

# Youth, Peace and Security in Kenya

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## **1. Introduction**

Kenya underscores the spirit and letter of UNSC Resolution 2250 in many ways. Over the last decade, Kenya's political-security volatility has been well documented by extant research and media reports. Incidence of political and election-related violence, radicalization and violent extremism, inter-ethnic and inter-communal clashes, pastoralist violence, and state-led violence dot Kenya's peace and security landscape in the last 10 years. While most of these peace and security issues predate the last decade, their scale, spread, intensity and impacts are unprecedented. As in similar contexts, much of research and policy attention have focused mostly on the role of young women and men largely as victims and perpetrators of violence, respectively. However, emerging pointers, as encapsulated in UNSCR 2250, signpost the crucial role and contribution of young people to preventing violence, responding to violence and rebuilding peace, and informed contributions to the security and stability of communities, countries and world at large. Kenya is no different; female and male youth on their own and/or in collaboration with other stakeholders, actively contributes to conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding in Kenya.

Accordingly, this report presents an overview of the contemporary peace and security challenges in Kenya, and the responses of young people in the form of their roles and contributions to peacebuilding efforts. This case-study was commissioned by UNFPA and PBSO for the Progress Study on YPS requested by SCR 2250, with funding support from SIDA.

This case study assesses the drivers of youth's participation in peacebuilding activities by providing concrete empirical examples (through case studies) of youth-led peacebuilding interventions. Thus the exploration of the contributions of youth to peace and security in Kenya transcends the orthodox "victim and perpetrator" stereotypes to include how young people actively contribute to the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts.

This report acknowledges the reality that some female and male youth do participate in violence; however, it emphasizes that not all youth respond to the threat or actual violence with counter-violence. It affirms the peaceful, non-violent nature of a majority of young people in Kenya. In fact, violence is not natural or analogous to youth, and through the use of appropriate methodologies, the oft-neglected important contributions of youth to peace and security can be uncovered, documented and supported. As such, this report documents concrete youth-led and/or youth-owned initiatives and their positive contributions (impact) to conflict prevention, dialogue and reconciliation, and post-conflict recovery in conflict-affected communities in Kenya. It acknowledges that the roles and contributions of young people to peace and security take place in a broader context. The includes peacebuilding interventions by a variety of actors, including the Kenyan government, African inter-governmental bodies (e.g. the African Union), United Nations and it is specialized agencies, development partners, local and international peacebuilding organizations, and civil society coalitions and organizations.

This study is a qualitative inquiry and uses a case study approach. It uses a theme-based approach to interrogate the role and contributions of young Kenyans to peace and security. The themes reflect the activities, tools and instruments used by youth to engage in, and contribute to peace and security in Kenya. In particular, this report x-rays how young Kenyans' use creative/talent industry to

contribute to peace and security. The creative/industry activities of interest include arts and culture (music, dance, and film), sports (football and athletics) and technology. The choice of the thematic activities is based on initial scoping assessment, as well on-going research and policy engagement of the principal investigator and the ALC.

It uses two methods to gather and analyse data, including the review of extant data such as scholarly publications, websites and reports of civil society groups (including youth organizations), media reports, and the analysis undertaken by think-tanks. Second is the use of semi-structured interview with identified key informants, including youth peace activists, and leaders of youth-led peacebuilding groups. Due to ethical considerations associated with the physical safety of respondents and researchers, some of the interviews were done through virtual means. Attempts were made to organize focus group discussions with young Kenyans, but this was considered too risky (hence the use of focus group discussions was dropped) as a result of the prevailing (volatile) political-security climate in Kenya in the second half of 2017. Overall, the primary data collection was affected (limited) by the Kenya's 2017 elections and its crisis-laden aftermath (following the cancellation of the initial election by the Supreme Court).

In spite of this, the study still interviewed ten female and male youth peace activists in Kenya through a combination of physical and virtual meetings. The choice of respondents for key informant interviews still reflects gender balance, thematic relevance, and local sensitivities. As such, it is consistent with the theoretical sampling approach, as opposed to statistical or geographical representation. The respondents provided invaluable insights into their work, those of fellow youth organizations, and broader issues of peacebuilding in Kenya

## **2. Youth in Kenya**

According to the UNFPA State of the World Population 2017, Kenya's 49.7 million population makes it the 6<sup>th</sup> largest population in Africa. More importantly, it is right in the middle of a youth bulge – persons aged 0-14 years make up 40%, those aged 10-24 years account for 33%, and people age 15-64 years are 57% of the population, respectively. With a fertility rate of 3.8 per woman and an annual population increase of 2.6%, the 'youthening' trend of Kenya's overall population is projected to continue on an upward curve in the short to medium term.<sup>1</sup>

Kenya's national youth policy, drafted in 2006, defines youth as 15-30 years.<sup>2</sup> This definition reflects the socio-economic peculiarities of Kenya, especially the nature and length of transition into adulthood. This explains its variation with internationally adopted definitions by the UN (15-24 years); the World the East African Community, EAC (15-35 years); the African Union (15-35 years); and the World Bank (12-24 years). This definition is gendered and it emphasizes a dichotomised classification of youth as either male or female. Furthermore, while age is crucial in understanding the demography of youth, it is important to recognize that young people are not a homogenous group particularly with regard to the transitory opportunities as well as socio-economic and cultural dynamics in society. Moreover, the strategy emphasizes the need to engage multiple actors.

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<sup>1</sup> UNFPA (2017): 126.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Kenya (2006): 1.

However, while this approach may get to those ‘hard to reach’ stakeholders, in practice this method is hardly effective in galvanising diverse ideas and dynamic changes among the youth. In addition, there is a tendency for the approach to be top-down, with the possibility that youth feel that their ideas are lost due to exaggerated and near theatrical engagement that amount to limited outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the policy frames youth as being “at risk” and in need of “management”, thereby limiting their participation and agency.<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Youth Affairs (MYA), which has since been absorbed into the Ministry of Devolution and Planning (MDP), developed an Action Plan for the years 2007-2012 to implement and actualise the Youth Policy. However, both are yet to be updated nearly a decade later. Perhaps this attests to the low prioritization of youth and the issues that affect them in mainstream governance, as well as the disconnection between the Youth Policy and the everyday reality of lived experiences of youth.

### **3. Overview of Peace and Security Challenges in Kenya**

Based on the survey of extant literature, Kenya’s peace and security challenges are varied. The roll call includes clashes between herders and farmers, conflicts over land and violence involving state security agencies to mention a few. Admittedly, it is impossible to provide accurate statistics on the number and spatial distribution of youth involved in violence (security challenges) in Kenya. Nonetheless, this report focuses on inter-communal violence, election violence, and violent extremism as case studies for exploring the underlying causes and drivers, the roles of youth therein, impacts on young people and society, and the challenges they pose to peacebuilding.

#### **3a. Inter-communal Violence**

Intercommunal violence in Kenya relates to violent conflicts between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity. Such conflicts may revolve around issues such as access and ownership of land or water resources, cattle raiding, or support for opposing political parties.<sup>5</sup> The scale of intercommunal violence in Kenya has risen and intensified since the advent of multi-party politics in 1992. Intercommunal violence has produced visible internal and cross-border impacts such as the loss of lives and properties; the displacement of persons and communities; rise in inter-group tensions and distrust; and destruction of socio-economic infrastructures and processes.

The specific triggers of intercommunal violence in Kenya vary across regions and counties, however the underlying dynamic is often similar, specifically contestations over access to resources. The superimposition of ethno-religious identities of communities on intercommunal violence tend to colour and misinform the causes and character of most intercommunal conflicts in Kenya. In virtually all cases, the ethno-religious identities of communities are only mobilised and instrumentalized in the intense competition for resources.<sup>6</sup> The resources in question do vary depending on the local political-economy system; it ranges from contestation over access to rangeland, farmland, and pastoral land, to water. In other instances, intercommunal violence is triggered by livestock raiding,

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<sup>3</sup> Ritchie and Ord (2017).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Evfersson, (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Mbugua, (2013).

often as part of historical cycles of violence. The clashes over these resources do have wider socio-economic and political implications, especially in the context of Kenya's mainly agriculture-based economy, and the ubiquitous influence of ethno-communal identities on politics. It is not a coincidence that intercommunal violence tends to be exacerbated during elections.

Intercommunal conflict most often occurs in certain hotspots in Kenya such as the Rift Valley, the North and the Coast. The Rift Valley experienced the first major incidence of communal violence in 1991 and intermittently since then (in 1998 and 2007 for instance) over historical grievance over land.<sup>7</sup> It pitches the Kalenjin community against the Kikuyus and other ethnic groups; the Kalenjins claimed ancestral ownership of land in the Rift Valley, however the lands were usurped initially by white settlers, and subsequently by the Kikuyus, and other ethnic groups. In Mount Elgon in the Western region of Kenya, bordering Uganda, recurring cases clashes between sub-groups of the Sabaot, the Soy and the Ndorobo, and between the Sabaot and the Bukusu. In the North-eastern region, intercommunal violence has been recorded among pastoralist communities within Kenya and across the border with Ethiopia. For instance, the Gabra and Borana communities in Marsabit county clashed (from 2006) over water and grazing land. In the Coast, cases of intercommunal violence have been recorded between the Pokomo and the Orma around the Tana River Delta over grazing issues. There is a cross-border, regional dimension to intercommunal violence in Kenya in the form of cross-border reprisals; violent skirmishes and incursions by state security agents and international cattle raiding syndicates; and the commercialization of cattle-raiding.<sup>8</sup> Cattle raiding occurs in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) of Northern Kenya, and is conducted as part of tradition, as a rite of passage, to accumulate bride wealth, and as means of replenishing stock after a natural disaster such as drought.<sup>9</sup>

Youth occupy multiple roles in intercommunal violence: as belligerents, victims and targets of violence, and as actors for peace. The culture of 'Moranism' in some parts of Northern Kenya means that young men can be more easily mobilized to engage in violent confrontation either as a source of pride and/or in defense of their community. Age sets are a key component of the social and political life of pastoralist communities in the North Rift. They can be found among the Samburu, Turkana, and Kalenjin sub-groups. Men in these communities are delineated into a number of age sets with a cyclical pattern. Of these different age sets, the warrior set (comprising of young males from late teenage years up to age 25 years) is one of the most important. The exclusively male warrior set, or the 'Morans' for the Masai and Samburu traditionally play important roles in the socio-cultural, economic and security systems of communities in the North Rift. Even in contemporary contexts, warrior groups act as guardians of the respective communities: "warrior militias represent the entire community, its stakes and its socio-cultural continuity."<sup>10</sup> Their roles include defending and protecting communities from reprisal attacks; engaging in cattle raids as a means of wealth accumulation; re-stocking and safeguarding the reputation of a particular age set or ethnic group.

It has been argued that the traditional controls which structured the activities of warrior age sets have been eroded due to the dwindled influence of elders, the influence of political power brokers,

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<sup>7</sup> In September 1991, organized groups of young men from the Kimyegei age group, calling themselves "Kalenjin Warriors" terrorized Luo, Luhya, Kisi and Kikuyu communities in the Rift Valley. The "Kalenjin Warriors" attacked farms, set ablaze and looted property, drove residents away from their homes and killed many. They were clad in unofficial uniforms, with their faces painted in the custom of candidates for initiation, and they were armed with traditional bows, arrows, and machetes. The violence resulted in thousands of people displaced from their farms and homes. See Kimenyi & Ndung'u, (2005).

<sup>8</sup> A commercialized cattle raiding involves a trans-border network of groups and individuals including: businessmen, politicians, and security and law enforcement officers who profit from grand-scale raids and the well-organized movement of illegal livestock internally and cross-border. See Menkhaus, (2015).

<sup>9</sup> See Ondima (2010), and Van den Broeck, (2011).

<sup>10</sup> Van den Broeck, (2011): 11.

the prevalence of small arms, and ecological hardships that render traditional modes of production challenging, and the need for alternative economic activities. Much of this has resulted in changing roles for the warrior sets (morans) including the increasing cross-border nature of their activities. Thus, young men turn to the possibilities offered by commercial raiding, militia groups, and as paid violent instigators and 'guns for hire.'<sup>11</sup>

There is also a gendered element to the role of youth, for during conflict young women are often targeted as victims of abductions and sexual and gender based violence during raids. It is arguable that the same rhetoric that imbues Moranism with ethno-communal pride and a commitment to defend the community is inherently masculinist, privileging the status of young male warriors over others, and unwittingly diminishing the value, worth, and bodies of young women. Indeed, it could be argued that these underlying ideas about the disposability of women and their bodies is manifest in the practices of child marriage, female genital cutting and child beading in which young girls aged 9-15 years, are given away as sexual partners to Morans with no obligation to marry or support any children resulting from the union.<sup>12</sup> Beading refers to the large number of red beads given the girl to seal the arrangement.

Youth are also actively involved in various initiatives as actors for peace including: peace brigades, Youth for Peace, Tuelewane and the Tegla Laroupe foundation, etc. some of which are explored in subsequent sections of this report. Even in that complex web of intercommunal violence, the agency of the young people that participate can hardly be denied. Many young people in their respective roles as perpetrators and victims of violence, and as arrowheads of peace and reconciliation have their motivations and interests linked to their individual and collective socio-economic, cultural, civic and ideological agendas. In most cases, youth participation in intercommunal violence, even in the context of structural determinants such as 'moranism', is linked to their awareness of their socio-economic and political marginalization and vulnerabilities with violence largely seen as means to ends such as recognition, status enhancement, wealth accumulation, and influence in community decision-making structures.

### **3b. Violence over Elections and Politics**

Kenya has historically managed its domestic instabilities without drawing much international attention until the outbreak of major episodes of violence following the contentious 2007/2008 elections. It became clear that Kenya is not necessary unique compared to its neighbours; it also has 'internal issues' that can lead to instability like any other country in Africa. Elements of election-related violence continued after the 2008 episodes largely due to subsisting local and intercommunal contestations. Of course, the scale of election-related violence reduced in the 2013 and 2017 elections, nonetheless, violence remains a visible denominator in electoral competitions and contests for political power in Kenya.

There is a *long duree* of election-related violence in Kenya; of the five elections held in Kenya since the introduction of multiparty democracy, three are generally classified as violent, namely elections in 1992, 1997 and 2007. It is no coincidence that the Rift Valley was the epicentre of electoral violence in 1992, 1997 and 2007 and afterwards. In the lead up to the 1992 elections for example, pre-election violence broke out in the Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces, mostly targeted at the Kikuyu, Luhya and Luo, all associated with opposition groups. The violence ended in 1993 with 1500 dead and 300,000 displaced.<sup>13</sup> Similarly in the run up to the 1997 elections, the Moi regime is

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<sup>11</sup> Menkhaus, (2015).

<sup>12</sup> Young, (2012).

<sup>13</sup> African Watch, (1993).

said to have instigated the pre-election violence in the Coastal province in August 1997 as a way of avoiding or minimizing electoral losses.<sup>14</sup> Cumulatively, the electoral violence of 1997 is estimated to have resulted in 2000 deaths and displacement of over 500,000 persons.<sup>15</sup> By the 2007/8 elections, political violence had become normalized: 'acts of political violence are observed and reported without any expectation that prosecution or other consequences might arise.'<sup>16</sup> The 2007 election violence is estimated to have led to the internal displacement of over 350,000 persons, and at least 1300 deaths.<sup>17</sup>

In analysing electoral violence in Kenya, it is clear that violence does not start and end with an electoral cycle; it is a continuous process in part because of the established root causes, including its overlap with several forms and layers of local and communal contestations, its ethno-religious underpinnings, and the zero-sum nature of politics and contestations for power. Election violence in Kenya relates to "all forms of organized acts or threats- physical, psychological and structural- aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during or after an election with the view of determining, delaying or influencing an electoral process."<sup>18</sup> It is a sub-category of political violence that is dependent on characterizing the actors, activities, and their motives within a specific timeline.<sup>19</sup>

A set of cross-cutting dynamics underpin election-related violence in Kenya, namely, the ethnic nature of the violence manifested in mass displacement of communities in the name of 'ethnic cleansing' (of non-supporters in both the opposition and the ruling party 'strongholds'); the intimidation and harassment of non-supporters; and state sponsored or induced violence through the activities of formal (state) and informal (non-state) security actors including youth groups. These issues signpost some of the structural conditions that give rise to and explain the recurrence of electoral violence in Kenya.

Another cross-cutting observation is the instrumentalization and institutionalization of violence, involving youth militias, by the state and opposition groups in order to 'build electoral influence.'<sup>20</sup> Throughout the Moi presidency, youth groups, including youth wings of political parties, were co-opted and used to intimidate and repress critics and opposition groups. For instance, under the cover of government protection, the KANU youth wing is said to have used and perfected the culture of political terror and extortion. This translated into the formation of several youth militias and created a 'violent' career pathway for young people in Kenya. One high profile manifestation of this was Mungiki Sect, originally formed as a counter youth group along with other ethnic oriented vigilante groups.<sup>21</sup> The proliferation of youth militias and vigilantes effectively ensured that the Kenyan state no longer had the monopoly of violence and visibility of youths and non-state violent groups in Kenya's political terrain, especially elections.

Although Mungiki's violence is the most documented so far, but violence existed among many other vigilante groups across the country, available for hire both during elections and after. While the existence and use of youth militias dates back to the Moi era, their profile, visibility and destruction increased geometrically during the Kibaki regime. It is estimated that by the end of Moi's era in 2002, Kenya is said to have had more than two-dozen known private militias both in rural and urban

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<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch, (2002).

<sup>15</sup> KHRC, (several years).

<sup>16</sup> Anderson and Lochery, (2008); 338.

<sup>17</sup> CIPEV, 92008).

<sup>18</sup> Omotola, (2008): 55.

<sup>19</sup> Höglund (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Muller, (2008).

<sup>21</sup> Kangwanja, (2005).

areas.<sup>22</sup> However, Kibaki's government (2002 -2007) failure to demobilize and disarm these groups combined with growing insecurity and the opportunity provided by contested elections, increased their number and scale of violence.

In reflecting on the role of young people in election violence in Kenya, ethnic-communal and political identities were mobilized and instrumentalized for goals that transcend political power. For most young Kenyans involved, it represented a tool for survival for them and their communities, and it was useful in the protection of acquired socio-economic and material privileges. This is against the perennial weakness of state critical institutions, often symbolized by the failure to guarantee the independence, impartiality and transparency of electoral administration. In such circumstances, protests, including violence, become a viable alternative to regular political contest. Also, the presidency and political power in Kenya is highly valued by political elite, ethnic communities and perhaps youth due to the limitless flow of patronage and perception as the gateway to individual and group socio-economic mobility. The zero-sum nature of elections and politics broadly meant that the political arena and elections specifically, became the main platform for advancing individual and communal needs, and the protection of rights and interests.

### **3c. Violent Extremism**

Kenya and the broader East Africa region is a reference point in the analysis of American-led 'Global War on Terror.' Kenya in particular suffered violent extremism well before the September 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks on specific targets in the United States. In August of 1998, U.S. embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) were car bombed that resulted in the death of 248 people in Kenya and 12 in Tanzania, while the number of the wounded was estimated at 5,000.<sup>23</sup> Kenya's struggles with violent extremism have not abated since then. For instance, in spite of the series of internal and cross-border security operations by Kenya, extremist groups, specifically Al-Shabaab, continued to carry out attacks such as Malindi and the Technical University of Mombasa (2017);<sup>24</sup> Garissa University College attack (2015); Mpeketoni massacre (2014); Westgate Mall attack (September 2013); and Eel Adde attack, where hundreds of Kenyan combatants and non-combatants were killed.<sup>25</sup>

Still, the history of political violence linked to violent extremism in Kenya predates the 1998 embassy bombing. For instance, Kenya's Somali-dominated North-eastern region had witnessed a nationalist insurgency movement in 1963, shortly after Kenyan independence.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Kenya's Coast Region had witnessed persistent clamour for independence by its majority Muslim population since independence. The agitations manifested as the Shifta insurgency in 1963 that was aimed at liberating the Somali region in northeast Kenya, then known as the Northern Frontier District (NFD), to merge with the newly-formed Somali Republic.<sup>27</sup> The two regions are made up of communities who perceive rightly or wrongly, to be marginalised in Kenya's socio-economic and political power structures. The two regions also have common history of violent conflicts linked to ethno-religious identities. These subsisting schisms provide important context for understanding the attraction of violent extremist ideologies and groups, especially Al-Shabaab.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kagwanja, (2009).

<sup>23</sup> Anon (1998), p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> Alphonse, (2016) and Anon (17 April 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Anon (16 June 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Ingiriis, M. (forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> Ringquist (2011).

<sup>28</sup> See Anon (26 July 2012), Chonghaile (06 July 2012) and Dabbs (30 August 2012).



The topic of youth radicalization is a hot and heated topic in Kenya because of Al-Shabaab's relative success in recruiting and radicalizing youths, some of them university students; and the government's well-documented failure to prevent youth radicalization. The explanation of why and how young Kenyan Muslims join Al-Shabaab transcends indoctrination and the appeal of Islamist ideology; it includes subsisting and continuing feelings of alienation and marginalization, and socio-economic vulnerabilities, and the broader logic and utility of violence in the politics of Kenya. In fact, Al-Shabaab formed a close relationship with the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) which actively projected the demand for independence by coastal communities. Al-Shabaab is thought to have fomented a close collaboration with the Al-Hijra, which derived from the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC) or the Pumwani Muslim Centre.<sup>29</sup>

On the one hand, Kenya's counter-insurgency/counter terrorism operations since 1998 and more recently against Al-Shabaab attacks targeted and alienated Kenyan Muslims, especially young Muslims. In the aftermath of the 1998 embassy bombing, Kenya stepped up police surveillance which contributed increased scrutiny and harassment, and alienation of Muslims and their communities. The series of crackdown and targeted assassinations of members of Al-Hijra and other groups by the Anti-Terrorist Police Unit (ATPU)<sup>30</sup> triggered street protests and violent riots in Mombasa.<sup>31</sup> It was not uncommon for Kenyan police to invade Somali neighbourhood in Eastleigh in Nairobi to arrest and detain young Somali men at Pangani prison. Once in prison, only those who could 'buy' themselves, a euphemism for bribing the police, can regain their freedom.<sup>32</sup> This tendency is still in place, even though the Kenyan government promised to discipline its police. In April 2014, Eastleigh was the scene of a major security crackdown – the Operation Usalama Watch – which rounded up nearly a thousand Somalis.<sup>33</sup> Many felt wrongly targeted for arrest and detention in the campaign against Al-Shabaab.<sup>34</sup> In such contexts, radicalization and violent extremism became attractive proposition for some young people as platforms for affirming individual and collective rights and interests of coastal communities.

And on the other hand, successive regimes in Kenya directly or indirectly created or exacerbated feelings of exclusion, marginalization and disaffection due to gross individual and intergroup inequalities and unequal access to political power, land and wealth. One key example of this is the accusation of forcible usurpation of land in the Coast Region by political and business elites linked to the Kenyan government. The Muslim population in the Coast Region have been strident in their persistent complaints about how the government elites forcefully take-over their land in order to take advantage of the lucrative tourist industry in Mombasa. This created and/ or deepened alienation and marginalization, and revived the historical calls for independence.<sup>35</sup> As the MRC Secretary General Randu Ruwa pointed out: 'The international community can see what is going on and we are urging them to intervene in this matter... Everyone knows we are marginalised, so we don't see any reason for the international community to just keep watching till we go fighting'.<sup>36</sup>

The problem of land grabs aggravated not only the state-society relations, but also left a mark in the psyche of many Muslims that the government in Nairobi was intent on confiscating their land. Those accused of land grabbing are largely Kikuyu elites from the highlands of central Kenya (Mount

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<sup>29</sup> Nzes, (2014).

<sup>30</sup> UN (2012).

<sup>31</sup> *Al Jazeera*, (01 September 2012).

<sup>32</sup> For an insider's account, see Mohammed Kahiye, (2015) and Carrier (2016).

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch, (11 April 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Telephone interviews with confidential sources, 22 July 2017. See also Kajee (2014); Human Rights Watch, (20 July 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Anon (05 August 2014) and Onyango (09 December 2016).

<sup>36</sup> Gatehouse (29 February 2013).

Kenya), from where the Kenyatta family hailed.<sup>37</sup> It is claimed that Kikuyu political and economic elites benefitted from state patronage, including land allocation in the Coast and other regions (e.g. Rift Valley) since independence. In most cases, indigenous communities are forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands.<sup>38</sup> The scale of radicalization and insurgency activities in the Coast signpost Al-Shabaab's shrewd strategy of inserting itself (and its ideology) in marginalized communities, and exploiting historical and contemporary local political-economic grievances.

Inter-group relations, especially between Kikuyus and host communities in the Coast Region have, worsened since the onset of Al-Shabaab insurgency activities in Kenya. The MRC's famous slogan '*Pwani si Kenya*' (the Coast is not Kenya) indirectly targets Kikuyus and other settler groups in the Coast. One female Kikuyu school teacher and elder at the Presbyterian Church in the Kisauni neighbourhood in Mombasa expressed the Kikuyu concerns this way: 'The coast people always want us out of this place. Of course, it worries us because when we hear "Pwani si Kenya", that... means they want people not from the coast to vacate. Everyone fears for their life [now]'.<sup>39</sup> This is the context for understanding the role and responses of youth in violent extremism in Kenya.

#### **4. The Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Kenya**

Conventional commentary and analysis of the role of youth in Kenya's political history generally portrays them as the energy behind political protests, inter-group clashes, and violent extremism; however much of this overshadows or overlooks their comparatively important roles and contributions to peacebuilding. The few available studies also unwittingly, dichotomise youth engagement with university protests in the 1990s often delinked from other youth engagement. Yet, historically youth have demonstrated courage and leadership at the most oppressive times in Kenya's political history. For instance, during the colonial period, youth associations actively opposed colonial rule and this formed a key basis for political association for Africans during this period.<sup>40</sup> Historically, Kenya's democratic transitions cycles are marked by youth engagement and these historical moments have also provided opportunities for youth empowerment. Youth in Kenya have strategically aligned themselves with key reform processes and actors engaging socio economic matters that affected them directly as well as challenging the status quo by supporting more institutionalised courses. Like the general civil society movement however, their participation has varied in terms of issues they contest, the avenues they use to express these contentions and the sustainability of their engagement due to the assumption that 'they are in transition'. Their peacebuilding efforts have hence been both through formal institutions they inhabit and informal spaces such as the 'streets'.

The formal spaces include schools, universities and religious institutions that are often guided by specific rules and with government oversight.<sup>41</sup> Student activism is a case in point; before 1992, the decay of the Kenyan state institutions also mirrored the decay of universities. The once free space for engagement in the immediate years after independence became 'infected' as it started to mirror events in the political terrain such as 'patronage, surveillance and violence' as well as the government manipulation of student union elections.<sup>42</sup> The demands raised by CSOs at the time

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<sup>37</sup> Anon (01 August 2014). See also Kenyatta (1938).

<sup>38</sup> Gatehouse (29 February 2013).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Mwangola, 2007

<sup>41</sup> Mwangola, 2007

<sup>42</sup> Klopp and Orina, 2002

such as the freedom of association, redistribution of resources echoed in the university environment. As such, students' and lecturers' grievances at the university in the 90s often converged with CSO calls for political reform and therefor made it easy for CSOs to work with the youth. Many students therefore were the energy behind key movements in the 1990s including the *Saba-Saba* mass action in 1990;<sup>43</sup> the Green Belt Movement for environmental protection led by Prof. Wangari Maathai; the Release Political Prisoners (RPP) movement to mention a few.<sup>44</sup> Despite their limitations, universities still became the 'environment[s] for the imagining of alternatives' and training grounds for leadership in the Moi era. This is evidenced by some of the products from this period that ended up forming the opposition groups that ended the Moi regime in 2002. Other achievements from this phase that went beyond politics and engaged social change more broadly was student's initiative to establish Kituo cha Sheria set to provide legal assistance to disadvantaged Kenyans.<sup>45</sup>

Secondary school students have also used available provisions in their syllabus to engage politically and for peacebuilding. One of such platforms is the Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festival (KNSCDF). Introduced in the 1950s by the colonial government as an extracurricular activity for Kenya youth, the KNSCDF has become an important space to engage current socio-economic and political issues from Kenya's diverse context. Working with teachers, primary and secondary school students are encouraged to write scripts that mirror their context. The festivals have the twin role of getting these young minds to reflect on their contexts while "enabling observers to use each annual festival to gauge grassroots opinion on the most volatile issues of the day."<sup>46</sup>

The festivals increasing popularity was clear in 2013 when the organisers disqualified Butere Girls' "Shackles of Doom", a play that talks about truth justice and equitable distribution in reference to the recently discovered oil in Turkana, for being tribal.<sup>47</sup> Although not representing all youth of this age-set, it shows that youth have taken advantage of the various platforms at their disposal and turned them into platforms for peacebuilding, however they understand it. Nonetheless, given that most of the formal spaces are overseen by the government they prove limiting for engaging sensitive issues depending on the regime of the day. In such cases, the informal spaces become necessary.

The 2007/8 post-election in Kenya marked a watershed moment in the analysis and understanding of the contemporary peacebuilding in Kenya, specifically the roles and contributions of young people. Despite its tragedy, the 2007 election violence unearthed youth discontent and because their spaces for engagement are limited, violent protests became the most viable channel.<sup>48</sup> One unintended consequence of violence and the visible roles of young people thereat in Kenya, especially the 2007/8 episode, was the triggering of a national dialogue on youth issues. At the minimum, this has altered policy thinking on youth, women and other minority groups, including triggering a national policy on youth. Some of these were included in the 2010 Constitution. Prior to this, policies on youth in Kenya were framed with the assumption that youth are 'a problem to be solve' and a reservoir of energy that needs to be exploited for 'productive purposes'. Up to 2009,

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<sup>43</sup> The Saba Saba day, usually the 7 of July every year, is celebrated as the day for multiparty politics in Kenya. In 1990, young political activists (Young Turks), spearheaded the push for multiparty democracy which resulted in plural politics by 1997 and eventually the end of the Moi regime in 2002. For example, see <https://www.tuko.co.ke/150494-here-is-how-kenyans-mark-saba-saba-day.html#150494>

<sup>44</sup> Amutabi, 2002; Press, 2012

<sup>45</sup> Klopp and Orina, 2002

<sup>46</sup> Mwangola, 2007: 153.

<sup>47</sup> Daily Nation, 2013, <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/play-disqualified-as-festival-kicks-off/1056-1748496-10gyxkrz/index.html>

<sup>48</sup> Githongo, 2010

youth were largely seen as ‘handymen’, “to help propagate ideas, policies and philosophies of a new society,” and Government policies were framed as such.<sup>49</sup>

The 2010 Constitution provided more spaces for meaningful engagement in socio, economic and political life; for example, Article 55 of the Constitution requires the government to take action to ensure youth education and employment. Similarly, the Constitution requires one-third representation by women in the Senate and National assemblies. Although this inclusion is a useful start to developing comprehensive policies for special groups, it is unfortunately not matched with deliberate efforts to address structural issues that perpetrate the marginalisation and exclusion of these groups.

The 2007 electoral violence in particular was a reminder that Kenyan youth still have agency that is not limited to the ‘ballot box.’ Youth hence legitimised ‘protest’ and a ‘protest culture’ that combined with institutionalised advocacy through broader civil society activism contributed to the de-legitimization of the Kibaki regime. This necessitated the Kofi Annan-led international mediation. Like in the 1990s, protests in 2007 were central to establishing a ‘culture of resistance’ in Kenya forcing dialogue to emerge from the grassroots up. Although effective in attaining quick results as proved to the swift response to Kenya’s 2007 post-election violence, protests in Kenya are usually short-lived and they are not necessarily effective for sustainable peacebuilding in the long run. Youth have therefore created and utilised alternative spaces in between elections.

In the following sections, the roles and contributions of young Kenyans to peace and security are documented and analysed based on thematic tools and instruments, including the use of art, music and drama; sports; dialogue and reconciliation; and technology.

#### **4a. Youth and the use of Art, Music and Drama in Peacebuilding**

The scant extant literature on alternative spaces occupied and used by youth to contribute to peacebuilding and broader social change processes in Kenya include the use of language, music and art that were particularly pronounced in the streets of Nairobi post 2007. Kenyan youth have been known to respond and relate to local music as it often speaks directly to their lived marginal socio-economic and political experiences that are often left out in broader national governance processes. Some of the few documented cases of youth using art and entertainment highlight the role of Hip Hop in addressing memory and empowerment in informal settlements in Kenya; with *Ukoo Fulani Mau Mau* engaging a discussion on identity as well as how past *Mau Mau* grievances remain relevant in Kenya’s contemporary socio-economic and political circumstances. Following the electoral violence in 2007, the Hip hop parliament emerged and brought together musicians and artists as a platform to perform and recount what they witnessed.

The use of *Sheng* in crafting most of the lyrics further adds to this appeal as it unites youth despite their ethnic make-up. *Sheng* is a “Swahili-based slang, with bits of English thrown in alongside other Kenyan and non-Kenyan languages”<sup>50</sup> that is spoken largely by young people in Nairobi and its suburbs. As a youth street language (collection of slangs), *Sheng* emerged in the 1980s and 1990s due to large rural-urban migration into Nairobi, and its appeal has spread ever since to the extent that in 2005 a government anti-HIV-AIDS awareness programme used *Sheng* on billboards and other outdoor advertising platforms. More concretely, *Sheng* has become the voice and topmost language for reaching young people in Kenya; for instance, it is freely used on radio programmes and Ghetto

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<sup>49</sup> Mwangola, 2007: 146.

<sup>50</sup> Dean (01 November 2013).

Radio has become the official Sheng station and the voice of youth. Sheng features in musical lyrics, radio phone-in programmes, online chats and social media posts where young Kenyans discuss issues affecting them such as crime, sex and gender, unemployment, child labour, early marriage, poverty, etc.<sup>51</sup>

Because of its informal nature, music, art and photography often go hand in hand. In the lead up to the 2013 elections in Kenya, artists joined peace activism. In April 2012 Kenyans in Nairobi woke up to murals across walls in strategic streets in Nairobi ‘denouncing Kenyan politicians ahead of the [2013] elections’ while avouching the leaders they want.<sup>52</sup> Other similar efforts was Boniface Mwangi, a photo journalist that exhibited pictures of the 2007 post-election violence as both a reminder of the tragedy and hence the need for Kenyans to remain peaceful in the 2013 elections as well as the social injustice and marginalisation that majority of Kenyans still grapple with. What is interesting about these efforts is that while advocating for peace, they still sensitized their audiences to the reality of impunity, inequality, corruption and other grievances that Kenyans need to bear in mind as they vote for the next leaders.

Beyond some of the individualized use of art, music and entertainment for peacebuilding by young people in Kenya, there are also large-scale, organization-based instances. The following examples illustrate this, focusing on the underlying rationale, target groups and participants, partners, and milestones recorded.

### ***Case study 1: Picha Mtaani***

*Picha Mtaani* means ‘street exhibition’ in Swahili, and is a youth-led national reconciliation initiative. It was formed with the support of UNDP Kenya for the purpose of “engaging Kenyan youth in finding lasting solutions to attaining peace and reconciliation, and healing the nation.”<sup>53</sup> The project creates a platform for peacebuilding and national healing in the wake of the 2007/8 post-election violence through street picture exhibitions and galleries as well as public dialogues and discussions. The Picha Mtaani national reconciliation tour was launched in December 2009 with a 24-hour street photography competition. The exhibition aimed to provide a platform for individual reflection, honest dialogue, and inter-personal healing and community reconciliation to over 2 million Kenyans. The Peace Caravan toured seven towns that were hardest hit by the 2007/8 post-election violence, including Eldoret, Kericho, Nakuru, Naivasha, Mombasa, Nyeri, and Kisumu. It is estimated that about 150,000 people visited the month-long exhibition in Nairobi alone, and over 500,000 people visited the exhibition across the country. Picha Mtaani was headed by Boniface Mwangi, Kenyan photojournalist and activist, whose work was heavily featured in the exhibit. In a statement on the objectives of the project, Mwangi specifically points to the utility of art as a medium for peacebuilding and social change; art presents an unbiased view, brings people face to face, and results in an immersive experience of violence, and it’s tragic and destructive results. This, along with psychosocial support and community dialogue provided space for reflecting and re-examining the roots, nature, and effects of the post-election violence, specifically among youth.

### ***Case Study 2: Maisha Initiative Kenya (MIK)***

The MIK is a Nakuru-based youth-led organization founded in 2013 following the scale of violence and losses experienced in the Rift Valley (Nakuru) as a result of the post-election violence of 2007/8.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/17548225>

<sup>53</sup> See [www.facebook.com/pichamtaani/PichaMtaani](http://www.facebook.com/pichamtaani/PichaMtaani)

Youth across different ethno-religious communities were directly or indirectly affected through loss of spouses, relatives, homes and friends. This informed the MIK's vision of developing young people as change-makers who are empowered to amplify the voices of local communities and other vulnerable groups, build local resilience to violent conflicts, and make communities in Kenya safer for citizens.<sup>54</sup> It has a diversified membership base made up of young males and females age 20- 29 years and from different ethnic backgrounds.

The MIK uses music, art, theatre, technology (Peace Geeks) and other creative skills as tools for communication and socio-economic empowerment of youth by creating platforms for employment opportunities. It also uses these tools for social mobilization, awareness creation, communication and entertainment and advocacy for peaceful co-existence among youth and broader society. Through its talent-hunt strategy, "MIK plays a key role in identifying talents and creative skills amongst male youth and young mothers, empowering them through exposure avenues for cooperation, shared learning, and developing their leadership skills."<sup>55</sup>

More specifically, the MIK uses art and theatre to build and enhance youths' talents and creative skills and entrepreneurial skills through promoting their engagement in positive socio-economic activities. MIK's also facilitates and provides physical and virtual spaces for networking, mentorship, experience sharing and knowledge advancement with a view to enhancing employment creation, education, leadership development and conflict management among Kenyan youth. Vulnerable young people, including out of school youth and children, and single mothers are part of the target group for the MIK. It provides skills and talent training and development programme for vulnerable youth, such as training in computer and ICT, drama/theatre and film making, music and dance, fashion design and tailoring, hairdressing, drawing, painting and craft-making, and entrepreneurship.

Ahead of the 2017 Kenyan election, the MIK organized the *Peace Inaweza Concerts* as part of its partnership with the Participation in Peaceful Elections (PIPE) and sponsored by *Perriama* a Non-governmental organisation from Denmark. The concert series included performances from different artistes, dancers, disc-jockeys, and models, and attracted over 500 audiences.

Maisha uses peace messaging to discourage young people from engaging in violence. For example, Milicent Orodí, a young female member of Maisha initiative speaking in Sheng, says that "*vita in ngori, peace ndio form*" (means that war/conflict is a bad thing and encourages young people using trendy words among young people such as "form" to encourage young peace from violence as peace is the in-thing, is cool and "Ngori" to firmly say no to violence.<sup>56</sup> Kevin Maina aka Vboy, a member of the Maisha initiative use slang/sheng, to discourage young people from engaging in violence by saying that "*vita ni wewe peace nidio kusema*. This message discourages any young person from advocating for or engaging in violence; and that MIK and its members stand for peace.<sup>57</sup> According to youth member and official of the organization, "*Maisha advocates for peace ama hutafit in.*"<sup>58</sup> This sheng expression indicates that Maisha will exclude from its membership any young person who advocate or engage in violence. Maisha initiative therefore uses peace messaging to discourage youth from engaging in violence by showing young people that the organisation and its members do not support violence and that any aspiration or support for violence is abhorred.

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<sup>54</sup> <https://peacegeeks.org/about>

<sup>55</sup> Interview through email correspondence with Diana Ayuma, Programs Officer for MIK, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017 Nairobi

<sup>56</sup> Email exchange with Diana Ayuma Programmes Officer, 6 December 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Email exchange with Diana Ayuma, Programmes Officer 6 December 2017

<sup>58</sup> Email interview with Diana Ayuma, Programmes officer, 6 December 2017.

Women play key roles in the development and day-to-day management of the Maisha Initiative Kenya as reflected in its mission of empowering young mothers and ladies. The Maisha has female trainers who train youths on civic and voter education.<sup>59</sup> The organisation also has female disc jockeys (DJs) that are in charge of entertainment at all Maisha initiative. The programme manager at Maisha is also a lady who is in charge of most operation issues within the organisation.

### ***Case Study 3: Kibera Hamlets and Kibera Walls for Peace (KHKWP)***

The KHKWP is an art-based youth peacebuilding initiative in Kibera, a settlement that is infamously known as Nairobi's largest slums and one of the major hotspot during the 2007/8 post-election violence. The KHKWP is made up of artists that use public murals and performance art throughout Kibera to facilitate communication and peaceful exchanges, and build unity between ethnic and political groups ahead of elections (starting with the 2013 elections) in Kenya.<sup>60</sup> The KHKWP was formed and managed by a group of eight youth artists, including three female artists, based in Kibera.<sup>61</sup> The Kibera hamlets mobilized a group of 30 youth to study peacebuilding and public art, which resulted in the creation of five public murals in high profile locations around Kibera.<sup>62</sup> At the time of closing the project in 2015, the KHKWP had successfully supported 50 youth to study peacebuilding and art, and who were actively involved in the design and creation of new public murals, music and dance in Kibera.<sup>63</sup> The project was a partnership between local organization Kibera Hamlets, international artists and educator Joel Bergner.<sup>64</sup>

## **4b. Youth, Sports and Peacebuilding**

In Kenya and across many African countries (and perhaps globally), youth policies and youth development activities were anchored on sports, volunteerism, and service to country in the aftermath of independence. The youth-sport nexus subsists till date in government's policies and interventions on youth. Empirically, sport-related activities and games have become the entry point for reaching different categories of young people, especially male youth. This has informed why and how youth-led peace advocacy in Kenya has also sought to leverage the youth-sport nexus. Activities such as football (soccer) and athletics' serve as centripetal forces for creating youth ensembles, and through which many young Kenyans access and contribute to peace and security initiatives. Some of the initiatives uncovered by this study in Kenya are profiled below.

### ***Case Study 4: Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation (TLFP)***

Tegla Loroupe, a renowned Kenyan athlete, established the TLFP in 2003 as a platform for using sports to promote peace through social outreach and cohesiveness between warring groups in Kenya. The foundation works to build trust among groups of youth from communities in conflict through annual Tegla Loroupe Peace Races staged in places such as Kepanguri, Tana River, and Karamoja. The foundation also organizes peace forums and disarmament activities between and among warring communities in the listed communities. A number of warriors from the communities in conflict later became peace agents in their communities as a result of their involvement.

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<sup>59</sup> Email Interview with Diana Ayuma, Programmes Officer, 6 December 2017

<sup>60</sup> <https://joelartista.com/2013/02/06/about-kibera-walls-for-peace-nairobi-kenya/>

<sup>61</sup> Phone interview with John Adoli, Founding Director 6 December 2017, Nairobi

<sup>62</sup> <http://kiberawallsforpeace.tumblr.com/about>

<sup>63</sup> <http://kiberawallsforpeace.tumblr.com/>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.kiberahamlets.org/index.html>

The Peace Races comprise of a peace walk, dignitaries race, and the warriors race, which is the main event. During this, community members from various pastoralist groups in conflict race across a 10km course. In 2017, the Peace Races began with the dialogue forums to discuss cases of cattle rustling and theft, as well as territorial infringement by neighbouring tribes. The TLPF mediated agreements and concessions between reformed warriors and community elders, to prevent further violence. The TLPF sees sports as key to building mutual trust and support amongst groups in conflict, specifically youth. In addition, the event also serves as an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and learning.

#### ***Case Study 5: Tuelewane Youth Exchange Program (TYEPEP)***

Tuelewane is an indigenous Kiswahili term for “let us understand one another,” and the Tuelewane Youth Exchange Programme was established to enhance peace and peacebuilding by and among youth. It was initiated in 2007 by the Kenyan Ministry of Youth affairs and Sports with support from UNDP Kenya in response to the post-election crisis. Still, youth play key roles in the implementation of the program, as participants and beneficiaries. Sport activities amongst communities in conflict were designed to foster good sportsmanship, inter-tribal interactions and cooperation and shared mutuality. They allow warring groups to interact and work together towards a common goal.

Amongst youth specifically, the competitive nature of the activities as well as the rules of sportsmanship, and the bonds created as part of a team enable them to set aside their differences towards a mutually beneficial goal. The program enables youth to travel to different communities and engage in dialogues with the locals to widen their world view, increase diversity, breed tolerance, and promote technical and life skills acquisition.

The TYEPEP organised exchanges and trainings for youth leaders from six major communities: Turkana, Tigania, East and West Pokot and Mogotio. In 2009, over 360 youth leaders engaged in activities focussing on peace and conflict resolution. The TYEPEP also organises cultural exchanges between communities focused on sports tournaments and religious activities. The project is estimated to have reached 5000 people in total. Sports have often been used as a tool for peacebuilding intervention in various settings for a variety of reasons: the trust that is built, spirit of sportsmanship, the channelling of competitive spirit towards a mutual goal, and especially within warrior communities the sense of valor and communal pride attributed to feats of athleticism and winning.

#### ***Case Study 6: Shakirina Youth for Development (SYD)***

The SYD is a local organization based in Old Town, Mombasa and was formed by male and female young people aged between 18 and 35 years. The SYD is unique given that female youth play key role in the SYD as they implement some of its core activities in the context of Mombasa’s conservative culture and Islamic orientation. Shakirina has mainstreamed young female engagement in its projects by having two third of female youth in leadership position within the organisation. The group is involved in community awareness and empowerment through socio-friendly projects, peace and security. The group has members from different areas within Mombasa County, with different skills. The vision of the SYD is to enhance the capacity and potential of local youths in old town community through talent and skills development; and to use sports to promotes peaceful coexistence

The group run a four-day in a week workshop/clinic to explore the current and potential role of sports in preventing violent extremism. According to Naima Twahir, the SYD Founding Director, “the



workshop brings together a diverse group of players, coaches, experts and practitioners to explore how lessons learned from sports education can contribute to more effective and sustainable countering violent extremism engagement.”<sup>65</sup> Participants include youths living in the old town areas, and experts with diverse backgrounds in sports from within the County of Mombasa. The SYD project mobilises children and young people aged 6 to 16 years in and out of school to equip them with football skills as a way of reducing idleness and exposure to radicalization and crime. The project motivates young people through trips and outings, mentorship, guidance and counselling. Nolly, a member of the group, noted that “through dialogue and mentorship, the organisation has been able to instil understanding among young people today to view each other as brothers and sisters living in harmony.”<sup>66</sup> Since inception, the SYD has trained 130 young people in football and other sports, 30 of which were selected for an athletics training programme for under-16 year-olds sponsored by the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) at Kasarani in 2016. The project also has a whatsapp group, where parents share views and they discuss about children upbringing. Through the project young people have been sensitized on peace issues by religious leaders, village elders, and police.

The SYD is supported by local partners such as Rayyan Nursery which provides library space and books; Fort Jesus Museums which provides a football pitch; and YADEN East Africa which funds some of its tournament. Some of the challenges faced by the SYD include inadequate sports kits; reluctance by men to fully embrace and support the project since it is implemented by young women; and the lack of funding with the risk that some of its volunteers sometimes leave to search for greener pasture.

#### ***Case Study 7: Peace Tournament Activity (PTA)***

The PTA aims at building of peace within abled and talented young people in Kenya through soccer competition in two counties, namely Western Kenya and Nyanza. The project involves the competitors in learning peace building methodologies, citizenry rights and how to build sustainable peace amongst themselves and their entire communities. The participating communities e.g. Manyatta Youth Resource Centre (MYRC) uses soccer competitions as a platform for sensitizing communities on the needs of having peace clubs within their settlement patterns.

The formation of the PTA was motivated by the pervasive role of young people in violence, including political/electoral violence and inter-communal clashes. The PTA project addresses the lack of knowledge and skills on peacebuilding, misuse of youth and youth agency in the context of violence, conflict-prone inter-communal relations in Nyanza and Western counties, and spate of gender-based violence. The theory of change assumes that youth are prone to participation in violence (and this can be reduced by addressing) due to limited awareness of their constitutional rights, their marginal socio-economic (unemployed) circumstances, and the lack of peace advocacy at community levels. Thus the PTA prioritizes citizenship (youth) sensitization; for instance, awareness of citizenship rights among youth is thought to be effective in addressing conflicts with the police, especially in reducing extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, and lack of trust. It is also seen as a strategy for involving youth in community police agenda, and reducing the rise in the number and the excesses of vigilante groups. All this are expected to contribute to building a culture of non-violence, soccer-based peace ambassadors, and indigenous peace education among youth and in the targeted communities.

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<sup>65</sup> Naima Twahir, Founding Director, Phone Interview , 16 October 2017, Nairobi

<sup>66</sup> Email exchange with Naima Twahir, 22 November 2017

The soccer tournament brings together 16 teams with three extra special teams from the police service, community leaders and neighboring country (Uganda). Whereas the special teams plays the curtain raiser match, the contesting teams are drawn from Kisumu Central, Kisumu West, and Kisumu East sub counties, Nairobi, Bungoma, Kiambu and Mombasa Counties. As part of the soccer tournament there are spaces and time slots for training sessions on peace and citizenship rights for competing teams and the spectators. The PTA emphasis on civic education, citizenship rights and obligations, and peacebuilding is designed to empower the youths and affected communities on how to achieve sustainable peace. The PTA is supported by partners such as county governments, inter-county peace teams, peace caravans and peace ambassadors. The PTA also works with Change Agents for Peace International (CAPI), NACADA, YWCA Urban Radio, Football Kenya, Kisumu Youth football Association, and Well-Wishers (a nongovernmental organization through their Turning The Tide Programme to fund and implement peace events).

### **Case Study 8: Manyatta Youth Resource Centre (MYRC)**

The MYRC is a registered community-based organization located and operating within Manyatta, Kisumu City. It provides safe spaces and technical opportunities for young people, and promotes youth driven community development initiatives. The MYRC was formed in 2009 in response to the 2007/8 post-election violence initially to promote conflict resolution and peace building in the neighborhood by engaging the youth in a series of participatory empowerment initiatives and homegrown solutions to local security challenges. Since conception, the MYRC has initiated a series of activities including performing arts events and a yearly football tournament aimed at promoting peace. The MYRC is guided by a vision of achieving a peaceful, safe and prosperous community that empowers its youth. The group's community centre in Manyatta promotes sustainable empowerment projects among the youth through sports development, music talent promotion, Art and craft and training in capacity building support.

The target groups for MYRC activities are young Kenyans between 16 and 40 years drawn from diverse backgrounds and occupations, including *Boda Boda* (commercial motorbike riders), *Jua Kali* (informal artisans), *Matatu* (public transport vehicles) operators, *Nyumba Kumi* (youth groups) and community policing agents and the Kenya police service. The MYRC organizes weekend activities such as counseling sessions, public speeches on topical issues, drama, and dances, all of which are accompanied by lunch for its members. The group also runs a music recording studio that promotes musical talent and is also one of the many income generating activities it operate. Other income generating projects include a sandals making initiative through the arts and crafts vocational wing, a motorbike service operated by youth members, and the sale of arts and crafts.

Through local and international partnerships, the MYRC has over 150 members with equal gender representation, and gender-sensitive programming; for instance, "it has provided safe spaces for its male and female members to discuss and address psychosocial and health needs of its members."<sup>67</sup> The MYRC undertakes a major awareness campaigns against gender-based violence in December of every year and this involves working police formations and other community policing agencies.

Most of these initiatives have been made possible by the crucial contribution of the group's football development project; male and female football teams have excelled in various tournaments and leagues in the region and have earned the group a number of support packages. The MYRC also managed to secure full education sponsorship for some of its talented football players to secondary schools in Kenya. Other anonymous supporters of the MYRC provide in-kind support through the

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<sup>67</sup> Anthony Oballah, General Manager, Phone Interview 17 October 2017, Nairobi

sponsorship of its “safe space” activities including the weekend lunches, sensitization sessions on HIV, drug and substance abuse, peace building and civic education at the group’s office space.

#### **4c. Youth and Dialogue and Reconciliation**

Dialogue and reconciliation are essential elements of peacebuilding across different societies, and Kenya is no exception. Young Kenyans have incorporated activities that promote dialogue and reconciliation into their peace advocacy across local communities. Dialogue and reconciliation are particularly crucial in Kenya given the multi-layered nature of security challenges, especially the intersection of ethnic, political, religious and gender identities. As highlighted previously, much of Kenya’s peace and security struggles transcend the macro-level political divisions and conflicts to include a myriad of localized inter-communal tensions and violent clashes. The youth-led interventions in this category range from those working nation-wide or across several ethno-communities, to those working in specific contexts. The examples of the former include the Peace for Africa and Economic Development (PAD) initiative, which works in ethnically sensitive and low income communities to mutual understanding and constructive participation in democratic processes. The PAD is a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding as empowers young people across ethno-political lines through entrepreneurship and economic development in order to foster mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation and unity. Through its *Fanaka Programme* the PAD empowers youth through business incubation training and provision of small grants in order reduce their vulnerability to political violence.<sup>68</sup>

Another example is the Kenya Youth Peace Platform (KeYPP), which is a nation-wide community platform for Peace and Civil Society actors. It was founded on June 2014 to promote a common vision and synergize the efforts of all Kenya youth peace actors to tackle underlying causes of conflict and to create a platform for sustained interactions, shared experiences, concerted efforts and seamless coordination of Kenya Youth Peace Actors.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the Laikipia Peace Caravan (LPC) operates as a platform for young people from different ethnic groups to travel as a group to volatile and conflict-affected areas to promote peace in Kenya. It organizes peace meetings in strategic locations such as markets, churches and schools to bring warring communities together to dialogue about conflict issues, especially cattle raiding.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of youth-led interventions that promote dialogue and reconciliation in specific contexts or to address specific conflicts are profiled below.

#### **Case Study 9: Kericho County Youth Bunge Network (KCYBN)**

The KCYBN was formed in the aftermath of the 2007/8 post-election violence centrally to promote ethnic dialogue and reconciliation among Sondu residents in Kericho County. The organization has several youth parliament (bunge) structures at the village level that mobilizes youth to have a greater voice at national level, to create new livelihood opportunities, to increase public awareness of youth priorities and to promote effective youth participation in governance and in peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>71</sup> Of the 30 board members of the KCYBN, 12 are young female youth.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, of the

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<sup>68</sup> <https://www.cafamerica.org/story/pad/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://kenyayouthpeaceplatform.wordpress.com/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.ileia.org/2016/12/19/pastoralist-youth-agents-peace/>

<sup>71</sup> <https://peacerevolution.net/wall/topic-99985965/kericho-county-peace-building-initiative-hots-spots-areas>

<sup>72</sup> Email interview with Kibet Too Wesley, Deputy President, 6 December 2017

7 leadership position within the organization, the treasurer, vice secretary and secretary are all female youth.

The overall desire is to ensure a peaceful electioneering period in 2013 and afterwards in Kericho country. Philemon, Rotich, a member of the KCYBN argues that “a society with no peace is a society creating poverty on its own”.<sup>73</sup> The organization promotes youth awareness and active participation in peacebuilding activities through its peace outreach activities, which often involves an average of 93 youth participants. The organization also seeks ways to strengthen youth voices and participation in advocating peaceful coexistence, and conflict management in Kericho County.<sup>74</sup> The group holds trainings to enable its members to understand peacebuilding issues among communities in the region, understand the role of youth in peacebuilding and advocacy, and repackages peace messages in creative ways in order to facilitate shared understanding among peers. Stella Chepkemoi, the treasurer of the KCYBN argues that “there is no way we can improve our economic standards if there is no peace in our society.”<sup>75</sup> One major achievement of the KCYBN was the commissioning of the youth bunge network at the constituency level and its consistent capacity to reach out to and mobilize its grassroots members.<sup>76</sup>

### **Case Study 10: Kaabong Peace Ambassadors (KPA)**

The KPA was formed in 2015 by a group of former warriors that had participated in armed cattle raid and violent attacks against rival communities in the Karamoja cluster. The KPA in Kenya is part of a broader regional peacebuilding initiative supported by the USAID to stem violent clashes and build peace and reconciliation in border communities in Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.<sup>77</sup> The organization provides rehabilitation to reformed warriors, holds communities peace dialogues and enforced peace agreements, and provides entrepreneurial and life skills to former fighters.<sup>78</sup> The Kaabong Peace Ambassadors play an active role in local peace dialogue committees that bring youth leaders, government, and security officials together to discuss youth role in security efforts. The community dialogues include sports for peace events, music and dance, drama, and advocating joint grazing agreements. The programme has led to the successful reintegration and acceptance of former warriors into the community.<sup>79</sup>

### **Case Study 11: Langata Youths Network (LYN)**

The LYN was founded in 2010 in Langata Constituency as a community youth-based voluntary organization with over 200 members aged 15-34 years. The LYN was motivated by the successive experience of violence linked to elections and politics, and inter-group clashes in Kibera. Although the 2013 March General elections had a reduced level of violence, it was still marked by high levels of ethno-communal divisions and tensions among Kenyans. This was especially so in slums like Kibera.

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<sup>73</sup> Email exchange with Kibet Too Wesley, Deputy President, 6 December 2017.

<sup>74</sup> <https://peacerevolution.net/wall/topic-99985965/kericho-county-peace-building-initiative-hots-spots-areas>

<sup>75</sup> Email exchange with Kibet Too Wesley, Deputy President, 6 December 2017

<sup>76</sup> Peace revolution. Kericho County Peace Building Initiative-Hots Spots Areas(Online) . Available at: <https://peacerevolution.net/wall/topic-99985965/kericho-county-peace-building-initiative-hots-spots-areas> Accessed on 12/10/2017

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.pactworld.org/features/%E2%80%98i-have-seen-light%E2%80%99-pact%E2%80%99s-help-ugandan-fighter-puts-down-his-weapons>

<sup>78</sup> Pact. ‘I have seen the light’: With Pact’s help, a Ugandan fighter puts down his weapons. Available at: <http://www.pactworld.org/features/%E2%80%98i-have-seen-light%E2%80%99-pact%E2%80%99s-help-ugandan-fighter-puts-down-his-weapons>. Accessed on 12/10/2017

<sup>79</sup> [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00MWP6.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00MWP6.pdf)

The LYN's vision is that of a free society based on equal opportunities for the development and empowerment of youths. The LYN's core activities include community radio programmes; community land and housing rights awareness campaigns; civic education training; peace building and alternative conflict resolution programmes; and leadership training programmes. For instance, the LYN conducts a community radio talk show at Pamoja FM 99.9 twice a month and has conducted over 100 editions since 2013. The radio program involved the participation and feedback from the Kibera slum citizens (especially youth) on issues of good governance, economic development, reproductive health, security and peace building, community cohesion and integration, and overall opportunities of development and citizens empowerment.

The LYN worked to mitigate potential conflict and violence by launching the Kibera Dialogues Project in 2013 that included youth and other community stakeholders. It included a series of pre-dialogue consultative meetings that targets the three most conflicting communities in Kibera, namely the Nubian (landowners), the Kikuyu (structure owners), and the Luos (tenants and inhabitants). According to Erick Owuor (LYN coordinator), the "pre-dialogue consultative meetings brought forth contentious issues such as rising negative ethnicity, tenants and landlord conflicts, political patronage, Kibera land issue, and youth unemployment, and this metamorphosed into a Joint Dialogue Forum that included all conflict-affected communities."<sup>80</sup> Winnie Nyaol, a Programs Coordinator, also argues that "the LYN dialogue promotes responsible citizenship which means that being a brother and a sister to your neighbour. Whenever people run into problems in their houses it is often neighbours who help first even before the family steps in. nobody considers tribe when the neighbours' house is burning therefore why should we start victimizing particular tribes?"<sup>81</sup> The dialogue forum was officiated by the head of the National Commission for Integration and Cohesion (NCIC), Hassan Mohammed and Hon Ken Okoth MP Kibera Constituency and Langata Youths Chairperson Daniel Orog. The project reached over 1000 Kibera community members. Some of the partners and supporters of the LYN include the NCIC, Pamoja FM Station, the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy and the South African Institute of Justice and Reconciliation {IJR}.

Young women are presented in the leadership of the LYN and in the coordination and implementation of activities.<sup>82</sup> The top leadership positions of the organisation namely Secretary, Treasurer, Programs coordinator, and Vice chairperson are all headed by young female youth. The organisation has a membership of 200, out of which 86 are female youth LYN also has programmes that specifically target young women including Women Small scale Trader, rights of Women Domestic Workers and women voices in Kibera. One of the biggest challenges to the participation of young female youth in the programme activities of LYN is the barrier that child care imposes on youth women who often lack child care facilities or assistance. Additionally, young single mothers often have to work to earn a daily wage which limits their participation in programme activities.

### ***Case Study 12: Inter-ethnic Dialogue and Peaceful Reconciliation (IDPR)***

The Inter-ethnic dialogue and peaceful reconciliation initiative derives its name from the Kiswahili and Sheng expression *Mbona Tusibonge* which means *Why don't we dialogue?* The IDPR is a peace project funded by the EU and works in collaboration Umande Trust and Sustainable Energy to work with youth in Kibera to address electoral and ethno-political violence in successive electoral cycles. The underlying rationale for the IDPR was the need to prevent and mitigate violence by breaking down ethno-political prejudice, promoting inter-group dialogue, and empowering youth and broader citizens to participate actively and constructively (in non-violent ways) in election and governance

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<sup>80</sup> Erick Owuor, Programmes Coordinator, Phone Interview 17 October 2017, Nairobi

<sup>81</sup> Email exchange with Erick Owuor, 20 November 2017

<sup>82</sup> Email Interview with Erick Owuor, Committee Chairperson of Mbona Tusibonge and Coordinator of LYN, 20 November 2017

processes.<sup>83</sup> The IDPR runs the peace project in collaboration with the Langata Youth Network to provide politically-neutral dialogue meetings and undertakes voter education seminars, educational theatre, and sport and music festivals. The activities were selected and designed by local project management committee comprising of youth representatives from different villages and ethnic groups in Kibera.

The IDPR also trained Kibera youth groups' representatives as 'Voter Ambassadors' to raise awareness and to ensure the active participation of young people in elections. Erick Owuor, a committee Chairperson argues that young people need to know they have rights- the right to peace being one of them.<sup>84</sup> The voter ambassadors were also trained on Kenya's new (2010) Constitution, leadership and conflict resolution and peace building. The voter ambassadors have designed and assumed leadership in managing and implementing the project. The IDPR ran over 30 Peace Events, including public peace debates focusing on issues affecting youth, women, disabled, and the elderly. It also organized debates on religious issues and among religious leaders, and on the activities of *Matatu* (local bus) touts. Some of the sessions also cover debates between political aspirants and political parties, and local peace agendas and conversations. Ramogi Osewe, Committee Member and representative of the Initiative for Community Action (ICA), argues that "Youth have come to the realisation that even though democracy dictates that the people are sovereign, through elections, people elect representatives to take forward their concerns, but in doing so they do not, in theory, relinquish any sovereignty."<sup>85</sup>

In the run up to the 2013 and 2017 elections, the IDPR voter ambassadors conducted over 60 voter seminars in Kibera to educate voters on peaceful coexistence, voting process, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and peacebuilding in Kibera. Since inception, the IDPR has reached out to about 5000 residents, including youth, through voter seminars, peace conferences and festivals. The activities of IDPR is said to have contributed to a more peaceful election process in Kibera in 2013 and 2017 in spite of claims of voting irregularities.

### **Case Study 13: Likoni Development Programme (LICODEP)**

The Likoni Development Programme (LICODEP) is a non-governmental organization that was established in 2004 with a network of eight youth groups and operates in Mombasa and Kwale Counties. The core members of LICODEP are young male and female persons aged 18-35 years, although some of the participants in its programmes fall outside of this age bracket. It was established to promote the voice of youth and women, as well as address the issues affecting them and broader communities. LICODEP focuses on issues of access to education, enhancing good governance, and strengthening youth participation and representation in decision-making at local level.<sup>86</sup>

LICODEP provides training on peacebuilding and gender equality, and undertakes outreach activities such as youth peace forums, peace campaign week, formation of tolerance and anti-bias clubs in schools and Madrasas, and a bi-annual football tournament for males and females. LICODEP promotes peace through peace messaging adapted to local circumstances and local language and culture; for example branded T-shirts by LICODEP carry the message that says "*Tusibaguane, tuvumiliane, tuungane tuimarishe Amani, usalama ni maendeleo, Jamii yenye amani ni Jamii yenye maendeleo*", meaning "let's not discriminate each other, let's join hands and enhance peace as

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<sup>83</sup> Erick Owuor, Committee Chairperson Email exchange 17 October 2017 Nairobi

<sup>84</sup> Email exchange, 20 November 2017

<sup>85</sup> Email exchange with Erick Owuor, 20 November 2017

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.licodep.org/who-we-are.html>

security and peace equal development.”<sup>87</sup> Another peace message carried in its poster reads “*Tushirikiane jukumu la usalama ni la mimi na wewe*”, meaning “let us work together as the responsibility for ensuring security and peace is yours and mine.”<sup>88</sup>

It also provides support for youth to access credit facilities and micro enterprise development, and information on reproductive health and substance abuse. Finally, LICODEP acts as a catalyst for collective/group action on community issues, especially on transparent and accountable management of decentralized governance structures and funding.

Apart from delivering trainings and building the capacities of its members (youth) on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, LICODEP has been able to raise awareness on gender issues in community policing and also supported various education programmes in the form of providing learning materials, trainings and school improvement programmes through the mobilization of the Likoni residents.<sup>89</sup> A number of female youth occupy leadership positions within LICODEP including finance officer, administrator, librarian and trainer on entrepreneurship and life skills. LICODEP also conducts forums specifically for women including young girls in peacebuilding activities which partners with *Sauti ya Wanawake* (the voice of women) to tackle violence against women and girls. The LICODEP is actively supported by partners such as ActionAid, Royal Danish Embassy, DIFD (through Coffey), USAID and the Likoni community, still it faces numerous challenges, especially the lack of material and financial resources to sustain its programmes.

#### **4d. Technology and Youth Empowerment**

Young Kenyans continue to leverage their pivotal role in the development and use of ICT tools to address governance and peacebuilding issues. Kenyan youth geeks are the trailblazers in the use of ICT in election monitoring through the *Ushahidi* Platform that was introduced after the 2007 election violence. The Ushahidi means ‘testimony’ or ‘witness’ in Swahili and was developed to crowd-map reports of election-related violence and breach of peace and has evolved to become platform for improving bottom-up flow of information and for citizens to exercise voice.<sup>90</sup> It was developed by a group of young technologists and bloggers interested in doing a mashup of where, when and how violence was occurring using Google Maps. The Ushahidi allows Kenyans to text reports of violence from mobile phones or through email messages to gain an accurate documentation of events, a requisite for genuine reconciliation and peacebuilding.<sup>91</sup>

The use of technology by youth for peacebuilding purposes was intensified ahead of the 2017 elections; for instance, youth used three main hashtags to promote peace and harmony in the run up to the elections. The Hashtag #TribelessYouth campaign was initiated by a 23-year old female university student and it advocated youth to vote political leaders capable of bringing about positive change, promoting national unity and preventing the use of youth in ethnic violence. It also sought to address tribalism and other ethnic injustices and discrimination in Kenya by organizing sessions with youth in different spaces such as churches, schools to teach them of the importance of

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<sup>87</sup> Email interview with Juma Mwasina, 5 December 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Email interview with Juma Mwasina, 5 December 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Juma Mwasina, Programme Manager Email exchange, 16 October 2017

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.usahidi.com/about>

<sup>91</sup> Jeffery (2011).

participating in governance and accountability processes in their counties. In addition, tribeless youth caravans were organized in different counties in Kenya.<sup>92</sup>

Another tech-based initiative is the #Chills campaign on twitter and Instagram that sought to promote peace among young people. The Hashtag was started by a young man who sought to increase young people interactions across cultural and ethnic lines in order to erase stereotypes. Through the Hashtag, young people are able to share short videos on the importance of peace and unity. Apart from online campaign and advocacy initiatives, there are also youth organizations and organizational platforms that actively used technology alongside other tools and activities to advance peacebuilding agenda in Kenya. One major case study is profiled below.

#### **Case Study 14: Universities and Colleges Students' Peace Association of Kenya (UCSPAK)**

The UCSPAK is a non-profit and non-political student association established with the major objective of preventing radicalization and promoting peace in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. It was formed in the wake of the 2015 Garissa University terror attack in which 148 persons (mostly students) were killed by violent extremists. Within the broader spectrum of peacebuilding, countering radicalization and violent extremism among students, youth and society at large is a major objective of the UCSPAK

The UCSPAK has representatives from all the 68 universities and colleges in Kenya representing the interest of over 2 million undergraduate students (mostly age 18-24 years) in Kenya. The National Students' Peace Congress is the supreme decision making organ of UCSPAK, and it comprises of delegates from all universities and colleges in Kenya. The UCSPAK intervention is focused on students of higher education in Kenya and its three areas of programming are leadership and governance; countering violent extremism; and gender and girl-child empowerment. The UCSPAK theory of change emphasizes youth especially those in the institutions of higher learning as key agents of change, specifically in the use of non-violent actions to bring about social change. Students of higher education can be used to build bridges across communities, and work together to mitigate violent conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence. According to Ruslan Magero (UCSPAK Coordinator), the organization seeks to “promote peace and security; sensitize students on the causes and effects of radicalization with a view to counteracting the appeal of violent extremism; unite youth across ethnic, religious and political-economic backgrounds; and to promote critical thinking and team spirit among youth.”<sup>93</sup>

Ahead of the 2017 elections, the UCSPAK organized the DRL project to promote the role of youth in peaceful elections and political governance processes, and involved working with youth groups and youth leaders, media and other civil society groups. The UCPAK also “engaged different institutions of higher learning in peace dialogue forums, peer to peer and social media engagement to counter fake news (that create tension in the country) and violent extremist messaging on platforms such as Tweeter and Facebook within campuses in four institutions of higher learning.”<sup>94</sup> The DRL project is an 18-month (April 2017 – September 2018) intervention sponsored by the US Department of Human Rights and Labor (DRL) to coincide with the period before, during and after the 2017 elections. It is implemented by three partners namely Saferworld, Life & Peace Institute (LPI) & Handicap International; UCSPAK is the implementing partner within higher institutions of learning.

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<sup>92</sup> CapitaCampus. 3 Hashtags Kenyan Youth Are Using To Preach Peace This Election Period.

<https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/campus/3-hashtags-kenyan-youth-using-preach-peace-election-period/>

<sup>93</sup> Ruslan Magero, Programs Coordinator, Email Interview, 19 October 2017

<sup>94</sup> Joel Maina, Executive Secretary General, Phone Interview 19 October 2017



The UCSPAK through partnership with Saferworld Kenya and other peace stakeholders is currently piloting schemes that engage youth in the institutions of higher learning to reduce their vulnerability to radicalization and violent extremism and increase their meaningful participation in Kenyan democratic space for a peaceful Kenya. The UCSPAK also engages students on key frameworks for peace including the Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. Goal 16 of Peace Justice and Strong institutions); the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security; and the African Union 2063 Agenda.

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, youth in Kenya don't lack the spaces to engage in peacebuilding and there is evidence of agency and creativity in how young people have leveraged their talents to advocate for good governance, and build social cohesion in communities. But youth and youth organizations engaged in peacebuilding in Kenya face challenges, as well as achieve important milestones. The range of key observations and findings specific to Kenya (but raises broader questions and implications) are highlighted as follows:

- ***Young people recognize and do seize opportunities for peacebuilding in the aftermath of violence:*** A key observation is that successive episodes of violence serve as a catalyst for expanded roles and contributions to peace and security in Kenya. The roles and contributions of young people to peace and security grew exponentially in the aftermath of the 2007/8 violence as a reaction to the post-election violence itself, as well as recurring ethno-communal conflicts. Admittedly, young people were involved in agitations for independence, and multiparty democracy in Kenya; however youth's contemporary roles and contributions to peacebuilding is linked to the experience of violence at communal and national levels. The 2007/8 post-election violence remains a watershed moment in peacebuilding in Kenya broadly, and the roles and contributions of young people in particular. The post-election violence triggered national conversations about peace; constitutional changes; and new policies and institutional mechanisms for peacebuilding. This suggests that experiences of violence do provide unintended opportunities for peacebuilding, but the key question is how to leverage such opportunities, especially in relation to and by young people (i.e. how can young people be supported to leverage such opportunities). Moreover, it is unclear to what extent the roles, and talents and contributions of youth to peacebuilding are recognized by other stakeholders.
- ***Youth doing peacebuilding in their own way(s):*** Youth participation and contributions to peacebuilding in Kenya is anchored on indigenous resources and practices, especially youth adaptations of cultural resources. Indigenous practices, especially language, underpin the contributions of young people to peace and security in Kenya. For instance, youth in Kenya have adapted local language, especially Swahili and Sheng to frame and brand peacebuilding ideas, messages and activities in ways that attracts broad understanding and participation. Through the local resources, peacebuilding is stripped of technical jargons, yet it is robust and delivers the associated ends of preventing and mitigating violence and promoting reconciliation. This raises the possibility of major peacebuilding interventions being designed or adapted to reflect youth's vision of peace and roadmap to attaining it in relevant contexts.

- ***Youth contributions to peace and security are bottom-bottom and bottom-down:*** Young Kenyan's roles and contributions to peace and security are largely localized, focused on specific issues and contexts. In most cases, youth-led peacebuilding interventions are sub-national, rather than a top-down exercise. This has its positives, and perhaps possible drawbacks. Of importance is that it makes the majority of youth-led initiatives to be fairly sustainable (even in the context of limited finances), context-specific, and reflects local needs and expectations. A potential limitation is the limited coordination and synergies across different contexts, and the risk that underlying national-level ethno-political divisions would remain a perennial challenge.
- ***Youth in peacebuilding in Kenya is multi-dimensional:*** Young people's roles and contributions to peace and security in Kenya are diverse in terms of activities, issues of focus, entry points, and target groups. In most cases, specific activities serve as entry points for the delivery of peace messages and advocacy, as well as capacity building on peace and security themes such as dialogue, reconciliation, preventing radicalization and countering violent extremism. The entry point(s) often reflect the needs and peculiarities of the target groups and the peacebuilding environment (communities). The arrays of target groups include students, unemployed youth, artisans, traders, community warriors, etc. The multi-dimensionality is also reflected in the range of partners and partnerships associated with youth's roles and contributions to peace and security; it includes the government, civil society organizations, peacebuilding organizations, development agencies, religious bodies, etc.
- ***Signs of increasing female participation and gender-sensitivity in youth-led peacebuilding:*** Some of the examples from Kenya would appear to indicate (or raise the possibility at least), instances of young female Kenyans participation in and contributions to peace and security, though small in relative terms. This does not suggest that female youth participation in peacebuilding is a new, recent development; rather it is becoming less shadowy and more visible. Moreover, the nature of peace-related programming and interventions by young people appear to be showing some elements of gender sensitivity as measured by the involvement of more females in the design and delivery of programmes, and the adaptation of activities to the needs of female youth.
- ***Youth contributions to peace and security are financially under-resourced, but driven by volunteerism:*** Peace advocacy among young Kenyans is driven largely by a shared vision about the present and future of Kenya. Young people are preoccupied with building peace and security in Kenya through regenerating new forms of citizenships, civic engagements, and social ethos founded on peacebuilding principles of mutual tolerance, respect, non-violence and reconciliation. To an extent, peace and peacebuilding is becoming a key element of youth identity and aspirations for the future in Kenya. Admittedly, some local and international stakeholders, including development agencies, civil society groups, and UN agencies do provide some technical and financial support to youth peacebuilding organizations, however this is generally inadequate, short-lived, uncoordinated and patchy. In most cases, youth peacebuilding activities and the quantity and quality of support for it by other stakeholders are hardly integrated with broader peacebuilding programmes at the national, regional and international levels. This raises a broader question on how mainstream peacebuilding could begin to

interrogate and engage with how young people interpret and manifest peacebuilding, their visions of peace, and roadmaps for progressing along the peace spectrum.

- ***Dearth of research and analytical frameworks on youth, peace and security:*** Analysing the roles and contributions of youth to peacebuilding in Kenya is not without conceptual and empirical limitations. There are limited extant studies, and there is a serious lack of conceptually and empirically robust analytical templates. For instance, there are no standardized templates or methodologies regarding the types of research problems and questions; sites and locations to explore; potential indicators of results and impacts; and how to mainstreaming gender in youth-led peacebuilding. Much of existing literature are focused on civil society groups, especially international peacebuilding organizations; the role of government and the UN systems; and macro-level (strategic level peacebuilding involving high-level diplomats and mediators).

## **6. Recommendations**

- I. **National Policy Framework on Youth in Peacebuilding:** There is a policy vacuum in relation to the roles and contributions of youth to peacebuilding in Kenya. The National Youth Policy only tangentially recognizes and covers the potential and actual roles of youth peacebuilding in Kenya. Worse still, it is not implemented. A new national policy framework for youth in peacebuilding is required to articulate, recognize and provide legal protection to youth groups involved in peacebuilding in Kenya. This will be in addition to reviewing and updating, and implementing the national youth policy. The recommended policy framework will also highlight legally-binding obligations on a variety of stakeholders, including the government of Kenya (national and county levels), private sector, civil society groups, development agencies, etc.

Key Actors: Government of Kenya with support from relevant agencies/office of the UN, EU, AU and EAC.

- II. **Initiate Youth in Peacebuilding Programmes at National and Regional Levels:** The landscape of peacebuilding broadly, and specifically on the roles and contributions of youth are largely uncoordinated/disconnected and lacking in strategic direction. At most, it is characterized by intermittent reactions to outbreaks of violence in Kenya and East Africa region. A Nation/Regional programme is required to recognize and integrate youth roles and contributions to peacebuilding into mainstream peacebuilding activities; bring together youth groups involved in peacebuilding to share experiences, resources and best practices; and to better coordinate youth peacebuilding interventions. The youth in peacebuilding programme will also assist in identifying and nurturing transformational leaders among youth across different sectors, counties and organizations in Kenya. Such programme will also align youth peacebuilding activities with international policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), African peer Review Mechanism (APRM), AU's Agenda 2063, UNSC 2250, etc.

Key Actors: Government of Kenya, youth groups in Kenya, EAC/IGAD, AU, and UN Regional offices/agencies.

- III. **Establish a Trust Fund for Youth in Peacebuilding:** This is required to address the high degree of uncertainties, as well as the limitations imposed by the lack of funding on youth potential contributions to peace and security in Kenya. The trust fund will serve as a mechanism for coordinating local and international financial and technical support, establish funding and accountability standards, and streamline funding cycles and templates for youth groups involved in peacebuilding in Kenya.

Key actors: donor agencies, development agencies, relevant UN agencies, international financial/development institutions, and the private sector in Kenya.

- IV. **Promote Youth Inclusion in Formal Decision-making Processes and Institutions to Ensure Prioritization of Youth Issues in Kenya:** The reality of inaction of the draft national youth policy reflects its minimal prioritization, as well as the lack of voice and representation by young people in formal processes and institutions of decision-making across Kenya. This is in spite of the 2010 Constitution, especially the devolution of governance. A dedicated programme is required to increase the access, participation and voice of youth in formal decision-making ensembles to champion youth issues; provide channels for feeding youth perspectives on key governance issues; and to reduce the marginalization of young people in government.

Key actors: Government of Kenya, relevant UN agencies/offices, and international development agencies.

- V. **A Research Agenda on Youth in Peacebuilding in Kenya:** The study and analysis of youth roles and contributions to peacebuilding lacks rigours and standardized methodologies for documenting and assessing impacts. A formal research agenda, similar to the Global Progress Study is required at the national level to streamline analytical templates and methodologies for studying youth roles and contributions to peacebuilding in broad term. The research agenda will assist in a rigorous mapping of the range of approaches and tools, and their spatial distribution of youth contributions to peacebuilding in Kenya. It will also facilitate the tracking of innovations and broader trends (change and continuities) in youth roles and contributions to peace and security in Kenya.

Key actors: Local and international universities and think-tanks, Government of Kenya, development agencies, UN Peacebuilding Support Office, and UNDP.

- VI. **Leverage the Energies and Creativity of Youth in Peacebuilding in Kenya:** Much of current innovations by youth and youth groups in peacebuilding in Kenya are neither recognized nor supported. In most cases, they are lost due to a lack of support and insufficient capacity to upscale. The majority of youth-led/owned peacebuilding initiatives have inherent potentials for mass sensitization and mobilization of young people and broader citizenry. Still, through a capacity building programme designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of youth groups, some of the youth-led/owned innovative approaches to peacebuilding can be sustained, shared and replicated across locations, and standardized and integrated into mainstream peacebuilding.

Key actors: Relevant UN agencies/offices, local and international peacebuilding organizations, and development agencies.

- VII. **Affirmative action to Promote Broad-based Inclusion, including mainstreaming Gender, into Youth Peacebuilding Activities:** Young people are never homogenous in Kenya and across other countries. The participation and visibility of certain section of youth in peacebuilding activities is either low or negligible in Kenya. At most, they are yet to be uncovered. Yet a broad-based representation and participation of various categories of youth, including rural youth, uneducated youth, young mothers, young widows, youth living with HIV/AIDS, former militia members and violent extremists, youth wings of political parties, youth in the private sector, etc. is required. In particular, the participation and visibility of female youth, as well as issues peculiar to the needs of young women remain minimal in the contributions of youth to peacebuilding in Kenya. A dedicated programme designed to increase the visibility and participation of female youth and other under-represented categories of youth is recommended; to develop their capacity in peacebuilding; and to ensure that peacebuilding advocacy address (include) their needs.

Key actors: Government of Kenya, relevant UN agencies/offices, local and international peacebuilding organizations, and donor agencies.

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