Cocody, focus group, August 2017
73 NGO member, Port-Bouët, focus group, July 2017
74 NGO member, Port-Bouët, focus group, July 2017

The non-participation of youths in the design of many initiatives is seen as an obstacle to them owning these projects. Yet others take a more nuanced view. For some participants, such as this young woman, one should critically question the youths’ responsibility in changing the dynamics:

*“The initiatives are designed for implementation and we are called upon to pilot them, but I would not want to be too critical. They provide the guidelines, but we have our own way of doing things, which we can adapt. It’s true that they come up with these initiatives and ask us to take over, [but] when the ball is in our half it’s up to us to use it properly, it’s our job to improve things. We have to be actual actors to carry the initiative through.”*⁷⁵

Nevertheless, in the course of discussions, a large number of youths consulted insisted upon their remarks. They stressed that they believe that most peace and security initiatives launched by national and international institutions do not engage fully with the changing realities in the field, because they have not been asked to participate in their design.

*“These initiatives do not include youths’ concerns. For the NGOs, young people are just a work force. [...] The project programs are empty. They have no bearing on reality in the field.”*⁷⁶

The poor adaptation of these initiatives to sociological reality and youths’ needs make them less effective, and it actually hinders true ownership.

3.1.2.2 “Road blockers”: initiatives do not include youths capable of truly changing things

Criticism of ownership of peace and security initiatives aside, the study revealed that youths also see the targeting of participants as a problem.

“A whole lot of things have been done, but not at the right place. Things remain up there, are decided at the mayor’s office, where you have to be well-dressed

*to be able to go there. The NGOs are afraid of tackling the problem and remain in the background, managing things. So, the real violent perpetrators are never targeted.”*⁷⁷

As our young study participants point out, these initiatives are rarely led by people who have a good knowledge of realities in the field. This is why for some initiatives these people subcontract the recruitment of young participants locally with intermediaries who specialize in subverting peace and security initiatives. According to the youths consulted, this effectively creates a local market which operates to defeat many of Côte d’Ivoire’s peace and security programs.

*« The projects are submitted to the mayor’s office [...] where they are sorted. Before reaching the associations and the public, the municipality has decided and contacted the NGOs of their choice. Regardless of whether projects are more or less successful, the implementation actors are always the same. »*⁷⁸

In the grip of local actors who control networks of intermediaries, sometimes using political connections and generally known as “road blockers”, there is an obvious bias affecting the selection of initiatives’ beneficiaries.

*“Those who were invited to participate were young people who had been politicized by the mayor’s office. Someone who belongs to a political party [...] will call a friend who belongs to the same party [...]. Basically, to involve someone of the same political persuasion. Or then someone whom you believe to be ready to join that party. Things are skewed from the outset. This is the main reason for initiatives’ failure.”*⁷⁹

This means that a large number of youth participants do not join because they want to contribute to the spirit of peace and security initiatives, but because they have been suggested by the people who control these networks. In effect, according to the youths

consulted the majority of these programs do not actually recruit youths potentially capable of individual change or of having a positive impact on other youths in their environment.

3.1.2.3 “Play-acting”: some initiatives are seen to be money-making schemes

Such errors in design and the targeting of youth participants contribute to the negative light in which youths see these initiatives. Their general view is that national and international initiatives are just big machines that come in to spend vast budgets without any real vision of youths’ realities.

*“We don’t have the time for this, we feel that these guys come here so they can collect their money (NGOs), play out their sensitization scenario, just for the money. Their approach to youths is play-acting, so nobody believes in that anymore.”*⁸⁰

As youths themselves point out, this is how the marketplace for financial profit is set up around the issue of peace and security. Within this marketplace, many youths join into the game by participating in the implementation of such initiatives while keeping their eye on personal gain. Their engagement is not based on a desire for social change, they have other motivations. Consequently, ownership of these programs is poor. Unanimous in their view of the negative role and the large share of responsibility of Ivorian youth in these dynamics, these young consulted insist that the money-based approach does not have the expected impact (see section 3.1.1.3).

*“Sensitization should not focus on spending money but should target the streets, where the culprits are. You can’t wash out their heads with money.”*⁸¹

80 Young Muslim, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
81 Former “microbe”, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
82 Unemployed person, Cocody, focus group, July 2017

3.2 Some examples of positive contributions: from appreciation to structural transformation

However, while identifying the limitations of a great number of peace and security initiatives, the consulted youths also pointed out other initiatives they would consider as positive and which could be qualified as good practice and an inspiration for positive youth engagement in peace and security issues in Côte d’Ivoire.

3.2.1 Individual mentoring of so-called violent youths to help them take responsibility for their community

The consultations conducted for this study revealed that the individual mentoring approach in dealing with so-called violent youths mobilized in a number of peace and security initiatives succeeded in cultivating confidence and open minds.

*“With the young Gardiens de la paix [Peace Keepers] we tried to put ourselves in the position of endangered and violent youths, we kept up a dialogue, tried to understand them and make them more self-aware. We had some success.”*⁸²

When mentoring is accompanied by development of the sense of responsibility, which positions youths as actors with agency, it contributes to gradual growth of these youths’ self-confidence, the belief that they can make it. This has led some youths caught within the dynamics of violence to initiate their individual transformation.

“I was fortunate to work in a school in Côte d’Ivoire. I saw a lot of violence, particularly on the part of young adolescents. I created a closer relationship with these children in particular. I listened to them to understand their motives. That’s how I realized that for a start they were not taken

75 Association leader, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
76 Show business personality (coupé-décalfé), Abobo, focus group, July 2017
77 Ex- microbe, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
78 ‘Vigilante’ committee member, Abobo, focus group, July 2017
79 Show-business actor (coupé-décalfé), Abobo, focus group, July 2017

seriously at home. I took four of them in hand, counselling them, giving them psychological advice. Today they have passed their junior secondary diplomas and they are appreciated. »⁸³

An added advantage is that when the mentored youth plays an important role in his/her peer group, this individual can become a model and influence his/her friends. Once the process of individual transformation is under way, these “reformed” youths can associate and engage for the good of the community, demonstrating their will to change.

*“I wanted to help my little brother and together with him I’ve been able to help four youngsters to quit their delinquent, violent behaviour. Today these youths have all apprenticed. Our neighbourhood is secure because they have organized into a self-defence group which patrols the area regularly.”*⁸⁴

Its potential transformative socio-psychological impact aside, mentoring is a more advantageous approach for young people who support peace and security initiatives. It is less costly than training workshops, mass sensitization (enhancing visibility through T-shirt distribution), music, dance or sports events, which all require financial means. Mentoring only requires mentors to devote sufficient time to their mentees. Generally speaking, this approach eliminates the financial obstacles which hinder youths in working for peace and security in the Ivorian context.

3.2.2 The tandem approach of community well-being and appreciation of engaged youths can overcome the appeal of material gain

While many local youth-supported peace and security initiatives are seen to be stained by the quest for individual financial gain, other initiatives show that engagement for the good of the community is facilitated when the community shows its appreciation. One example is the initiative of a community “vigilante” group⁸⁵ in an Abobo sub-division.

*“Well, what we have observed is that this has been very good for the neighbourhood, because after everything that investors had been hearing, today we have a bakery which we didn’t have before. There is a hospital nearby and a pharmacy is under construction. People realize now that it is possible to invest in our neighbourhood”*⁸⁶

According to the youths in this group, the successful engagement for peace and security lies foremost in the fact that although the initiative is a youth project, it has prioritized the community’s needs, contributing to building a safer community environment. As stated by the young people consulted, prior to their initiative the community encountered security problems with recurrent violence imputed to the so-called “microbes” gangs. Because of these aggressions and due to a powerless police force, economic activity had slowed down considerably throughout the community and everybody felt threatened. This is what prompted the community’s youths and elders to create an initiative which would be in charge of community security.

“After the [post-electoral] crisis, a new security threat popped up, what we now call children in conflict with the law. Here in Adobo, in a neighbourhood called [...], one Sunday we witnessed a scene that you really have to be able to stomach, otherwise you can’t watch it. One of our friends was chopped to death with a machete. And this with police looking on. After that, one of the community elders called a meeting with the neighbourhood’s

*youths. And he organized a group to defend the neighbourhood against attackers. This is how the community ‘vigilante’ group was founded.”*⁸⁷

From these youths’ point of view, the success of this initiative relied upon the community’s degree of appreciation.

They point out that the initiative earned the support from all of the neighbourhood’s communities, because they shared a common concern. Consequently, in spite of their young age, those who participated in the initiative felt empowered by this appreciation and moral recognition. The sentiment provided sufficient motivation for them to look beyond any individual financial gain.

*“The fact is that the initiative was well received all around. All of the community leaders, our families and local business owners supported us because they believed in our work. As for the baker, he gave us bread every night. We were congratulated, so we were proud to be working for the community, people had not been able to go to the mosque or to church, not even to the market. So, we didn’t think about money, we were not paid.”*⁸⁸

Also, one of the essential features of this positive contribution to peace and security was the diverse background of participating youths. The strong legitimacy enjoyed by the group’s “leader” within the community enabled them to bridge the ethnic and political divides and to include a large number of the community’s youths.

“Everybody in the neighbourhood appreciates our big brother. After the crisis, people in the neighbourhood were split. But he paid no attention to that. For the fasting period [Ramadan] he buys sugar and gives it to those who can’t afford it. At Christmas, he hands out chicken. He does not care about [the distinction of] Muslims and Christians. He is welcomed everywhere. So, every time he plans something [and initiates an activity], people take

part. He is open towards young people, in contrast to some of the others in the neighbourhood, who may have [more] and are older than him. This is why, when he called upon youths to participate in the neighbourhood ‘vigilante’ group, all the youths [...] felt they needed to respond, because people said to themselves that if this guy was doing this, whenever he takes the lead [and initiates an activity], it is going to be a good thing to be part of.”

Thanks to all these conditions, which youths feeling themselves considered and fulfilled, a calmer climate returned to the neighbourhood and social change was generated purely through voluntary participation.

*“We created this movement for peace and security. Today the result is very positive, because we have found work for the rudderless children”*⁸⁹. *A solid support structure gives them better guidance. Everybody wants to be part of this.”*⁹⁰

3.2.3 Conciliation of structural transformation with long-term self-fulfilment

The experience of a start-up company specializing in political marketing, which was consulted in the course of this study, supports the idea that youths’ individual advancement is compatible with structural change. The start-up’s premise is that to achieve peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire, society needs to introduce a new generation of politically interested young people to participate in governance. Thus, its objective is the transformation of the Ivorian political class by introducing and positioning a new generation in the political arena.

“The objective of our agency is to provide a framework for youths to engage in political activity throughout the country. Things like developing a strategy, positioning themselves, presenting their ideas for a political launch. We want to be an innovative agency, we want to introduce youths to

83 Educator, Abobo, video interview, July 2017
84 “Vigilante” committee member, Abobo, video interview, July, Yopougon, video interview, July 2017
85 A form of alternative security-related community response observed in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Abidjan.
86 “Vigilante” committee member, Abobo, video interview, July 2017

87 “Vigilante” committee member, Abobo, history study group, July 2017
88 “Vigilante” committee member, Abobo, history study group, July 2017
89 Violence-prone young people, so-called “microbes”
90 “Vigilante” committee member, Abobo, history study group, July 2017

politics in a different way. We provide them with tools, with the basics for a healthier approach to politics.”⁹¹

With this in mind, the start-up designed a training format for youths to learn how to make rational political choices, analyse political discourse, providing individual regular guidance to protect these youths from all sorts of manipulation by political leaders.

“We offer individual mentoring. Youths approach us individually and we try to orient them in the best possible way, pointing them to the best channels for spreading their message to the politically interested. We teach them how to use social network messaging. We show them how to understand, how to analyse political discourse. Because a better understanding of what politicians say enables youths to make better choices.”⁹²

This is all part of the objective of providing Ivorian youths with a method of owning peace and security issues through political engagement.

“We provide youths with free training, a step to making them see that the important thing is not their personal gain, but the good of the nation. When you have politicians educated in this way, you can see an evident impact on peace and security because in our countries it is the politicians who give out the orders that lead youths to engage in violence.”⁹³

At the same time, through these initiatives youths who sign up for the long term learn how to take care of their financial needs.

“We decided not to ask youths to pay any fees. First, we train them. And as they gradually enter the political stage, we will be able to access other markets for our activities. Like all businesses, we have activities which generate profit, but always in relation to peace and security.”⁹⁴

To summarize, on the one hand this start-up has the long-term goal of transforming the political stage by changing youths’ political engagement via a combination of training and individual mentoring. On the other hand, it shows these positively engaged youths how to acquire financial independence by working for peace and security while avoiding the pitfalls of letting personal gain take precedence. Young people consulted by this study consider this initiative as a positive contribution of Ivorian youths to peace and security.

Conclusion: Part Three

These observations of the Ivorian context show that thanks to home-grown initiatives and engagement with initiatives launched by national and international institutions, Ivorian youth manifests its desire to take on existing peace and security concerns. While this is doubtlessly a positive contribution, this desire nevertheless encounters enormous challenges. In large part, this is due to the fact that youths do not experience empowerment nor receive any mark of appreciation when engaging in many peace and security programs. Socio-political divides and a very real crisis of civil engagement further limit the efficacy of a number of initiatives. However, in order to ensure the continuity of local resilience for peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire, it is essential that Ivorian youth relaunch its engagement to this end by taking inspiration from a number of successful initiatives, while always seeking the support of public authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4

91 Start-up founder, Yopougon, video interview, July 2017
92 Start-up cofounder Yopougon, video interview, July 2017
93 Co-fondateur de start-up, Yopougon, consultation vidéo, Juillet 2017
94 Start-up cofounder, Yopougon, video interview, Juillet 2017

PART 4: RECOMMENDATIONS



Youth participants of the Participatory Video workshop filming during their fieldwork



4.1 Better understanding diversity to engage those youths with true potential for furthering peace

1. Understanding the specific constraints and opportunities for peace in different “youth worlds”

Peace and security initiatives which involve youths must **identify the different “worlds”** which condition actions to be undertaken, that is the different social spheres in which they move (e.g. student unions, transportation syndicates, religious organizations; see Annex on Abidjan). Taking into account this heterogeneity, initiatives must recognize the **specific constraints and opportunities of each of these “worlds”**. In this manner, the positive potential of each youth “world” can be mobilized through appropriate actions. Differentiated, in-depth analysis is thus a necessary step for all peace and security initiatives involving young people. Of course, this should not obscure the fact that each individual within these « worlds » has his/her specificities.





2. Identifying the violent young people most apt to abandon violence and become role models to transform their peers

Identification of violent youths liable to become actors of change is an essential step for the success of youth-supported peace and security initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire.

First of all, initiatives must ensure that the solicited youths really have a violent background. Then it is important to identify the individuals who are most motivated to abandon violence. Finally, it is essential to provide these individuals with close support to enable them to act as role models and influence their peers to join them on the path to transformation.

It is thus essential that for such initiatives the **identification of violent youths capable of facilitating change is understood and designed as an activity in itself**, with its own appropriate resources.

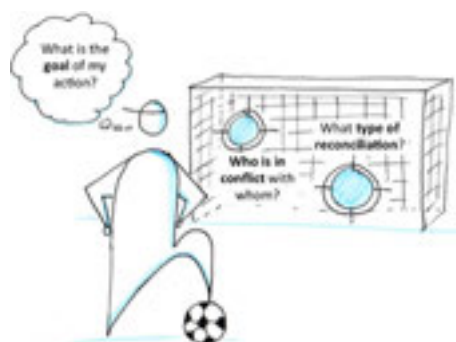


4.2 Reinforcing youths' capacities to improve their contribution to peace

3. *Football for peace?* Defining explicit targets and objectives for each initiative

Many initiatives which target youths, or which are launched by youths themselves focus on events of leisure activities (e.g. football tournaments, theatre groups). These initiatives aim to work for peace and security based on the supposition that these events will automatically break down barriers, but this is not always the case.

In order to increase the effectiveness of their contribution to peace and security, **they must set themselves specific objectives for transformation**. The following key questions can help to define these objectives: (1) **Who are the conflicting parties** and who should therefore be specifically targeted by the event? (2) **What kind of reconciliation** do you wish to achieve, i.e. are the conflicted parties to engage in dialogue, get to know each other, or work together? Taking into account the answers to these questions, a football tournament or any other activity can actually be used to contribute to consolidating peace and preventing violence.



4. *Barometer of social cohesion:* Improving the quality of an action by better analysis of conflict dynamics

Even when youths endeavour to clearly understand the conflict dynamics and its target groups in the attempt to improve the quality of their peace and security activities, they do not always have the necessary analytical information on structural dynamics of conflict. Therefore, we must develop and **provide the tools capable of explaining the main structural conflict dynamics** which impact their areas of activity.

One such tool, repeatedly referred to in the course of the consultations, is a barometer which regularly measures the degree of social cohesion in areas singled out for consolidation of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire. This **barometer of social cohesion will provide the indicators youths can refer to in designing and evaluating their contribution** to peace and security. Moreover, this barometer will evidence the evolution of peace and security in individual areas, informing the assessment of initiatives' collective impact.

5. *Know-how for peace:* Engaging youths in the design of peace initiatives

Many peace and security initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire declare that they want young people to be at the centre of their activities but in reality only employ youths as an implementation work force to carry out their predefined program. If youths are really to be considered as participants in peace and security, initiatives **must involve youths in the project design phase**.

This upstream involvement will ensure that initiatives are reality-driven and will make them more effective. More importantly, youths who participate in project design will have hands-on training and will reinforce their capacity to design and implement future peace and security initiatives. Following this experience, **youths** will be able to design their own initiatives with greater autonomy and impact.





4.3 Reinforcing youths' legitimacy as actors for peace

6. **"We young people have something to say": Creating a space for dialogue on peace between youths and their elders**

When dealing with conflict and insecurity issues linked to Ivorian youth, one must absolutely understand the dominant role (positive or negative) of other community actors who are perceived as elders of society (e.g. politicians, gang leaders, local business successes, teachers, etc).

As this study has shown, youth-led peace and security initiatives are largely subject to the political and identity-related tensions which have characterized Ivorian society over the past two decades. These fault lines are stressed and reopened by a number of society's elders and instrumentalized by political parties and youth associations, determining support and non-support of peace initiatives. This has nurtured mutual youths' distrust.

This attitude surfaces when a group of young people launches an initiative for peace and security with the goal of uniting youths. Certain groups frequently refuse their participation because they consider the initiative to be under the influence of a particular political orientation or a social group. Consequently, this limits the impact of youths' peace and security initiatives, because they are not successful in attracting participants with diverging political and identitarian allegiances.

Thus, it is essential that all initiatives targeting youths plan to provide a **space for dialogue and direct cooperation between youths and their social elders if they expect to influence these dynamics which hinder the engagement of young Ivorians for peace and security.**

This direct, intergenerational dialogue should be designed to **strengthen youths' legitimacy, responsibility and recognition when discussing peace and security concerns with their elders.** This will reinforce their status as fully-fledged actors for peace and security in society, especially considering that the majority of youths are from communities where their voice is rarely heard in the decision-making process.



4.4. Giving recognition to the role model of youths working for peace

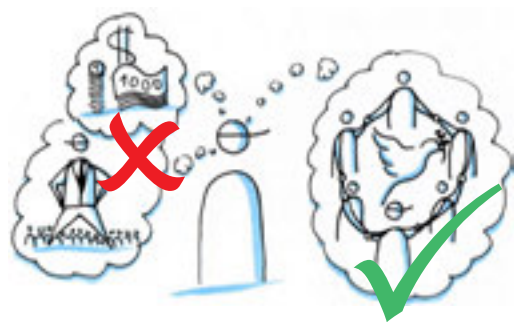
7. **Never say never: Make the community accept the image of youths capable of renouncing violence**

Ivorian youths with a background in violence who contemplate taking up alternative routes of social reintegration are faced with a quite difficult transition. It is not an easy undertaking to break free from gang violence, shed violent behaviour and learn to reconstruct oneself in harmony with a newly adopted lifestyle. It is the support (or indifference) of family and community which largely determine the success of this transition. The fact is that due to their violent past image, most of these youths continue to suffer from stigmatization.

If their transition is to be a success, their communities must be able to deconstruct the negative image about these youths which they have carried over from their violent past. To this end, initiatives which integrate (formerly) violent youths would do best to **contribute to the promotion of youths who are presenting themselves in a positive image, more specifically as role models of repented violent youths, willing and able to reintegrate society.**

In time, the community will realize that these transformed youths can provide leverage for better strategies in the fight against youth violence. Many of these positive role models, when benefitting from appropriate mentoring, are able to transmit the desire and the courage to change to those youths who for the time being remain a part of gang violence (see Recommendation 2).





8. ***“I’m committed to serving others”***: Promoting civic engagement thanks to youths in the service of peace

A considerable number of Ivorian youths engaged in these peace and security initiatives wish to improve the situation of their community, neighbourhood or society in general.

However, when they attempt to recruit more youths in view of expanding their activities, they are confronted with young people who have a greater interest in personal gain than in the welfare of their community. They seek to imitate the currently dominant model of success in Ivorian society and therefore join peace and security initiatives in the hope of “money” trickling down or to increase their social or political capital (acquiring the title of “chairman” or “secretary” of an association or NGO).

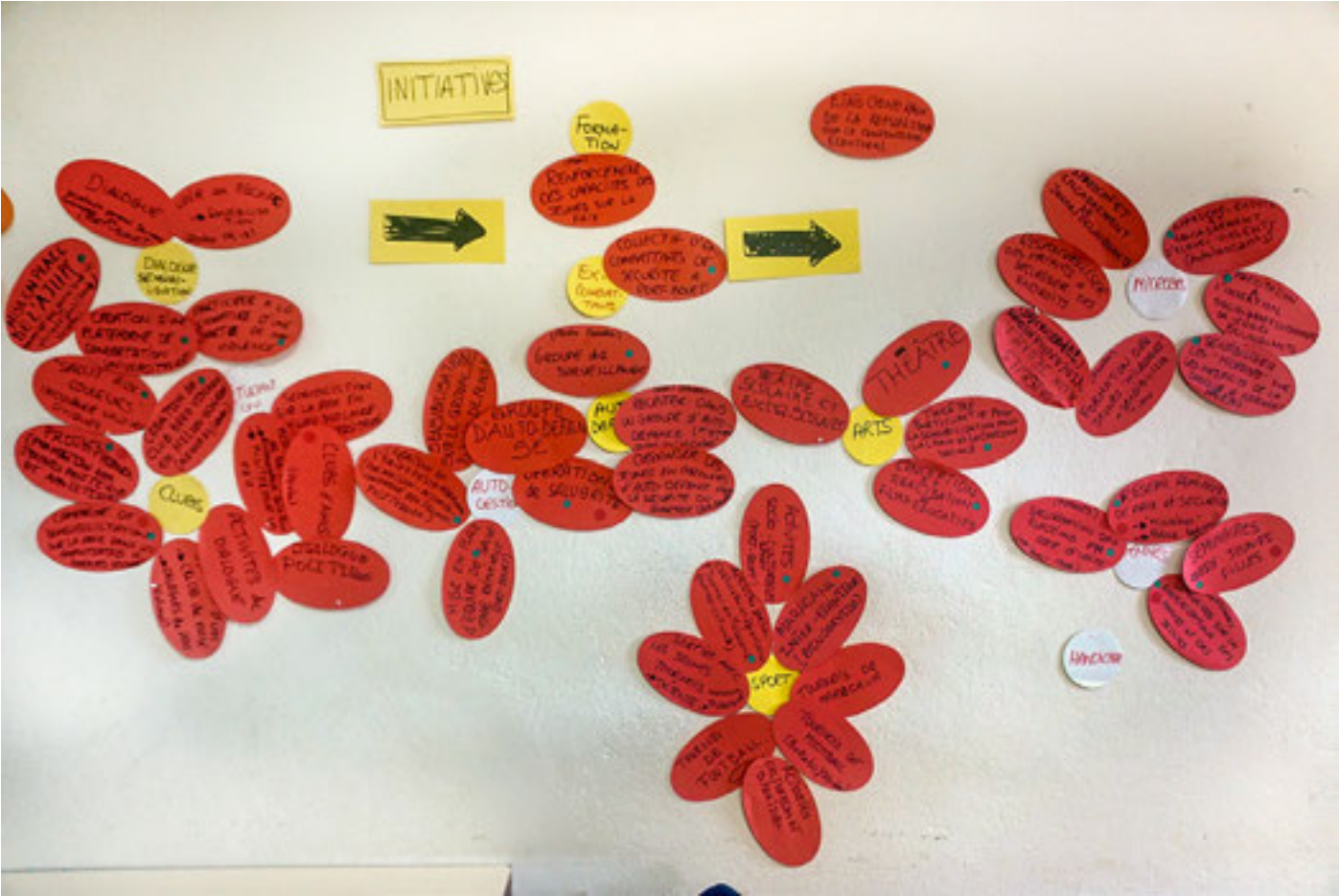
If they want to change this dynamic, youth-led initiatives or those working with youths must **promote youths who commit to peace initiatives in the service of the community and not for personal gain, thereby reinforcing the model of civic engagement**. This would help youths who work for peace and security to involve other youths who are truly motivated by changing the situation.

ANNEXES

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Distribution of youths by social sphere or “world”

Profiles	Justification
Young politician (party or movement ...)	The political class, in particular, politically engaged youths, is very engaged in peace and security-related issues.
Young activist (humanitarian action, association ...)	Activists generally accuse decision-makers of not doing enough for community security. Generally, it is the actors who are involved in peace and security initiatives.
Young ‘fundamentalist’/ ‘engaged’ Muslim (dawa, ansar din, soufi ...)	Individuals in this group are frequently stigmatized and labelled as fundamentalists, extremists whose opinions are seldom taken into account.
Young Christian (catholic, evangelical ...)	An important fringe group, Christian youths are generally considered to be a model of morality (peace)
Young ‘microbe’	Violent youth gangs (children and adolescents) are an urban crime phenomenon. Armed all sorts of blades they roam the streets of lower-class neighbourhoods looking out for people to attack and rob. In Abidjan in particular this category is a real threat to security.
Auxiliary personnel (syndicate, gnambro ...)	In Abidjan in particular this category is a real security threat.
Young student	This sub-group includes potential social, economic and political leaders on their way up.
Unionized pupil / student (FESCI, CEECI...)	Frequent school pupil and student protests are exploited for political purposes.
Unemployed youth	Youth unemployment is a major problem in Côte d’Ivoire. Unemployed youths are often seen as easy prey for political or ideological manipulators.
Young civil war veteran	Côte d’Ivoire has a vast number of young adults who have been part of the army, rebels or militias and now find themselves abandoned by society. This is an important peace and security risk factor.
Young manager or businessman (start up ...)	More and more young managers of businessmen with social awareness get involved in peace and security activities.
Young con artist (‘brouteur’, cyber con operator)	Many unemployed youths are drawn to cyber identity crime, they are considered as a security threat, namely in Abidjan.
Young trend addict (‘coupé-decal’)	A lot of Ivorian youths identify with this urban street style (music, clothing codes, attitudes ...), which is becoming the archetype of Ivorian youth.



Clustering of youth initiatives for peace and security identified during the Participatory Video fieldwork

Annex 2: Statistics for participants in collective video and focus groups

Table A: Breakdown of participants by age group

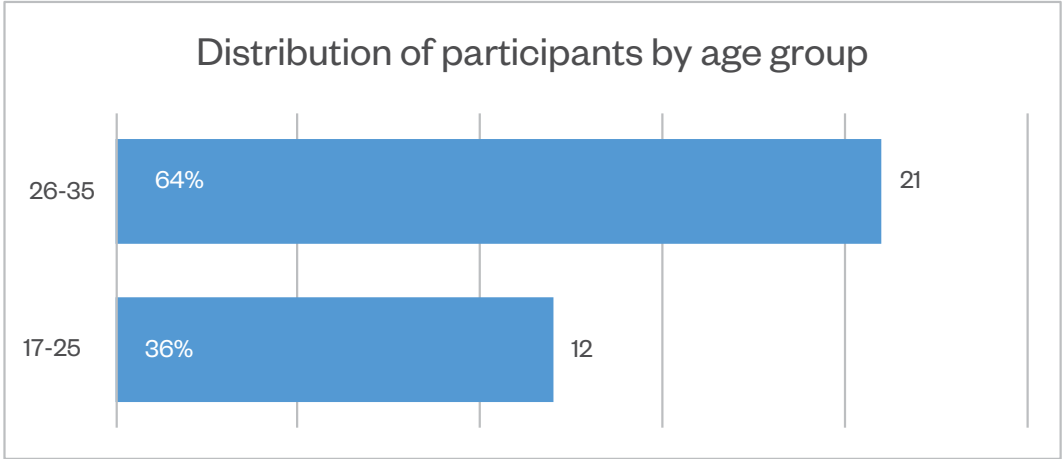


Table B: Breakdown of participants by municipality

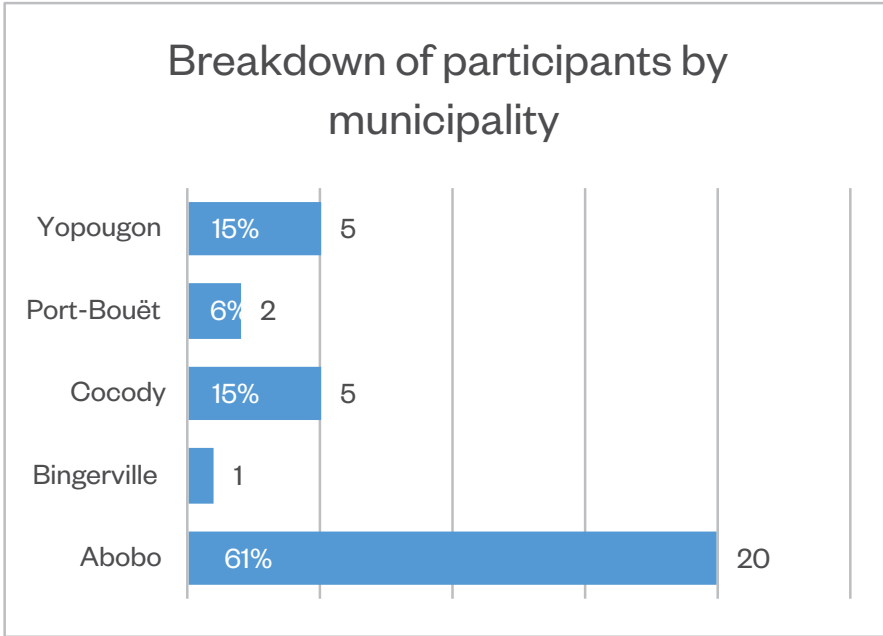


Table C: Breakdown of participants by gender

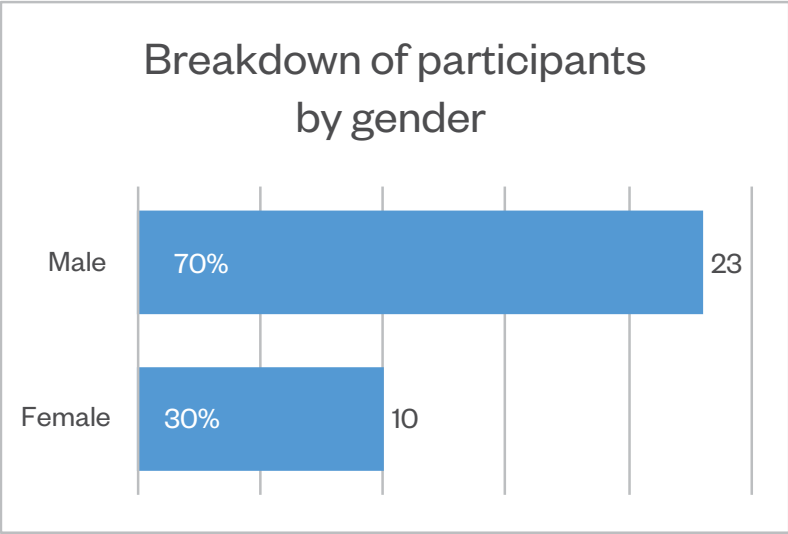


Table D: Breakdown of participants by socio-cultural group

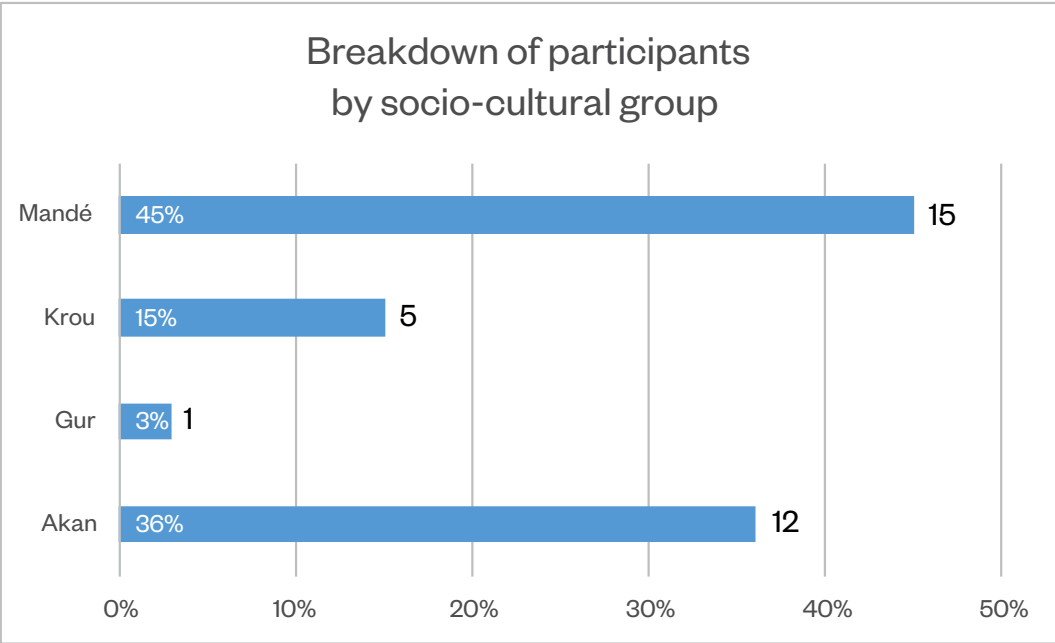


Table E: Breakdown of participants by activity

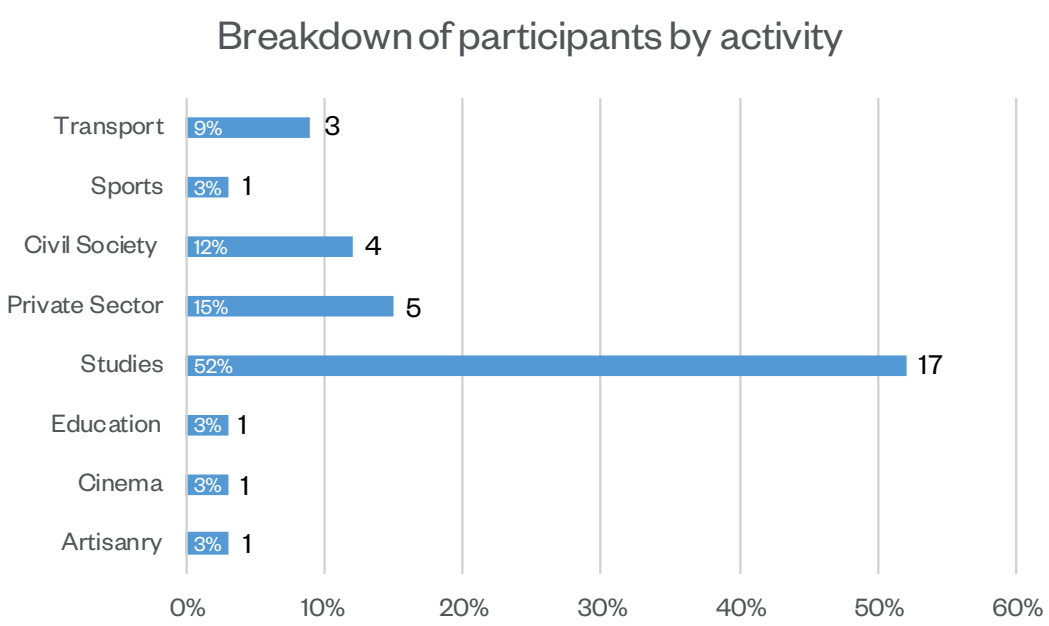
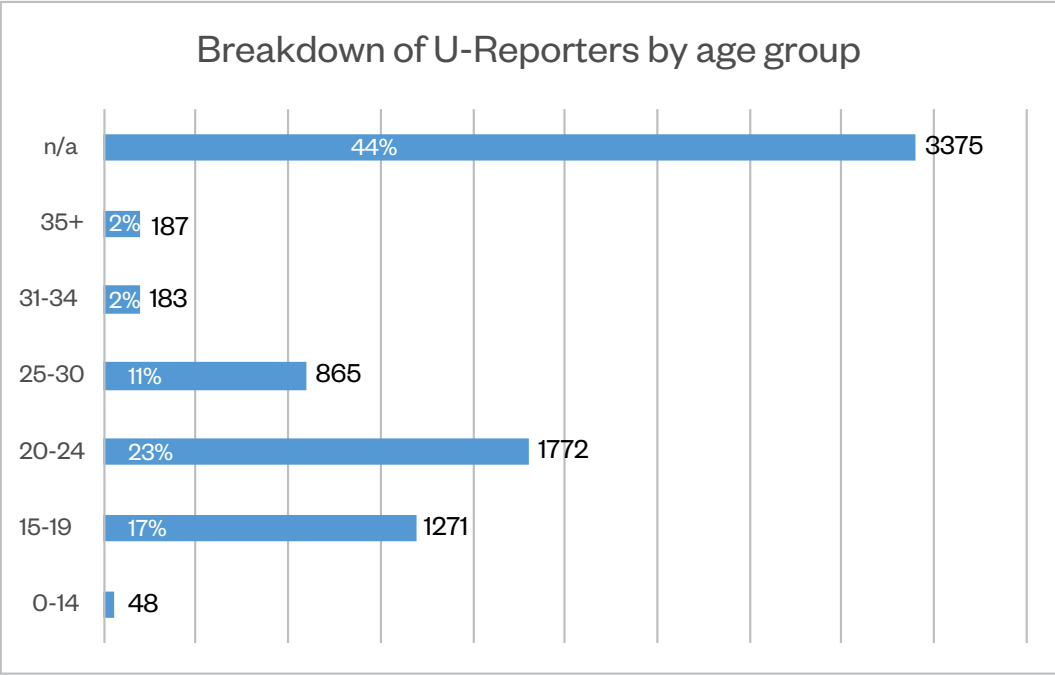
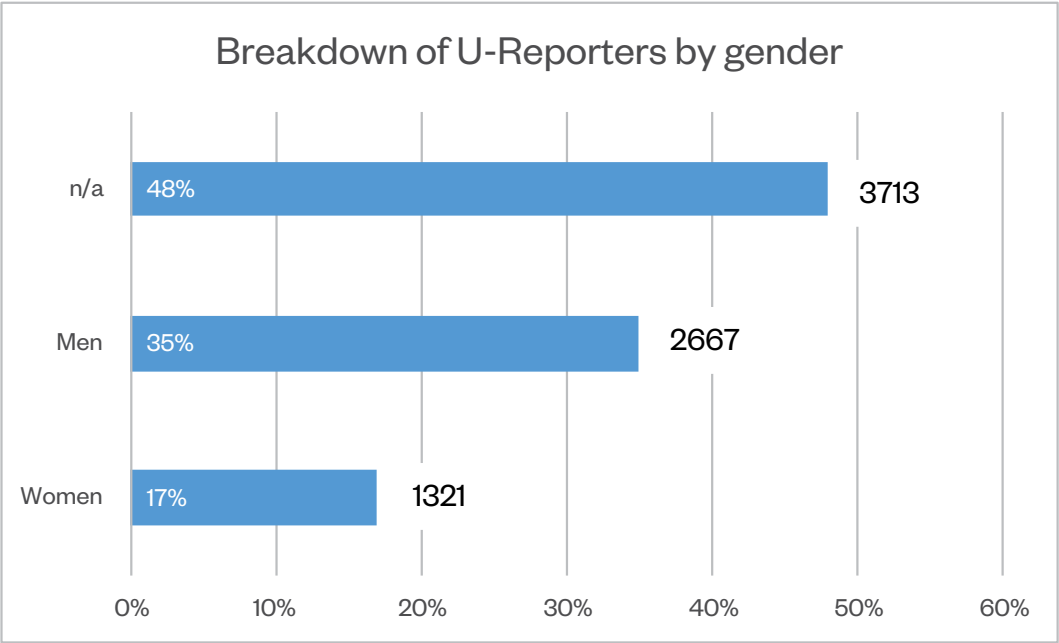


Table G: Breakdown of U-Reporters by age group



Annex 3: Statistics of survey participants (11.08.2017) in U-Report platform on the « Contribution of youths to peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire »

Table F: Breakdown of U-Reporters by gender





Target groups for fieldwork in the context of the Participatory Video workshop

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