

Celina Del Felice and Obi Peter Onyeigwe (editors)

Youth in Africa. Agents of Change

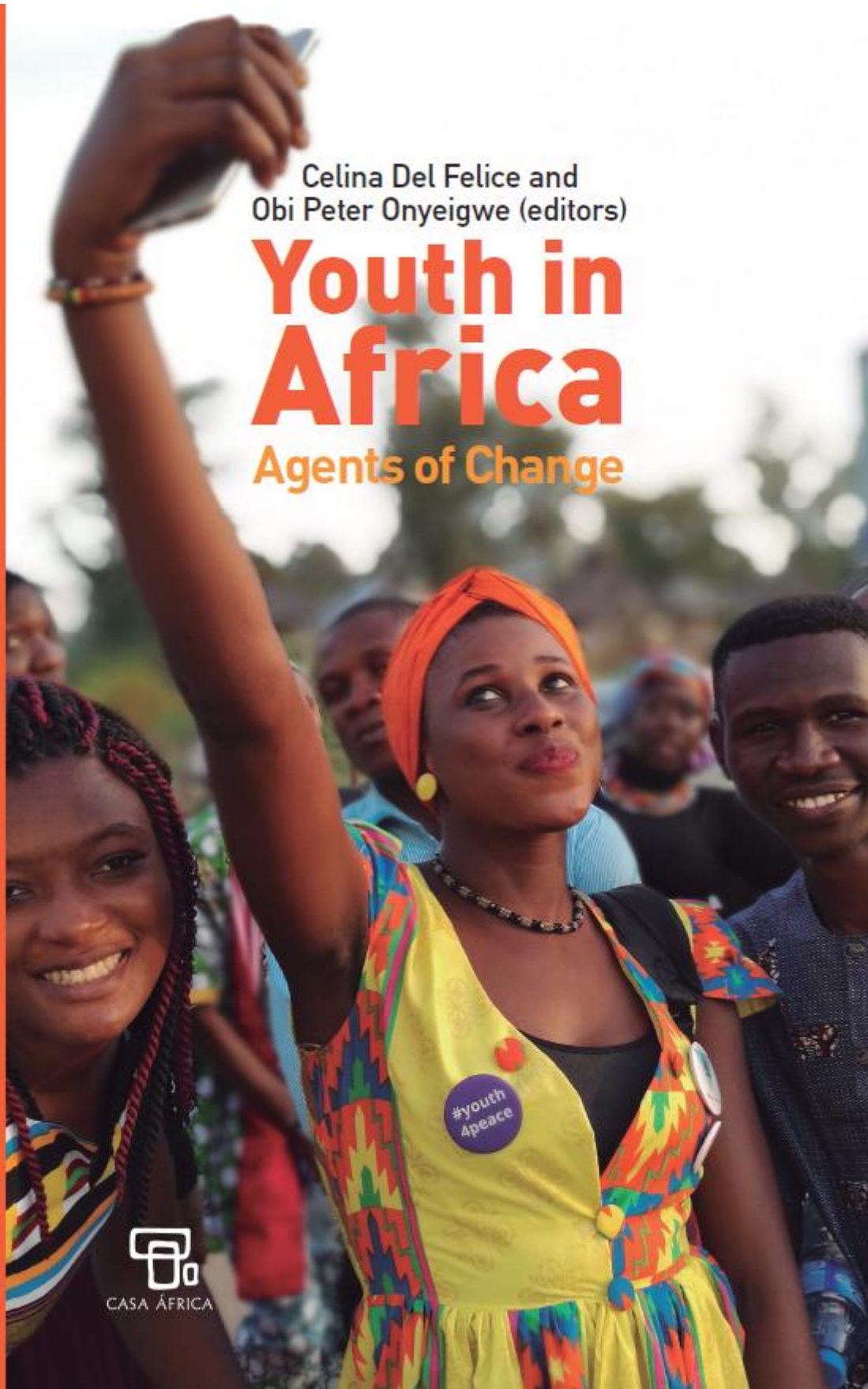
Celina Del Felice and
Obi Peter Onyeigwe (editors)

Youth in Africa

Agents of Change



CASA ÁFRICA





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and Obi Peter Onyeigwe (editors)

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CASA ÁFRICA EDITS TITLES LIKE THIS ONE IN COLLABORATION WITH LOS LIBROS DE LA CATARATA WHICH AIM TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES CURRENT AFFAIRS, THEIR HISTORIES AND THEIR CIVIL SOCIETIES THROUGH ESSAYS AND TEXTS WRITTEN BY AFRICAN AUTHORS OR SCHOLARS SPECIALISED IN AFRICA. THIS SERIES ADDRESSES TOPICS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL OF THE CONTINENT FROM A POINT VIEW WHICH IS DISTANT FROM STEREOTYPES THROUGH WHICH AFRICAN REALITIES HAVE BEEN TRADITIONALLY ADDRESSED.



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THIS BOOK AS BEEN EDITED TO BE DISTRIBUTED. IT IS THE AIM OF ITS EDITORS THAT IT IS USED AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE, THAT ORIGINALS ARE ACQUIRED TO ALLOW THE EDITION OF NEW ONES, AND THAT, IF PARTS ARE REPRODUCED, THE TITLE SHOULD BE MENTIONED AND AUTHORS, ACKNOWLEDGED.

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FOREWORD

YOUTH IN AFRICA: POLICY PARADOXES AND VIABLE OPTIONS

It is easy to see why, in a world oiled by neoliberalism, any discussion about Africa's youth inevitably ends up being a session of mulling, assessing and predicting the economic benefits of the youth, their productivity, and their contribution to the well-being of society. The reason is simple: all countries in the continent are struggling with a youth bulge, and no one wants to have millions of young people in their country without work, or some meaningful engagement.

A quick scan of Africa's development blueprint, the Agenda 2063, offers invaluable insight into the thinking within the policy sphere about the place of the youth in the continent. In more than half of the 24 mentions in which the word "youth" appears in the Agenda 2063 document, the words "potential", "empowerment", "transformative leadership" and "innovation" appear adjacent to it. It may all look like a proper diagnosis of the youth situation in Africa, but the subtext of helplessness or latency among the youth cadre is prevalent in the framing of the continental policy document prepared by the African Union. It gives credence to the worries about a generation gap in the policy sphere; the widely-documented concern about Africa's old leaders superintending

countries where many of the people are young, seemingly fostering a disconnect between the government policies and the aspirations of the youth.

As 2016 Mo Ibrahim Foundation report found out, the average age of African presidents was 66 while the median age was about 20 years old. Within that logic, it is easy to forget that the youth of today are children of yesterday and the elders of tomorrow. Therefore, compartmentalising their involvement in societal progress without a wholesome consideration of the whole milieu of possibilities that society can afford for everyone is unwise.

Nobody remains a youth forever. There is a pointlessness in nations coming up with policies, incubation projects, safe spaces for youth, things which only offer false confidence to young people. Policies cannot be youth-blind or gender blind and at the same time, they cannot put youth in a box in which they have all the answers or have to be guided. Policies need to be inclusive to everyone, especially youth and women for example, as opposed to policies that are stiffly limiting or exclusive to one group. Additionally, the moment one defines another as 'youth', there may be the implicit burden of inexperience that comes with it, and thus trusteeship. The other view is that in Africa, that burden of inexperience means young people are locked out of meaningful contribution to social, cultural and economic progress of their country.

In both views, there's an unsaid predisposition to keep the youth "engaged" or "employed" as a panacea to stability, an ingredient for peace. What this says is that the continent is fearful of a whole generation that is coming up. Also, it says a lot about the breakdown of the traditional value systems that knit a society together, value systems that ensured that the elders are no longer afraid of the young people, because of constant mentorship, with sufficient latitude for the youth to make mistakes or fail, and learn from these.

The single story of the African youth, as people with energy, talent and champions of innovation and entrepreneurship—people who need to be shepherded and guided in one way or another, given resources to do projects to keep them engaged—leads to the perpetuation of the youth narrative, and a terrible policy confusion

about what “youth” is. In fact, in most countries, the definition of youth unemployment yields to the global definition that focuses on the people between the age of 15 and 24, a definition favoured by the UN for “statistical consistency”. Yet in some countries such as Kenya, which uses that UN definition to compute unemployment figures, the problem is that the definition of youth refers to the ages between 18 and 35 years. To these countries, anyone below 18 is a child, and children have no mind of their own, goes the wisdom. The African Youth Charter puts it at between 15 and 35 years. But UNESCO’s clarification is helpful, because it gives meaning for having targeted policies for youth, essentially, focusing on people who have completed or left compulsory education but before they get their first job.

The reason for pointing out these little things in policies is to buttress the ground-breaking propositions in this book that go beyond looking at the “potential” of the youth, to exhibiting what young people are doing to change the world. The implicit thrust of the chapters in this book appears to be an emphasis that thinking about the fleeting concept of *youth* as a permanent state, spawns policies that essentially demand trusteeship over the initiatives of the youth, a kind of guided exercise over free will, a development map that young people have to stick to, or perish.

Do young people need opportunities? Of course! But as nature always reminds us, these should not be given, like alms. One has to be passionate about something, to do it to solve the society’s problems; to meet social, economic, and cultural needs; to change lives. The obsession with finding opportunities for youth to make money, to keep them engaged, to empower them creates false ambition and needless frustration.

Experiences from Nigeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, The Gambia, and many other countries where many young people have limited opportunities for participation in public life, and therefore resort to alternative means, often characterised by violent clashes with authorities, make it easy for policymakers and the leaders to think of youth as simply a potentially dangerous cadre that needs to be managed. This reasoning has been applied to the poor before, and to women, and it

keeps on failing every time, because the assumed powerlessness, a lack of agency is a baseless premise.

This book shows that it is possible for youth to live and do everything that society expects of its members regardless of age and gender. It is an inspirational compendium that gives invaluable insights into the thinking of young people, their aspirations, how they see the world, and records their contributions with amazing familiarity for anyone in the continent. It addresses today's challenges and exposes without lambasting the policy failures and leadership inadequacies in a subtle convivial manner, which I think, makes it a great beginning point for policymakers to think about their policies in a much clearer and sustainable way. After all, nobody in Africa wants to lose out as soon as they grow too old to be termed 'youth' and therefore suddenly cannot access services because they are no longer youth when they become a certain age, without considering the cultural and social context.

With the knowledge that by 2025, one out of every four people in the world under 25 will be African, it just means that the leaders of today have to focus on building a continent with resilient and sustainable programmes to ensure that children transcend into responsible adults, without having to be segregated through policies. It has to be a continuous loop, not the current mindset that assumes children have no role, treats youth as children, and ignores the necessity of the mistake-making experimental phase in the transition to adulthood.

ALPHONCE SHIUNDU
Kenya Editor, Africa Check

INTRODUCTION

CELINA DEL FELICE
AND OBI PETER ONYEIGWE

Any society that does not succeed tapping
into the energy and creativity of its youth
will be left behind

KOFI ANNAN

This book could be compared with a choir of serious and joyful voices at once. One which sings with passion, yet gathering different voices in melodious harmony. These different singers have one thing in common: they all believe in the power of young people as social change agents. They all share stories of how young people in Africa are not only facing challenges but addressing them with determination.

We, as editors of this volume, are youth workers and educators for peace and human rights ourselves and we have had the honour of working with many extraordinary young people. We have been witnesses of the creativity, energy, braveness, eagerness to learn, and special leadership of young people in Africa. However, the picture of them we often see in media or academic studies is different. They are portrayed as helpless and hopeless, they are presented as victims to be saved or as possible threats to stability, a group to be feared. We do not deny that youth experience deprivation and extremely challenging situations nor that often militias or violent groups are composed of or led by young people. We simply argue that the current portrayal of African youth is incomplete and biased if it does not account for

the multiple positive roles that youth have not only as peaceful but also as actively committed.

The aim of this book is to make known some of the many stories of positive contributions young people in Africa make to the prosperity and peace of their communities and countries, as individuals or organised in groups, movements or associations. More than ever, young people are aware of their rights and obligations as citizens and decide to speak up, mobilise, organise and work hard towards the realisation of these rights. More than ever, they realise that they have a voice worth listening to and a special power.

To understand the roles young people play in bringing about social change it is important to introduce two concepts: the concepts of youth and of agency. The idea of youth is broad and it has different connotations, it is an elusive concept we could say. Broadly, the term *youth* is used to refer to the transition from childhood to adulthood and this is determined by biological, psychological, social and cultural factors. Commonly, a person is considered an adult when s/he has reached maturity and can be autonomous, indicated by markers such as being able to support oneself economically. But these markers vary greatly depending on the cultural and specific socio-economic context. In some cultures, rites of passage are common to indicate the end of this transition period. But as it is a period of transition it is difficult to rigidly state where it starts or ends. Moreover, there is a subjective factor, that is, people can feel more or less young. For statistical and programming purposes, the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security 2250 defines a young person as someone who is between 18 and 29 years of age (UN, 2015) while the African Youth Charter defines young people as those between 15 and 35 (AU, 2006).

The second key concept to fully understand the chapters in this book is the concept of agency. This concept is used in the social sciences, especially in sociology (e.g. Guiddens, 1984, Fowler and Biekart, 2008) to refer to our capacity as human beings to reflect about our own lives and contexts, to act independently and to make our own free choices. At the same time, many factors influence

and shape our decisions such as social beliefs, practices and roles, for example, those related to gender roles, social position or class, religious or traditional beliefs, or stereotypes about a certain ethnic or age group. In this book this concept is used several times to describe how youth are able to become aware of the limitations in their contexts, and of their own position and strengths to take action for change. All chapters share stories of personal and group processes of awareness and consequent action.

The book is organised in five parts. The first is of an introductory character and it is followed by a second part where different forms of youth political participation in Africa are described. A third part addresses how youth promote gender equality. A fourth one, how youth build social cohesion and contribute to economic prosperity. Finally, a fifth part includes chapters about how youth build peace.

As in a choir, the beauty of this book lies in the diversity of its voices. Chapters are written by 14 female authors and 21 male authors representing 13 African countries from all its regions, plus three European authors and an American one. They come from a diversity of backgrounds, including notably young people, activists and entrepreneurs who write about their own work and stories of transformation, youth workers, educators, development and humanitarian workers and public officials who work in youth-centred programmes and have witnessed first-hand their potential and their power and finally, academics who have studied youth agency in multiple forms. Some of the authors have a mixed profile, for example, they are activists, educators and researchers at the same time.

We tried to use inclusive language both and though we have edited the chapters to ensure readability, we have tried not to alter the style nor the content as we wanted to respect the way in which authors want to share their stories or express their ideas.

We strived to include chapters on different topics, types of youth-led civic engagement and from different contexts and regions in Africa. At the same time, we acknowledge our limitations. Though the book mentions the contributions of youth to fighting climate change or promoting LGBTBI rights, these movements are

not described in specific chapters in this edition. Additionally we could not include experiences from Northern Africa. Despite our efforts, we have to accept that it is simply impossible to capture the great diversity and richness of the continent in terms of its civic initiatives and we hope to keep collecting and publishing so many stories that deserve to be shared. We hope to have made a small contribution with the present volume.

Despite the different topics covered and perspectives, all chapters support the idea that little is known about the ways youth organise and take initiative, and moreover about the impacts of these initiatives and their special contributions. Though youth groups and movements work in collaboration with other state and civil society organisations and are part of broader social movements, such as the human rights movement, their ways of organising and contributions are distinct. They are able to identify specific problems that affect them and other young people, such as the need for quality inclusive education and adequate employment opportunities. They are also capable to identifying and implementing solutions to these problems in creative and innovative ways.

One important note must be made: though this book provides ample evidence of the power youth have in the present, it does not intend to help governments and other relevant actors get off the hook of their responsibilities. It is states which must guarantee human rights and all relevant stakeholders to commit to the implementation of youth and other appropriate policies to ensure equal opportunities for all. Youth not be left alone to take all risks of innovation and social change. At the same time, policies and actions will be much enhanced and effective if they are designed and implemented through meaningful partnership with youth actors which recognise their knowledge, capacities and opinions. Showing how youth make valuable contributions to their communities does not mean that they know it all or know better than others, rather that they have special knowledges about what it is like to be a young person in a particular context and specific characteristics and resources that societies should tap on. This is why intergenerational dialogue is fundamental in all spheres of social

life as most likely deep social transformation is an intergenerational endeavour (Fowler and Biekart, 2008: 21).

In conclusion, Africa's greatness, its peoples' centred progress and growth remain greatly in its young people, the choristers and the change makers. Indeed, the strong optimism, passion and power prove that youth in Africa are both agents of change and sources of hope.

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PART 1
YOUTH IN AFRICAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

MOHAMMED QASSERRAS

INTRODUCTION

Youth in Africa have often been portrayed in academic studies and in media in general in a negative way. They are seen as victims of conflicts and economic crisis or as troublemakers, being easy targets of manipulation and recruitment by violent groups. However, this image of youth is distorted and incomplete. This chapter presents the key findings of a limited selection of academic studies among many which show a less known aspect of African youth, that they are not only inherently violent but resilient, peaceful and socially engaged. The chapter proposes seven statements that emerge from a series of case studies on African youth positive roles and summarises the evidence available to support them.

AFRICAN YOUTH REFUSE VIOLENCE

Though it is true that youth in Africa have joined armed groups (Sellevold, 2012), they are not inherently violent (Obaje and Uzodike, 2013; Cubitt, 2012). For example, in the context of Mali,

Argenti (2002) argues that despite many youth being subjected to various forms of violence, only a few resort to it as a means of social change: "The great majority are proving to be extremely skilled and inventive in responding to the successive crises (...) It is young people who are increasingly taking the helm and, against all odds, peacefully reconstructing alternative social orders..." (p.146-151). Civic skills of Mali youth are also described by N'Diaye (2009): They find solutions to everyday challenges and adopting democratic processes including voting as "a matter of civil and patriotic duty". Similar findings are recorded by Agbiboa, E. D. (2015) who portrays youth as tactical agents of peacebuilding and development in the Sahel region. Ensor's findings (2013) also describe how South Sudanese youth have been the focal point of multiple environmental and political processes in a context of hardship.

AFRICAN YOUTH ARTICULATE THEIR VOICES

Examples of African youth enlarging political space are numerous. Musarurwa (2016) describes how in 2016 youth began to articulate their voices and spoke up against injustice in Zimbabwe, McEvoy-Levy (2001) documents the positive contributions of youth in post-apartheid South Africa, and Affaa Mindzie (2015) describes youth political participation in Mali, Niger and Senegal. On the ground youth are often the ones helping with voters' mobilisation and the day-to-day running of political parties and have mobilised to promote women's participation. Also on electoral participation, Lawson (2017) shows how a youth-led initiative helped to prevent electoral violence during Ghana's 2017 elections through non-formal education and the effective use of mobile phones and radio broadcasts especially targeted at youth. The initiatives were implemented in the North of Ghana with the aim of promoting a culture of non-violence and involved youth in an early warning monitoring system. In six-months the project reached 44.000 young people through trainings, workshops in schools and teachers colleges, rallies and sports activities who signed peace pledges.

AFRICAN YOUTH INNOVATIVELY CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Young people have contributed to the economic recovery and prosperity of their countries. This is the case in post-war Sierra Leone as described by Bangura (2016). For example, young ex-combatants created an association of motorbikes and taxi drivers to address youth unemployment. This association did not only provide an income-generating activity for youth but a much needed space of solidarity and inclusion (Peters, 2007). In Somalia, Awil Osman Abdi is a young entrepreneur who co-founded Mogadishu-based technology and innovation hub, iRise. He states "Our main objective is to nurture tech-talent in Somalia so to uplift the youth. We also develop their business skills so that they can become entrepreneurs and establish their own businesses, hence creating jobs for themselves and for others" (UNSOM, 2017: 1) These examples of youth entrepreneurship from Sierra Leone and Somalia are not the exception, but two of many examples which can be found throughout the continent and as it is evident in other chapters of this book.

AFRICAN YOUTH POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEBUILDING

Several authors document the key contribution of youth initiatives to peacebuilding processes. McEvoy-Levy (2001) in the context of her research in South Africa argues "youth are the primary actors in grassroots community development [...] they are at the frontlines of peacebuilding". The involvement of youth was a key factor in Sierra Leone's peacebuilding process, especially the re-integration of former child soldiers (Obaje and Uzodike, 2013, McIntyre and Thusi, 2013). Authors describe the multiple initiatives funded locally or by international organisations to support peace education through peer-to-peer learning.

Similar findings exist for the case of Liberia (Mutisi, 2012) and Somalia (Kemper, 2017). In her study, Kemper describes how

youth-led organisations in Somalia advocating for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. They have organised a forum and invited parliamentarians and government officials to debate on how to implement the resolution in Somalia. They put together a Somali Youth for Peace Act including a set of specific recommendations. In Kenya, a youth group called MOYAS started the Caravan Peace Walks. Youth walked from Eldoret towards Nairobi for seven days with the aim of promoting a message of peaceful coexistence, in a context of post-electoral violence. Studies also depict youth as more open-minded and future-oriented, rather than limited by ethnicity and intolerance. For example, a study in Kenya shows that they value other cultures and endorse intercultural marriages (Prisca, Kandagor, Kiprono, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The selected studies conclude that youth in Africa adopt multiple roles and strategies to contribute to the transformation of conflicts and prosperity of their communities. Youth struggle to fight exclusion, poverty, hate speech and environmental degradation among others. They become leaders and entrepreneurs and take initiative despite many challenges. The aim is not to argue that African youth are champions or exceptions, rather to illustrate the much richer reality with the stories that are rarely told in media or studied by social scientists as deserved.

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CHAPTER 2

YOUTH IN PEACE PROCESSES, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL: THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECOWAS

KENNEDY ZARO BARSISA

INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a 15-member regional group¹ with the mandate to promote economic integration and development, has an explicit commitment towards the development of youth. This chapter summarises the main challenges facing youth in the region and the main regional, strategic lines of action.

ECOWAS YOUTH POLICY PRINCIPLES ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

ECOWAS is explicitly committed to the empowerment of youth, in order for them to be adequately included in the regional integration process (ECOWAS, 2010). Article 61 of the ECOWAS Revised

1. ECOWAS members are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Treaty (1993) clearly states that Member States are “to cooperate with a view to mobilising the various sections of the population and ensuring their effective integration and involvement in the social development of the region”. Member States commit to promote youth and women’s organisations and involve them in the activities of the Community.

By definition, a youth in the ECOWAS region is any person within the age of 15–35 years. Young people require social, economic and political support to realise their full potential. This is the stage of life in which the brain of an individual is developed at its full capacity. And moreover, youth constitutes a productive group of the workforce of every community. While it is true that young people are characterised by energy, enthusiasm, creativity and promise, they are also faced with high levels of socio-economic and political uncertainty, thereby becoming a vulnerable segment of the population (AU, 2011). ECOWAS has witnessed this in its social, political and economic challenges. At the same time, ECOWAS, rather than considering youth negatively, works to properly and productively harness their potential.

There are more young people in the world than ever before, creating unprecedented potential for economic and social progress. There are about 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 – the largest youth population ever (PRB, 2016). Many of them are concentrated in developing countries. In fact, in the world’s 48 least developed countries, children or adolescents make up a majority of the population (UNFPA, 2015). At the same time, youth represent 41 per cent of unemployed people. Too many of these young people see their potential hindered by extreme poverty, conflicts, discrimination or lack of information.

The West African region has a population of approximately 359 million individuals, with children and youth aged below 35 years constituting more than 70 per cent of it. This demographic phenomenon must be seriously considered, in order to ensure that ECOWAS Member states benefit from this inherent resource in peace processes and development. One of the flagship measures taken by ECOWAS in this direction is the adoption in 2008 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). Its purpose is

to serve as reference for the ECOWAS system and Member States, in their efforts to strengthen human security in the region. The framework recognises in strong terms the critical role youth empowerment could play in the achievement its goals.

Key youth empowerment activities recommended: the adoption of appropriate and targeted policies on the status of the youth in the region; job-creation, in particular in the extractive and construction sectors; investments in labour-intensive and medium to long-term agricultural and infrastructure programmes, as a sustainable avenue for skill development and employment for young people; the establishment of a youth volunteer programme; the establishment of national youth councils to serve as forums for youth-youth interaction and platforms for channelling youth-specific concerns into national and regional policy; skills development in ICTs, sports, arts, peace education and leadership/citizenship training; development of awareness campaigns around 'Youth and Violence' with a special focus on irregular migration and dissuading the youth from creating or joining non-state armed groups; mainstreaming youth involvement in conflict resolution and peace-building strategies and sustainable DDR initiatives in post-conflict reconstruction strategies and equipping ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Centre in Ouagadougou. In the next sections, I describe specific challenges for youth in the region and how ECOWAS has addressed them.

YOUTH AND CONFLICT

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented increase in armed conflicts in the West African region and youth have been either victims of them or involved as perpetrators. The involvement of child soldiers in the Liberian and Sierra Leone wars is well documented. The highest number of child soldiers is found in Africa, with an estimated number of over 300,000 young soldiers, most of which are between the age of 10 and 24 years old. Many are compelled to join through conscription, abduction and coercion. During warfare, young women encounter threats of rape, sexual

harassment, exploitation and trafficking. Young people's involvement in armed conflict is facilitated through trade of small arms and light weapons. Insufficient opportunities to earn a living often leads them to gravitate towards participating in violent conflicts, and also heightens their chances of facing poverty and thus becoming vulnerable to illicit activities, like the traffic of arms.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

High youth unemployment rates are observed in ECOWAS Member States, with some countries having a percentage of over 70 per cent of youth unemployed. The economic growth seen in recent years has failed to translate into significant poverty reduction and improved living conditions. ECOWAS has developed and adopted the ECOWAS Youth Employment Action Plan (2012). The action plan is intended to provide policy direction in creating the enabling environment for job creation and decent work for youth in the region. One of the key indicators in the youth employment challenge is the mismatch between qualifications obtained by the many graduates and the labour market needs. All countries need to step up efforts in job creation to address effectively the problem of youth unemployment.

YOUTH IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Closely related to youth unemployment is the rise in irregular migration towards Europe. Migrants are mostly young people. This has resulted in tragic deaths and other terrible predicaments. 2016 was the year with the highest number of irregular migrants that have perished in the Mediterranean Sea. A large number of these migrants come from ECOWAS Member States.

A coordinated response is needed. Yet, the process entails complex challenges in terms of governance, migrant workers protection, migration and development linkages and international cooperation. Migration should be a choice and not a

necessity. ECOWAS, under its programme on Free Movement and Migration (FMM West Africa, 2018), consisting of a consortium made of the European Union, the Global Migration Group, the International Organisation for Migrations and the International Labour Organisation, is implementing programmes intended to promote fair migration and discourage irregular migration in the region. Youth are at the centre of this phenomenon and should be thoroughly educated, in order to make migration a choice and not a necessity.

YOUTH BULGE

The world population in 2016 was 7.4 billion (Population Reference Bureau). Africa has an overall population of 1.2 billion, with West Africa's population being at 359 million. The average fertility rate of Africa is 4.7. Most West African countries have fertility rates above the 4.7 continental average. Niger and Mali's rates, with 7.6 and 6.0 respectively, are among the highest in the world.

Studies show that countries in medium demographic transitions (characterised by higher birth rates and lower life expectancies) result in a high youth population in proportion to the total adult population (a youth bulge), and consequently become more predisposed to the outbreak and sustenance of conflicts (Urdal, 2006). Whereas Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire's conflict situations buttressed this school of thought, the examples of other countries, such as Ghana - which had similar characteristics but did not get into war -, nuances the argument and highlights the importance of other underlying factors, apart from demography in fomenting and sustaining conflict.

When there is a youth bulge, the propensity is for their numbers to outpace available jobs and result in even educated young adults being unemployed and poor. The accompanying frustrations, and consequent resentment against those perceived to be enjoying the few available opportunities, lead to the emergence of *desperados* resolved to survive by any means possible. This contributes to urban decay and accompanying social consequences.

Over-exploitation of natural resources, such as water, forest and arable lands, drives them to critically low levels. These factors, together with other social realities, produce vulnerable youth populations who become ready-made cannon fodder for recruitment by rebel militias, political gangs and extremist networks.

A youth bulge should not be perceived negatively as a challenge only, but as an opportunity that can be harnessed. This imposes the necessity of Member States to evolve dynamic youth empowerment and development programmes that will engage youth into meaningful activities.

ECOWAS established a Youth and Sports Development Centre in 2005, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, for the implementation of youth centred programmes to ensure that youth of the region are properly engaged and given space in the regional integration efforts of the Commission. Periodically, the Centre organises skills trainings, capacity building and empowerment programmes.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Youth have the right to be heard and be listened to. They have a voice. That voice deserves the attention of decision makers and leaders. Often times, youth are neglected or kept at bay when decisions on issues pertaining them are being discussed. The recognition of the right of young people to be heard, have their views given serious consideration and to play active roles in promoting their own interest in the development of their societies has increased all over the world.

The age-old propensity of adults taking decisions concerning young people in their absence is at variance with the commitment respecting the participatory rights of youths. Drawing this group of people close and harnessing their potential represents an effective strategy for achieving a balanced people-centred development approach that cuts across all segments of society. Young people have experiences that are unique to their situation and have the views, skills and capacities to bring about constructive resolutions to their own problems. It is therefore legitimate for young people

to contribute to programmes, policies and decision making processes.

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework recognises the significant role youth could play in the regional peace process. When we talk about wars and conflicts, the real actors and victims are the youth. Engaging youth through constructive dialogue about peace and conflict, especially about their negative consequences, long before wars and conflict situations start would play a great role in dissuading them from taking to such vices as options to resolve issues.

ECOWAS has established several platforms to engage with youth and to ensure they are carried along in the regional integration process. The ECOWAS Youth Forum, established in 2004, is an avenue for youth to interact, share and exchange ideas and make pertinent recommendations on topical issues pertaining them to ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Youth Volunteer Programme, launched in 2010, is a youth flagship programme that promotes the integration of youth in the region; ECOWAS also brings together National Youth Councils, which are umbrella bodies of youth organisations in the region to be sensitised and provided with capacities on regional youth initiatives and challenges.

Over the last decade, the declining level of political engagement of youth had been a matter of concern for decision-makers. The idea of promoting 'youth participation' has become popular in the discourse of Western governments and international organisations. The cause of the scarce youth involvement is generally traced back to a lack of interest from the young people. As a consequence, political institutions are often called upon to be more "youth friendly", less bureaucratic and to "speak the language of youth". However, it is highly questionable that this approach addresses the main barrier to youth participation in decision-making. Instead, it can be argued that the formal political system is increasingly regarded by young people not so much as "boring" but rather as irrelevant, inaccessible or both things at the same time. This is why they seek for other forms of expression and activism out of institutional spaces, for example, through social media, civil society organisations or informal groups.

CONCLUSIONS

ECOWAS has assessed the critical challenges facing youth in the region and is committed to implement strategic lines of action in a coordinated way. Youth represent a peace and economic development dividend and investing in them becomes crucial. Youth, indeed, have a role to play. For their impact to be felt it is pertinent to recognise and carry them on developmental initiatives and regional integration processes.

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TOWARDS EFFECTIVE YOUTH AGENCY THROUGH CORE VALUES, A VISION FROM ZIMBABWE

DOMINIC MUNTANGA

INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, the New York Times reported that Martin Shkreli, a young entrepreneur, dramatically increased the cost of Daraprim—a lifesaving drug used to treat toxoplasmosis, an infection that can be life-threatening to people with weak immune systems—like AIDS patients. While the drug cost about \$1 to make, Shkreli profiteered, hiking up the market price by more than 5,000 per cent, from \$13.50 per pill to \$750 per pill (Pollack, 2015). About eight thousand miles away, one of Zimbabwe’s young businessman also put personal financial gain over community needs. Wicknell Chivayo was awarded a multi-million dollar tender and is said to have been paid \$5 million to build a solar power plant in Gwanda to help solve part of the country’s energy problems (Kazunga, 2018). The project held much promise: it would power businesses, help clinics refrigerate life-saving medicines, as well as power incubators to give preterm babies a chance to live. However, when the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and Energy visited the project site, they found that “no work ha[d] been done at the site of the proposed solar power plant” (Kazunga,

2018). Instead, the young businessman bought expensive cars and flaunted his wealth on social media.

These scandals, partly fuelled by greed and lack of integrity, reflect what has become an all too common global crisis of fundamental core values. In the aftermath of these scandals, and other negative front-page stories involving youth, it is fairly easy to be pessimistic about youth and humanity's prospects in general. In fact, one stereotype of youth today is that they are troublemakers who lack moral values. Yet, today's youth offer the greatest promise for humanity. For every scandal, many more individual and collective expressions of positive core values among youth—both big and small—go largely unreported. With their energy, innovation, resilience, persistent optimism, and commitment to a better world, many harness social media to challenge the status quo and fight social injustices. Furthermore, if young people get the issue of core values right, they can be more effective agents of positive social change. They can successfully build more effective relations between individuals, communities and nations, as well as between mankind and the environment. Ultimately, they can tackle society's most complex issues and help build a sustainable world for all species, now and in the future.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF CORE VALUES

According to the Barrett Values Centre, "values are deeply held principles, ideals, or beliefs that people hold or adhere to when making decisions. They are ideals that guide or qualify personal conduct, interaction with others, and other situations of social interaction. Our values inform our thoughts, words and actions. The decisions we make are a reflection of our values and beliefs. Individuals express their values through their personal behaviours; organisations express their values through their cultural behaviours." (Braithwaite and Blamey, 1998).

The Barrett Centre identified four types of values found in organisational settings: individual values, relationship values, organisational values, and societal values. Individual values such

as humility reflect the principles individuals live by and what they consider important for their self-interest. Relationship values, such as trust and generosity, mirror how individuals relate to other people, be they friends, family or colleagues. Organisational values, such as teamwork, echo how organisations operate in the world. Societal values, such as environmental awareness and sustainability, reflect how we relate to society (Barret, 2010).

WHY CORE VALUES MATTER

In 2008, the global financial crisis shook the world economy and, in the process, wiped out billions of dollars belonging to banks, pension funds, non-profits and ordinary citizens. People lost their homes, livelihoods and savings, while banks lost their money and peoples' trust. Today, barely a decade later, news broadcasts highlight another series of devastating scandals; the world faces unprecedented global challenges in climate change, water and food shortages, environmental degradation, pollution, excessive inequality, as well as extreme poverty. The indications are that, as resources become scarcer and disparities between rich and poor widen, the likelihood for socio-economic instability and human conflict will increase.

As humankind grapples with these global challenges, there is wide recognition that the threats we face today are largely fuelled by a crisis of fundamental core values. That our water sources, air and environment are increasingly polluted by mercury from gold mines, or that thousands of lives are lost in wars fought to control oil and minerals, while resources meant for food, roads, housing, clinics and life-saving medicines are diverted for personal use, reflects a crisis of our fundamental core values: we now place personal gain and wealth over lives and profits over our environment and community needs.

While scientific and technological solutions are important factors in solving complex global challenges, nothing possesses a great influence on our ability to address humanity's plight than our core values. Core values shape how we see the world, and how

we act in response to local and global challenges. This realisation has heightened calls for humanity to develop a new value system that puts the human race, the fruits of human ingenuity and the global commons that sustain all life forms above self-interest and individual monetary gain.

YOUTH VALUES IN ACTION

That young people hold the promise for the future—through their energy, idealism, passion, optimistic and ability to come up with new ideas—is indisputable. While their efforts are often undervalued and largely go unrecognised, many young people outside of the media's spotlight have become an embodiment of commitment, resilience, community service, accountability, and trust. What is clear is, if humanity is to effectively tackle society's most complex challenges, we must help inculcate such values in the following generations of youth.

YOUTH, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In 2017, young people in Zimbabwe mobilised thousands of people through social media to call for social change. Led by youth activist and founder of #ThisFlag movement, Pastor Evan Mawarire, the youth reignited public interest in civic engagement and mounted mass protests against repression, poor governance, corruption, and unemployment. The momentum built by this movement culminated in mass protests that eventually contributed to a change of government. Today, youth continue to play an important role in the country's political discourse. With the opening up of the political space in 2017, young people formed the People's Own Voice (POVO), a political coalition of independent candidates who run for local government seats in the 2018 harmonised elections. Whether they can effectively harness their idealism to help change the world will largely depend on their core values. As nothing has ever been accomplished by good intentions alone,

commitment—putting one’s heart and mind in their work—will be a defining value for success this year and in years to come.

YOUTH CONTINUE TO EXEMPLIFY RESILIENCE

The story of Isaiah Bowani, a teenage school dropout, is a case in point of how young people continue to be resilient, even in the face of challenges. Isaiah dropped out of school because of lack of funds to pay for school fees and, in part, to pave the way for his younger siblings. In 2015, he participated in an agricultural training programme for out of school programme for youth, which saw him turn his fortunes around. He went from a school drop out to a young farmer. During the programme, he demonstrated great ambition, commitment, hard work, and excellence. Consequently, he received additional support from the Zimbabwe Farmers Union Barclays Bank. This enabled him to grow his business. Despite his failure to acquire a secondary education, he has become a successful producer of lettuce over the last few years, in large part due to his resilience. His business continues to inspire other young people to use agriculture as a vehicle for overcoming lack of opportunity.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE USING TECHNOLOGY TO MOBILISE AND SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES

While it is easy to get caught up in the fearful and pessimistic spirit of our time, young people are playing important community service roles. For instance in 2017, young people played an important civic role using U-Report, an SMS mobile technology tool developed by UNICEF to empower youth to have a voice on the social and economic issues affecting their communities. Youth were at the forefront in mapping risk prone zones and improving community disaster preparedness during Cyclone Dineo. They have also led numerous community service initiatives such as cleaning streets under the auspices of churches, sports clubs, and civic associations, such as the Rotaract Club and Junior Chamber International

(JCI). Young people like Jahalamajaha Ncomanziof Bulawayo, a former President of Rotaract, have helped build communities of young people dedicated to community-service in schools, hospitals and children's homes. Others, like Samantha Sibanda, the founder of Signs of Hope, an organisation committed to ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities in national development programmes and to raising awareness of their plight, have founded their own organisations as part of their commitment to community service. Engaging in service has helped young people to learn from completely different perspectives and acquire life skills and knowledge, as well as provide a service to those needing it most. When young people serve, they not only become active members of their community, but also have a lasting, positive impact on society, no matter how small. They also contribute to building a sustainable future.

YOUTH MUST HELP CULTIVATE TRUST

In our increasingly complex and interconnected world, one of the most important values for individuals, institutions and society at large is trust. It is foundational to the ability of young people to make positive change in society, be it through political participation, social enterprise, or business. In politics, trust has great implications for those wishing to make change. To lead, young people must have willing followers who must believe that their leader is trustworthy. Without trust, youth cannot be effective leaders.

In business, stories are abound about how entrepreneurs who created jobs for millions of people started out. Paola Sapienza, a professor of finance at the Kellogg School, says that, "trust is quintessentially one of the most important ingredients in almost all economic transactions and is fundamental to all trade and investment." Econet Founder, Dr. Strive Masiyiwa and other entrepreneurs who have multinational companies had to look for money from strangers, investors and banks to succeed, people had to trust them and their promises before they would part with their money. The inverse is also true. Without trust, people would just not have

invested any of their money. In fact, low levels of trust have serious economic implications for individuals, institutions, and countries at large. Concerning individuals, the ability to mobilise others for collective social impact largely depends on trust, while for institutions, the lack of trust can undermine reputations and the capacity to successfully interact with key stakeholders. Similarly, a country without trust will also find it difficult to attract investors to grow its economy. Though economies can survive without trust, they cannot thrive to reach their full potential.

YOUTH AND PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is another core value related to trust. As such, young people must cultivate it through their actions. The Webster's Dictionary defines "accountability" as "the quality or state of being accountable; an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions." As a value, the lack of accountability in both public and private institutions has led to disastrous results for all of humanity. For young people wishing to be agents of social change, being accountable helps to acknowledge and assume responsibility for actions taken. In his work on accountability, Jonathan Raymond (2016) notes that, while every leader sees accountability as a foundational ingredient in a healthy and sustainable culture, most people usually "make the mistake of associating accountability and punishment—instead of considering it a tool to help people unlock their highest self. They also make the mistake of assuming that accountability is a one-off event—rather than thinking it as a long-term personal conversation." To inculcate the value of accountability, Raymond suggests that we must name small but problematic behaviours in an informative way, instead of waiting for a crisis, framing how those problems are connected, and unpack performance issues and the impact that problematic behaviours have on others in a way that quickly moves from surface-level events to meaningful and actionable personal growth themes. For young people, valuing accountability ensures that people acknowledge

and assume responsibility for actions and decisions. When youth are accountable, people will trust and believe in them enough to want to be part of their initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Today's youth represent the best hope for the future. "Youths are major determinants of the level of development in any society" (George and Uyanga, 2014). As humankind grapples with both global challenges and opportunities, it places its hopes in young people to find solutions and contribute to a sustainable planet and future. To be effective social change agents young people must not only look outside, at what others must do—be it government, the church, or maybe even God. Instead, they must also introspect and cultivate positive core values. Values are crucial to how we relate to issues like environmental protection and the welfare of other members of the human family. Core values also help to explain why some young people with incredible talents and dreams give up at the sign of the slightest challenge, while others can fail a hundred times, get up, start afresh and keep trying until they successfully go on to change their communities and even the world. As society pins its hopes on youth, society and young people must work together to cultivate positive values such as accountability, commitment, service and trust. Most importantly, society must give voice to youth, emulate their values, and highlight their contributions to society—no matter how small.

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PART 2
YOUTH AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER 4

STUDENTS AS CHANGE AGENTS: THE CASE OF THE STUDENT AND SCHOOL FEDERATION OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE (FESCI) (1990-2000)

DAGAUH GWENNAEL GAUTIER KOMENAN

INTRODUCTION

The Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire, FESCI, for its acronym in French) is the main Ivorian student federation. It is a left-wing movement which assumed the aspirations of the country's educated youth. Its history is inextricably linked to that of Côte d'Ivoire. From its birth, the movement struggled to improve the conditions of the Ivoirian secondary and university students and for this reason it faced political powers on multiple occasions. This chapter tells its history and explains to what extent the FESCI decisively influenced the political life of the country.

THE BIRTH OF THE FESCI

The FESCI was born from the convergence of five of the dissident movements of the Movement of Secondary Students and University Students of Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement des étudiants et élèves de Côte d'Ivoire, MEECI), created in the 70s by President

Felix Houphouët Boigny (Fakoly, 2018). Students no longer felt represented by this association and the dissident groups decided to create a federation to join efforts and achieve better results. From its origin, it adopted a Marxist orientation. The dissidence occurs in a context of social unrest and general rejection of the management of Boigny and its neoliberal adjustment policies. The opposition is led at the university level by two main actors: on one hand, the main syndicate of university professors, National Syndicate of Research and Higher Education (Syndicat National de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, SYNARES for its initials in French), spearhead of the Ivorian socialist party, the Popular Front of Côte d'Ivoire (FPI, for its acronym in French), and on the other, the student protest movement, which will later be channeled by FESCI.

The FESCI allied with the FPI, the first opposition party of Côte d'Ivoire, for its ideological closeness, but also approached other opposition parties, especially the ultraliberal party, Rally of the Republicans (Rassemblement des Républicains, RDR for its initials in French), from the second half of the 90s. Within ten years, FESCI extended its influence outside the classroom and became the authentic maker of political leaders.

MOBILISATION AS A TOOL

In its beginnings, FESCI, led by Martial J. Ahipeau, mobilises against Boigny's policies (Makre, 2013). The strikes and protests multiplied at the university. The origin of these mobilisations was in the fact that Alassane Dramane Ouattara, as prime minister and within the framework of the Structural Adjustment Plans, implemented a series of unpopular measures, among them the reduction of the public education budget, and consequently, the lack of investment in infrastructure and other services. The response was a brutal repression in this period. One example was the protests over the power cuts that did not allow studying at night during exam periods and that were repressed with a ruthless police intervention (Konate, 2002). Faced with the violent repression of

the demonstration, the SYNARES decreed an indefinite strike, demanding the prohibition of the entrance of the police in the university campuses, the resignation of the rector, the end of the single party, the introduction of multiparty policies and the organisation of a national conference.

Boigny, aware of the risk of protests expanding, yielded to the demands of the university, opening the political sphere to new parties and *de facto* ending the single-party regime. Taking advantage of the weakness that power had shown, all the Ivorian labor bodies joined the revolt, with the aim of reforming the unions that were established and controlled by the state for thirty years, in order to express their own demands.

In response, the government banned FESCI as an organisation, forcing its members to operate underground. In the following years, the students continued to denounce the conditions of overcrowded classrooms at the university and the response continued to be repression and harassment. Looting and attacks by pro-government groups supported by the police (HRW, 2008) and the entry of an elite corps of the Ivorian army, the Parachute Commando Rapid Intervention Force (FIRPAC by its initials in French), were documented at Yopougon campus in May 1971, in which rapes, murders, torture and arbitrary detentions of students were committed (Eburnienews, 2016). A government commission of inquiry concluded that General Robert Guéi was responsible and that soldiers had raped at least three students and brutally beaten several more and recommended sanctions, however, Boigny refused to punish anyone, arguing that he did not want to weaken the Army (HRW, 2008).

In this year and confronted with the impunity of the military, FESCI organised protests for weeks that became increasingly aggressive, as it was fed back by the violence of the police trying to repress them. Hundreds of students were arrested. The degeneration of the situation in the university gave rise to one of the most multitudinous peaceful demonstrations of the opposition and of the Ivorian civil society organisations, led by the FPI, on 18 February 1992. This demonstration was, once again, violently repressed by the government (Duparc, 2002), which imprisoned

many of its leaders (HRW, 2008). During the time of Henri Konan Bedié's presidency (1993-1999), the student movement and the organisation continued to be repressed. In fact, the new president was even more radical in his fight against FESCI than the previous one.

Under the leadership of Guillaume Soro, FESCI became even more involved in the political sphere, moving away from the strictly university and school sphere and supporting the Republican Front (an alliance between the FPI, RDR and Union of Democratic Forces, UFD) through the multiplication of his actions against the power of Bedié. In fact, FESCI participated in the Active Boycott during the 1995 presidential elections along with the Popular Front and ended up with several of its members behind bars. Bedié's government, through the Security Minister, Koné, declared the FESCI "outlawed".

In 1997, the FESCI considerably expanded its range of action, establishing sections in secondary schools, beginning with the Classic and Modern High School 1 in Bouaké. In this way it could have influence at all levels of the educational system of the country.

In September of the same year, President Bedié realised that the student movement was gaining strength instead of losing it and promised more investments in the university system to rehabilitate dilapidated and overcrowded buildings, thus achieving a truce with FESCI. It also lifted the ban on the union and the government officially recognised FESCI as the legal representative of the students.

In 1998, FESCI held its first public congress, where Charles Blé Goudé was elected general secretary. This ensured the presence of FESCI in the sphere of exclusive influence of the FPI. That same year, faced with the inaction of the authorities regarding their promises, FESCI organised several strikes and protests that, due to the links between the local sections, had a national character. These protests degenerated, once again, in violent confrontations between the police and the demonstrators. In addition, Goudé and other leaders of the movement were imprisoned several times (Makre, 2013). As a result of the mobilisation of the FESCI, many public educational institutions were closed, including the Yopougon campus, which was emptied of students to become police accommodation. In addition, as a punishment, a

period of recess was decreed in most of the faculties, which forced many university students to repeat the academic year.

In May 1999, police broke into the different university campuses as part of a new campaign of repression. The uniformed ones were dedicated to persecuting the students, beating many up and destroying their belongings. Several students were sent to hospitals with broken limbs and cranial concussions. Goudé was arrested and the news reached the front page of the state run newspaper, *Fraternité Matin*. In protest of the mistreatment received and the conditions of detention, a hunger strike began. Its objective was to pressure the government to comply with the demands of the students who motivated the mobilisation. On 28 September 1999, a delegation of religious leaders composed of the Catholic Cardinal Agré, the Imam Koudouss and the Methodist Bishop Boni embarked on a mediation mission and visited Goudé in order to convince him to suspend the strike that paralysed education. That day, the delegation found him tied with a rusty chain to his hospital bed. The image appeared in the newspapers, overwhelmed the public opinion and ended up ruining the popularity of Bedié (Ivorian Net, 2016). The protests continued and in the face of the general malaise and tenacity of the FESCI, Bedié granted an amnesty to the detained members of the FESCI, including Goudé, something that eased the tension.

POLITICISATION IN TURBULENT TIMES

The FESCI was one of the first formations to salute the *coup d'état* of General Guéi that overthrew Bedié. Goudé calls it "redemptive violence" (Doumbia, 2018). In 2000, FESCI entered into a cycle of internal disputes, following the opposition between Goudé and Major Doumbia (the first deputy secretary-general), which separated it from its own objectives. Guéi, aware of the influence that FESCI could have, tried to win his favor by appointing Ahipeau as youth advisor. He was the first general secretary and founder of this federation (Makre, 2013).

Despite the internal divisions, FESCI officially supported "Yes" in the referendum organised by the military junta to approve

a new Constitution. After the elections, it was one of the movements that occupied the streets to force Guéi to recognise the result of the polls, which declared Laurent Gbagbo (FPI) winner, and forced him to leave power. The military finally resigned on 25 October 2000.

At the end of 2000, a temporary fracture took place within the FESCI when two congresses were organised, in Abidjan and Bouaké. The first, officially recognised, was close to the FPI and the second, driven by the dissidence, in the RDR orbit. The gap between both factions will end up recomposing in 2001, with the recognition by both currents of the official candidate Jean Yves Dibopieu. However, in the conflict between proGbagbo and pro-Ouattara militants of the FESCI and the paramilitarisation of a part of the movement, in addition to its growing politicisation outside the university, we could have a kind of pre-view of the civil war that began in 2002, as a result of the failed coup on 19 September.

The times of the Gbagbo government, which extends from 2000 until its eviction from power by force in 2011, through an armed intervention led by French and UN troops, coincided with the moment of splendor of the FESCI, when it became a power in itself, with great influence in the Ivorian educational field and also in the political and social sphere.

CONCLUSION

The FESCI was presented, since its birth in 1990, as a tool to claim the rights of educated youth, tired of the single party and the economic crisis. Thanks to its remarkable resilience, it has managed to become the most powerful youth movement in the country. Its influence on Ivorian politics is undeniable and it has worked as an incubator for political leaders of all tendencies. In fact, the former leaders of FESCI have been the protagonists of the political scene in Côte d'Ivoire for long time. Goudé, imprisoned by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, was the one who led the Ivorian "patriotic resistance" (2002-2011) (Sylvestre-Treiner, 2017). Soro (2014) is the president of the National Assembly,

after leading the armed rebellion that started in 2002 and brought Ouattara to power in 2011. Ahipeau heads his own political party (Sangaré, 2018). Yayoro Karamoko is currently the general secretary of the youth of the RDR. Doumbia, after being a predominant figure in the rebellion during the civil war (2002–2011), founded his own political party, the Panafrican Congress for Renewal. Other lesser-known leaders of FESCI are also present in the country's politics.

This movement is a microcosm of Ivorian politics. Its history replicates the history of the country, anticipating it and interweaving with it. It is also an undoubted agent of change and democratisation as well as a quarry of leaders. The infighting, having resorted to arms since 2001 and their closeness to the patriotic youth have earned him the reputation of having introduced violence into the university and have stained its name. This case study shows how a student movement is faced with political options in a context of power struggles, often violent ones. It is a movement that at times it divides itself and having difficulties to both represent students interests – the foundation of its strength – and achieve political goals and resist, not always peacefully, an oppressing State. Certain behaviours that are not exemplary are observed, in contrast with those described in the rest of this book. However, the relevance of this case lies in the fact that not only the bright side of youth participation is shown but also its shadows and paradoxes, simply because they are part of reality. This is why it is of vital importance to understand this movement's strategies in its historical context, a context of search for democratic consolidation.

In the post-election crisis of 2010, they were considered an objective to eliminate: by extension, the universities and students in general were attacked, seeing them as a support of the Gbagbo regime. However, its ability to provoke change and mobilise the Ivorian society remains a reference, especially in these times, in which the police has once again turned repression into the official response to student demands and the marches of the opposition. The FESCI continues to fight against the repression and arrest of its leaders, including its current general secretary, Fulgence Assi.

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YOUTH-LED CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM²

TAFADZWA TIVARINGE

INTRODUCTION

Despite various political promises to ensure that access to quality education is extended to all, the education system in post-apartheid South Africa remains plagued by deep structural and systemic inequalities like many countries across the African continent (Nattrass and Seekings, 2001; Spaul, 2013b; Spreen and Vally, 2006). For young black people in rural areas and low-income township neighbourhoods especially, the new political dispensation has not yielded much material change in access to quality education. As Spaul (2013a) recounts, "although racial segregation has been abolished for 18 years now, schools which served Black students remain dysfunctional and unable to impart the

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2. Special thank you to Equal Education youth for allowing us to hang out with them in pursuit of developing knowledge on young people. Also, thank you to The Atlantic Philanthropies, The California Endowment, The Hazen Foundation and The Cricket Island Foundation for providing financial support that led to this project. Last but not least, I am particularly grateful to my current advisor Ben Kirshner and other principal investigators on this study Rodd Watts and Rashida H. Govan for generously allowing the opportunity to use data obtained from the International Study of Youth Organising Project.

necessary numeracy and literacy skills students should be acquiring at this level” (p.436). Yet, despite disproportionately facing such adverse educational conditions, young people’s ability to shape government policies is significantly constrained by structural limitations that typify the policy process. For instance, young people who have not yet reached voting age are unable to use the electoral process – a key lever of shaping government policies in democratic polities. Such a limitation fragments the collective voice of the youth and significantly hampers their ability to use conventional modes of political participation to advance their political interests (Honwana and Boeck, 2005; Jenkins, 2016). To be clear, the structural limitations facing young Africans in the policy process extend beyond age-limits. Other notable ones include but are not limited to: disillusionment with the electoral process among otherwise age-eligible youth voters (Mattes, 2012; Resnick and Casale, 2011), inadequate resources to organise and shape the policy agenda (Booker, 2017; Kwon, 2013), and values that can be adult-centric as well as disapproving of activism (Watts and Flannagan, 2007; Kirshner, 2008).

The structural limitations faced by African youth in shaping the policy process pose important questions to any stakeholder interested in the ability of young people to exercise political agency. One such question is what are viable strategies that can enable young people to exercise political agency in ways that mitigate the restrictive structures that they exist within. Through an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which young Equal Education activists are shaping education policy in South Africa, this chapter presents viable strategies of mitigating structural limitations faced by young people across the continent. To this end, I begin by briefly profiling Equal Education (EE), a student-led organising group. Subsequently, I offer an abridged account of the methods employed to obtain the data used here. Thereafter, I document strategies that EE youth are using to mitigate the structural limitations that confront young people seeking to shape South Africa’s education policy. Here, I only document strategies that are aimed at addressing the limitations that are mentioned above. Further, given that there already exists a huge body of work that documents

the structural limitations faced by youth in shaping policies, this section will only offer cursory reference to such challenges. The idea here is to provide a narrative that primarily addresses what remains scant in the literature: strategies and models of addressing challenges confronted by youth in exercising political agency. I then conclude the chapter by making the case for why EE's strategies can be applicable across the continent.

EQUAL EDUCATION: A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Formed a decade ago, Equal Education is "a movement of learners, parents, and teachers striving for quality and equality in South African education through analysis and activism" (Equal Education, 2018). To date, EE has an estimated membership of 5.170 activists that predominantly consists of secondary school and post-secondary school youth who tend to reside in low-income urban and rural areas. As a democratic movement, EE's strand of youth advocacy necessarily involves strategies that are consistent with democratic principles. To understand the policy process as well as the lived realities of learners, EE conducts extensive research that is aimed at producing "effective recommendations for improvements, and submissions on various government processes" (Equal Education, 2018). To equip young learners with tools to analyse their conditions as well as understand the policy process, EE has a range of learning activities such as youth groups, mass meetings, teach-ins, and camps. Together, these spaces of learning make up the organisation's "learning ecology" (Barron, 2006).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter is based on data collected from 2013 to 2015 as part of a study that sought to understand the various outcomes associated with young people's participation in community organising across seven different cities in the world; namely, Cape Town, San Francisco, Chicago, Colorado, New Orleans, Belfast and Dublin.

Over the duration of the two-year data collection period, we primarily “deeply hung out” with the EE’s youth members (Geertz, 1973; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). For us, as a ten-member research team, conducting research across the seven sites, hanging out translated to observing and interacting with eight primary youth groups in Cape Town’s low-income neighborhoods such as Khayelitsha, Makhaza, Langa and Kraaifontein. During these interactions, we also conducted interviews with youth (N=60) and adult staff members of the organisation (N=20) as well as administered surveys (N=120). In addition to youth group data, we also collected observational data on teach-ins, campaigns and protests (N=100).

The use of ethnographic methods is particularly important to this inquiry because, fundamentally, our inquiry was aimed at apprehending the context-specific ways in which young people navigate the structural constraints of a policy process in pursuit of advancing their political interests. Here, ethnography is particularly useful in efforts to foreground young people’s voices because, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out, “people’s actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher” (p. 4). Additionally, because of the multiple forms of data collected in this ethnographic inquiry, we were able to triangulate data in ways to enhance the validity of findings (Flick, 2004).

ADDRESSING THE LIMITS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS

The limits of electoral politics pertaining to young members of EE manifests in two fundamental ways: age-based limits to electoral participation and an ineffective electoral system. From our interview data a consistent finding is that young EE members often characterised the political process as “one that does not recognise the role of young people” (Equal Education, 2015). Further probing showed that the reason why EE members characterised the political process in this way was twofold. For the young high school learners who had not reached voting-age, the dominant sentiment was that the political process’s inability to recognise young people

stemmed from the fact that they “are not even qualified/allowed to vote” (Equal Education, 2015). For the post high school youth who had reached voting age, the characterisation was justified on account that “the voting process is ineffective” (Equal Education, 2015). In cases where the charge was that “voting was ineffective”, the view was that young people did not perceive the current political parties as representing their generational interests and that corruption was so entrenched that they had lost faith in the ability of elections to render politicians accountable to the community” (Equal Education, 2015).

The sentiments expressed by EE youth in regard to the limits of electoral politics in Africa are extensively documented in academic literature (see for example Fisher, 2012; Resnick and Casale, 2011; Lindberg, 2003; Roche, 1999; Lodge, 1998). What is lacking in the literature however, are models that young people can use to address these issues in ways that are consistent with democratic ideals. For EE youth, a key strategy has been to adopt informed forms of direct participation in the political process. To be clear, direct forms of participation are not new to the political process (Dalton, 2008). However, the ingenuity of the EE model is the manner in which such direct participation is done. These youths conduct direct participation in a way that addresses three dominant perceptions associated with direct participation. As Mudde (2004) observes, public discourse typically frames direct participation as highly charged and negative because it is perceived as purely “emotional and “simplistic”, it is a form of participation that considered as “opportunistic” and that direct action necessarily adopts a purely Manichean affair where the role of participants is reducible to a dualistic “friends and foes” (p.544).

To address these negative perspectives on direct action, EE youth make use of extensive research collected across the multiple departments in the movement to engage the policy process as well as intentionally build productive relationships with other interlocutors in the education policy process that, all things considered, could otherwise be foes. The ingenuity of this approach is that, through adopting a research-based approach to framing

challenges within the education policy, the contributions made by EE youth are thrust into the public sphere and the policy making process in a manner that has rational credence, as well as use value that extends beyond perceptions of “opportunistic” interests by EE members.

Take for instance the extensive research that young EE members conducted as part of the movement’s organising work that later led to the formulation of EE’s recommendations for government to adopt the “Minimum Norms and Standards” as formal government policy. Here, young people documented autoethnographic accounts that shed light on the dismal conditions that typified the state of their school infrastructure (Equal Education, 2014). Conditions that emerged from that research include but are not limited to, “broken windows, mud schools, lack of decent ablution facilities, no libraries, lack of books, lack of teachers, lack of security and lack of sports facilities” (Equal Education, 2015). As a testimony to EE’s research-centered approach to organising, the movement further augmented the research done by young equalisers with other inquiries conducted by the movement’s Policy and Training Department and various other external parties such as the country’s Department of Basic Education’s National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) report. The NEIMS report underscored EE’s findings by affirming that “schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are in the worst condition, but that the problem of poor infrastructure is not exclusive to rural provinces” (Equal Education, 2015). Indeed, such systematic use of research from multiple sources “greatly helps in enhancing the legitimacy of the movement’s policy contributions” (Equal Education, 2015).

In addition to using research as a means of legitimating youth’s contributions to the policy process, EE typically attempts to productively work with other key players in the education policy process in ways that emphasise common interests. Such an approach is extended even to stakeholders who EE identify as bearing some responsibility for the educational challenges faced by a majority of black students in the low-income urban townships and rural areas. Take for instance, EE’s relationship with government officials (both provincial and national) that are key stakeholders in

the education policy process. While it is true that EE members have publicly clashed with provincial and national government officials over certain political demands, EE members crucially take time to acknowledge and credit the efforts of such stakeholders in advancing equality in education. A publicly well-documented case in point is EE's relationship with the Basic Education Department's Minister, Angie Motshekga. While EE has clashed with the Minister Motshekga on various matters relating to the education policy, EE has, on multiple occasions explicitly acknowledged and credited the Minister for her contributions toward a more inclusive and quality education. In a public statement penned in response to the Basic Education Department's adoption of EE-crafted "Minimum Norms and Standards" EE wrote that the movement "is extremely pleased to be walking forward with Minister Motshekga" (Equal Education, 2015). EE further observed that the route to the adoption of this policy was, in part, facilitated by the Minister's willingness to invite EE members to policy discussions that were "robust, frank and constructive" (Equal Education, 2015). Indeed, EE's collaboration with the Department of Education and its Minister, even as they disagreed on particular issues, attests to the ways in which the movement's strategy underscores positive-sum relations rather than the Manichean stereotype that tends to be associated with direct action.

(RE) SHAPING PERCEPTIONS: YOUNG PEOPLE AS CAPABLE POLITICAL LEADERS

In his work on children's role as citizens, Roche (1999) observes that "much current discussion on children and society is marked by a series of interlocking discourses which serve to problematise and marginalise children" (p.475). The effects of this "negative agenda", Roche (1999) notes "thrives untouched by recognition of the many complex and demanding responsibilities accepted by children or the many degrading social forces that bear down equally on children and adults such as poverty and racism" (p. 475). In our interactions with young EE members, it became apparent that

despite bearing the effects of poverty, inequality and also addressing such conditions through various efforts, young people felt that they were predominantly not perceived as capable contributors to socio-political solutions. In an interview with Sbu (not real name), an equalizer, he reasons that “adults are not confident in the ability of young people to be leaders because they do not see us doing real things that assists the community and therefore lack trust in us” (Equal Education, 2014). By the end of our study, we noted that Sbu’s sentiments – that the default position to mistrust the capabilities of young people is often associated, and or reinforced by the fact that adults typically lack awareness of the capabilities of young people – was a recurrent finding across the multiple interviews.

To address the dual paucity of social awareness and trust in young people, EE is structured in a way that is intergenerational as well as connected to various key organising groups such as other NGOs and workers unions. For starters, the intergenerational approach ensures structured contact between that youth and adults. Because the movement is primarily youth-focused, the structure of the activities necessarily involves young people working together with adults and also taking leadership roles in contexts that are intergenerational. Such a scenario significantly (re)shapes the deficit perspectives that typify the manner in which young people are dominantly characterised by offering counter examples that centre of young people’s capabilities (Bamberg and Andrews, 2004; Sen, 2000). Indeed, because youth are exhibiting leadership in intergenerational contexts, the message carried by the movement’s mantra “every generation has its struggle” is beginning to gather social traction as adults begin to see how partnering with youth allows for generational renewal (Equal Education, 2015). Additionally, through connected organising with various workers unions such as NUMSA and other NGOs such as Social Justice Coalition, Section 27 and the Treatment Action Campaign, young people’s voices are positioned in a networked structure that amplifies their voice by tapping into the socio-political capital that is associated with such groups.

TOWARD EFFECTIVE YOUTH AGENCY

Perhaps the most notable indicator of the effectiveness of EE's model in advancing the agency of young people thus far has been the movement's ability to effectively leverage research as well as creatively use a plethora of other strategies to exert pressure on the policy system (Equal Education, 2015). As this chapter has shown, such an approach has enabled school-going youth to exert effective political agency in ways that have tangible policy outcomes.

Given that the challenges associated with the policy process discussed here hold true across the continent, young people across the continent are already organising and youth possess the capacity to conduct and harness research in pursuit of direct action (Honwana, 2012); a key take-away from EE's model is that there are strategic ways in which research and considered networks can be utilised in ways the better advance young people's political agency.

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CHAPTER 6

YOUTH MOVEMENTS AS A KEY PARTNER FOR INFLUENCING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND BEYOND: THE CASE OF 'AJCAD' ASSOCIATION DES JEUNES POUR LA CITOYENNETÉ ACTIVE ET LA DEMOCRATIE, MALI

OUSMANE MAIGA, LIEN VAN MELLAERT, SITAN CISSE,
IMOGEN DAVIES AND RONALD VAN MOORTEN

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Youth for Active Citizenship and Democracy (*Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie*) fights the injustices faced by youth in Mali, including those faced by peers in Bamako's suburbs and conflict-affected areas, and by young girls working as domestic workers or those at risk of early marriage. In this chapter, we describe the evolution of the organization and its young activists, many of whom initially joined forces as members of the Youth Advisory Board, an Oxfam initiative promoting youth rights to education and sexual and reproductive health under the My Rights My Voice (MRMV) program. Now, AJCAD has evolved towards an independent youth-led initiative that is successfully implementing and leading local and national initiatives. In the last section we offer some reflections on the role of development organisations aiming to support youth initiatives.

YOUNG ACTIVISTS JOINING FORCES

Mali has a young population: 67 per cent of the Malian population is under 25 years old (CIA, 2018). This segment of the population is the victim of incoherent policies in terms of access to basic services such as quality education and health, specifically sexual and reproductive health. With the rise of violent extremism, especially in the north of the country, Mali's young people are also affected by conflict. One of the explanations for this situation is the limited opportunities for their participation in political decision-making spaces. Despite the existence of structures that aim to include young people, such as the Mali National Youth Council or the Children's Parliament, many initiatives perceive youth mainly as beneficiaries rather than considering them as autonomous change agents. In general, politicians are mainly interested in youth at the time of elections. The manipulation and instrumentalisation of young people as *electoral fodder* remains a challenge.

A Bambara proverb says: "You cannot shave a person's head in his absence". In this context, this means that it does not make sense to make decisions that affect young people without involving them. That is why Oxfam's MRMV Program, focusing on young people's rights to quality education and sexual and reproductive health, initiated a Youth Advisory Board to ensure youth representation in the programme.

In 2013 eight young men and women were selected to set up a so-called Youth Advisory Board (YAB). Its philosophy was different from that of existing youth structures. The YAB aimed for true meaningful youth participation, with young people making real decisions about a programme that directly addressed their needs. The YAB worked to ensure that young people's concerns were adequately addressed in terms of the programme's thematic priorities and activities.

THE YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) became the representative body of MRMV. Initially, staff and partners were not accustomed to giving space to young people as equal partners or leaders. It was its members'

talent that inspired them to accept these new ways of partnering. The members were chosen following an open call for applications based on their motivation and availability to participate in program implementation. Seven of the eight members were students and under the age of 20. They were already members of Malian youth organisations but had not yet participated in decision-making processes and guidance to development programs. They underwent training to develop their overall agency, confidence, leadership and campaigning skills on sensitive issues such as sexual and reproductive health. Alongside this training, they were put in contact with decision-makers to enable them to use their own voices to defend their rights.

In its capacity as watchdog, the YAB challenged policy makers in a structured way on selected topics, particularly the need for the integration of sexual and reproductive health rights education into the national curriculum and the provision of quality education. In its advisory capacity, its members played a leading role in mobilising citizens during the preparation of the presidential elections in collaboration with the Education for All Coalition and other youth groups. Electoral campaign activities were focused on the analysis of candidates' projects; the mobilisation of citizens to sign a manifesto asking for the prioritisation of basic social services for young people; and the mobilisation of potential voters, particularly young people, through awareness-raising tours and TV adverts. An important element of this initiative was the commitment to provide objective, unbiased information. The efforts empowered young people to make more informed choices with one goal in mind: Letting politicians know that young citizens are aware of their rights and duties, and ready to choose their political representatives based on a real, tangible societal project instead of short term motivations such as handouts (for example, t-shirts) or other tokenistic initiatives.

REACHING OUT TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH PERI-URBAN YOUTH CLUBS

MRMV supported the YAB to establish Youth Clubs in Bamako and Ségou districts so as to involve a broader base of youth through

awareness raising activities about sexual and reproductive health and the importance of quality education. Clubs are made up of young people in all their heterogeneity in communities, including in-school and out-of-school youth and disadvantaged young people. AJCAD built the skills of these club members to take initiative within their own communities and advocate for their rights to sexual health education.

The clubs became spaces for learning with different allies (parents, decision-makers and other young people) and holding them to account about their role in critical issues. Its members used theatre, dance, sport and music to mobilise their peers, and to raise awareness. The management of the Youth Clubs strengthened the leadership and management skills of the members of the Youth Advisory Board, who in turn managed the planning, operations and resources allocated to the activities in the nine clubs, each composed of hundred young women and men.

This phase coincided with the end of MRMV. It was the start of an ambitious and promising adventure, of a constant struggle for the promotion of youth rights and leadership. All this triggered the members of the Youth Advisory Board to start thinking about what would happen after the closure of the MRMV programme. In 2014, the Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy (AJCAD) was created. AJCAD is maintaining the Youth Clubs as spaces where young people can come together. AJCAD serves as a springboard for strengthening young people's leadership and acts as an informed player in the implementation of different initiatives bringing in young people's perspectives into national and local debates.

AJCAD AS AN INDEPENDENT YOUTH-LED PARTNER

AJCAD made its organisational development a priority. Through other projects supported by Oxfam, and later other donors, the organisation was able to further build on skills acquired during the initial My Rights My Voice period. It organised itself guided by democratic principles and this is reflected in its current organisational structure, which includes for example, a General Assembly where its members come together to make key decisions. In 2018,

AJCAD employs 11 full-time employees with funding from different donors. It has established standards for project and fund management. In donor engagement, AJCAD places a lot of importance on freedom of expression and seeks collaboration as an equal partner. The young AJCAD members gained the skills and confidence to meaningfully negotiate with large donor organisations. In the past years, AJCAD started to engage in international advocacy activities. In this way they could represent young people at major events across Africa and beyond.

AJCAD AS PART OF MALI'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

AJCAD's goal is to contribute to Mali's peace and prosperity through the responsible participation of young people. To reach this goal, its mission is: "to support young people in synergy with other organisations to raise their voice in decision-making bodies of all levels. We strive to defend their rights, to mobilise them, to inform them and to build their capacity so that they become active, competent, productive and responsible citizens". Its members are under 35 years of age, the age limit as defined by the African Youth Charter.

Today it has 148 members as volunteers and 1000 members of Youth clubs. As an entirely youth-led organisation, AJCAD has been able to define its own strategic plans and to ensure its policies are directly relevant to young people's experiences and needs. Some of its partners welcomed this initiative with pride, while others were more reticent. Initially, AJCAD faced stereotypes of young people who were instrumentalised and not considered competent and mature enough to be part of the development processes and debates. Despite these drawbacks, it continued its commitment showing young people are the first experts in the resolution of their problems.

ACHIEVEMENTS

While AJCAD still focuses on sexual and reproductive health rights, it has broadened its scope and is now working on a wider range of

topics, all with a strong emphasis on participation and active citizenship. From 2014 to 2018, AJCAD led twelve programmes and seven projects related to active citizenship and electoral processes, resilience and climate change and youth employment, with a total income of over 500,000 Euros and working directly with several donors including Oxfam, Equilibre et Populations, Danish Embassy, OSIWA, Girl Generation and WaterAid.

The first project implemented by AJCAD as an independent structure was on child marriage prevention. 58 public events helped to sensitise around 17.000 young boys and girls and their parents about the negative effects of early marriage for girls and their families. AJCAD also organised young people's involvement in TV debates and a photo exhibition on girls' leadership. The activities contributed to making the issue of child marriage a topical issue and secured support among young people as allies to speak up for their peers who are at risk. Club members have successfully mediated between girls and parents to prevent early marriages, enabling them to continue their education.

AJCAD also led the advocacy efforts on the acceptance of the platform *clickinfoado* by the Ministry of National Education. Through this electronic platform developed during MRMV, young people can request information and learn about sexual and reproductive health. The Ministry has accepted to integrate the platform into the basic education curriculum. AJCAD was identified by the West Africa Law and Health Alliance as the youth partner for the network in Mali out of more than 80 pre-selected organisations.

Under the project "Mobilising for the Rights of young girls and adolescents", AJCAD continues its advocacy work on the inclusion of the *ClickInfoAdo* platform in the teacher curriculum as well promoting sexual and reproductive health in local policies. AJCAD has its own radio station broadcasting programmes on reproductive health and promoting young people's point of view. To broaden its collaboration base and network, AJCAD became a member of the Generation Girl network, which promotes the abolition of female genital mutilation. Furthermore, AJCAD is leading a consortium of youth organisations promoting citizen mobilisation for participatory elections and research on youth participation

in electoral processes. It is also involved in policy making processes. For example, through the *Ante Abana* citizen platform, which translates roughly into “total disagreement”, AJCAD contributed to the rejection of a revision of the constitution. At a pan-African and global level, AJCAD members advocate for democracy, good governance and youth and human rights.

THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS IN SUPPORTING YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES

Young people can act as social change agents independently or in partnership with other organisations. As this case demonstrates, NGOs and community-based organisations have the potential to play a meaningful role in amplifying their voice. Existing or emerging youth organisations may decide to collaborate and engage with or receive support from large development organisations for a variety of reasons, from increasing access to funds to broadening networks to adding an extra layer of weight to their ongoing campaign and advocacy work. NGOs can fulfil an important brokering role, facilitating connections between youth activists and developing networks from the local to the national or global level. The latter can be especially important for groups and organisations from marginalised groups.

A collaboration with youth organisations may take different forms. Youth participation can be summarised as “a process where young people, as active citizens, take part in, express views on, and have decision-making power about issues that affect them” (Farthing, 2012). To determine different degrees of youth participation, the Ladder of Participation is a helpful framework (Hart, 1992), ranging from tokenism to fully shared decision-making. The importance of truly youth-driven initiatives is increasingly recognised. Adult involvement is no longer assumed to be a requirement for effectiveness (Hart, 2008) and may even be considered counterproductive in some cases, as it risks taking away ownership from youth.

A (formal) youth organisation such as AJCAD has strong potential to roll-out and advocate for a youth-driven agenda beyond

the duration of specific projects. Yet it is only one way to generate lasting changes for youth development and communities. Youth also organise through looser network structures or digital movements. An understanding of the current youth landscape is crucial to avoid overlap with activities of organisations with the same purpose which may have already been forged within the youth movement.

For development practitioners, moving away from merely working *for* youth, to working *with* youth and being led *by* youth, also means analysing current ways of working, and the extent to which these allow for the active participation of young people.

In the case of partnerships, AJCAD professionalised and formalised its structure, yet many youth movements work in more informal or network-like structures with volunteers instead of paid staff. Administrative and audit requirements for partner organisations are rarely tailored to allow for such more dynamic partnerships, which limits the possibilities to engage with youth groups and movements. Furthermore, this dynamic can result in informal groups experiencing pressure to move towards formalisation. While such formalisation can make groups more effective, it can also result in a redirection of attention towards more administrative tasks, with the risk that the energy and momentum of youth advocacy activities get lost.

NGO and donor support inevitably brings a power dynamic in play. These dynamics may result in pressure for youth-led initiatives in terms of agenda-setting. In the case of MRMV, there was a strong focus on sexual and reproductive health rights, which was of critical importance to the young people participating in it. However, when AJCAD started working independently, access to employment emerged as a priority issue. Oxfam and others working to support youth-led initiatives will have to explore innovative approaches to programme development so that young people can set their own agendas within short programme design processes.

AJCAD's evolution developed into a success story beyond expectation, yet there are also untold attempts from development organisations to support youth participation that vanished when funding stopped. This does not necessarily mean that these

collaborations were not fruitful. Even when young people's participation was limited to the scope of one project, they may have brought about changes for the wider community or have developed skills for their future lives. Ultimately, the motivation and talent of the young people involved is the determining factor in the success of any initiative. To fully unleash the potential of youth as autonomous change agents, it is up to any organisation partnering with youth to adapt and find ways of mutually strengthening each other, allowing space and flexibility for young people to set their own agenda and act upon it.

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YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AS EMERGING CHANGEMAKERS IN ZIMBABWE

TAFADZWA RUGOHO

INTRODUCTION

Youth with disabilities are marginalised and discriminated world-wide, and especially in countries across the Global South. Yet, issues that affect this group are largely ignored by academics, policy makers and governments. The World Bank estimates that more than 250 million youth with disabilities are currently living under the poverty datum line, which contributes to a double burden situation. In most developing countries, especially in Africa, people with disabilities are viewed from the medical and charity perspectives (Rugoho and Maphosa, 2017). People with disabilities are considered to be sick and in need of rehabilitation in order to fit into the larger society or simply relying on the benevolence of the community to survive. Furthermore, communities treat people with disabilities as people without agency, and it was therefore a bold move by the United Nations to adopt the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. This convention, namely, adopts the rights-based approach to disability issues, and encourages countries to outlaw all cultural and religious practices which discriminate against people with disabilities.

Several African countries have adopted the CRPD; however, the majority of them still remain to fully implement it. For instance, Zimbabwe ratified the convention in 2013, but this has not yet translated into substantial and adequate national laws and policies. Therefore, Zimbabwean youth with disabilities are constantly lobbying for the domestication and full implementation of the CRPD.

As an organisation working for the improvement in the rights of people with disabilities, Leonard Cheshire Zimbabwe³ is at the forefront of the lobbying campaign to make authorities domesticate the CRPD. For instance, the organisation has initiated an advocacy project called “The Young Voices”, which is entirely youth-driven. Under this project, several activities have been conducted by youth with disabilities, which eventually has resulted in many of them having the chance to meet with policy makers. Policy makers have also invited the youth involved with “The Young Voices” project to make presentations at different forums. Combined, these efforts resulted in the crafting of the National Disability Policy which is currently under cabinet consideration.

Mainstream media is seldom discussing or raising awareness about issues that affect people with disabilities, and matters such as the right to education, health care, and shelter are rarely mentioned. Therefore, the press has contributed to perpetuate discrimination against people with disabilities, rather than to oppose it. With the advent of social media, however, youth with disabilities themselves are now using new channels to challenge such narratives; social media advocacy allows youth with disabilities to express opinions without being edited by commissioning editor, which in turn has allowed them to be blunt and straight to the point. Therefore, thanks to social media, activists with disabilities can reach out and directly engage with a number of people previously unreachable.

Correspondingly, Zimbabwe is currently witnessing a new form of advocacy in which young disability activists are using technology to enhance political participation and to reach out

3. For more information, visit: www.leonardcheshire.org.zw

to different stakeholders. They have opened blogs, twitter and Facebook accounts to reach out to a bigger audience, which clearly is an approach different from those of previous generations. The availability of technology has enabled people with different disability to be able to advocate, and young disability activists use social media to set the agenda for government and other organisations. The thrust of the chapter is to discuss how “The Young Voices” project initiated in Zimbabwe is transforming disability advocacy and the political participation landscape.

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ZIMBABWE

People with disabilities are estimated to constitute 15 per cent of the Zimbabwean population, and the majority of these people do not have access to social, economic and political opportunities (Rugoho and Maphosa 2017). Simultaneously, the government has been lagging behind in the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities. Historically, Zimbabwe was once regarded as a model country in promoting the rights of people with disabilities after it became one of the first countries to introduce a disability related law (Manatsa, 2015). The country has also established the National Disability Board and has appointed a Presidential Advisor on Disability issues, but, the Disability act was never completely implemented as the government seemingly lacked sufficient commitment to the issue (Choruma, 2007; Mtetwa 2011). Zimbabwe did also ratify the CRPD in 2013, but the convention was never translated into domestic law (Rugoho and Maphosa 2017). As such, Zimbabweans with disabilities have not benefited neither from the convention, nor from other domestic regulations on the topic.

The Zimbabwean disability movement dates back to the country’s colonial era. It is worth noting that even though the colonial government never developed policies directed at empowering people with disabilities, religious organisations such as churches provided care for the needs of black disabled people. Simultaneously, black disabled people began to organise themselves in different formations, and organisations such as Jairos Jiri, National Council

of Disabled People of Zimbabwe (NCDPZ) and many others were established and registered during the colonial era. They all shared the same main objective, namely to fight for the rights of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, little progress was noted during the colonial period, mainly because any demand by the disabled people was just considered to be coming from the simultaneously ongoing liberation struggle of black people.

After gaining independence, however, the Zimbabwean government seemed to be more willing to listen to the concerns of people with disabilities, and in 1987, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted the Education Act. With the adoption of this act, the government introduced education for all - regardless of disability and status. Moreover, the disability movement continued pressuring government until it adopted the Disability Act (1992).

Nowadays Zimbabwe is defined as a youthful country with its majority of the population under the age of 45 years. Yet, Zimbabwe follows gerontocracy and plutocracy systems and Zimbabwean youths are facing the challenges of unemployment and lack of opportunities across different sectors of the economy. Currently, the unemployment percentages are thought to be way over 80 per cent (Rugoho and Maphosa 2017), and youth with disabilities are arguably the most affected by this high rate of unemployment. Simultaneously, the government has not adopted any policies aimed at increasing the employment or well-being of people with disabilities (Manatsa, 2015), and youth with disabilities are therefore bearing a double burden facing a wide range of challenges stemming from lacking opportunities and exclusion from work life.

The older generations have done a notable job ushering a disabilities movement in Zimbabwe throughout the decades. However, the availability of technology has facilitated the emergence of a new youth-led disability campaign in which young activists use social media intensively to raise awareness about issues that affect them, and to communicate more directly with policy makers about their demands. This new generation of disability activists work with and towards different political parties on how to mainstream disability issues in political activities and structures; and consequently, many political parties have introduced

measures to include more people with disabilities in their work, such as in the 2018 general elections.

In the following sections, a number of examples are described to illustrate how young people with disabilities have proactively and creatively addressed specific challenges affecting them in their daily life. They specific challenges they have addressed include: access to quality sexual and reproductive health education; discrimination; lack of assistive devices; limited training opportunities; and lack of spaces for young people with disabilities to express their needs and proposals.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

In Zimbabwe, people with disabilities are generally excluded in the formal and informal discussions of sexual and reproductive health, as well as in the curriculum in formal schools. Teachers and parent are often not comfortable discussing sexual and reproductive issues in the presence of their children or students with disabilities. There are additionally quite a number of myths towards people with disabilities, which has further contributed towards their perpetual marginalisation in discussions about sexual and reproductive issues. For instance, one such myths is that people with disabilities are asexual, a perception that degrades people with disabilities to be people simply without any sexual feelings, and should they have feelings do they certainly not have the agency to control them appropriately.

Women with disabilities are in a particular vulnerable situation regarding this matter and they are often prone to horrific sexual violations (Rugoho and Maphosa, 2015). That is, rapes of women with disabilities are unfortunately relatively common in Zimbabwe, though their cases are largely unreported. On top of that, most of the perpetrators are family and close friends, which often makes the situation more intricate and complicated.

As a countermeasure to the lacking discussions and information about the matter, Zimbabwean youth with disabilities have taken the initiative to teach their peers about their sexual rights.

That is, the initiators have worked with government officials and other development organisation to make sure that people with disabilities are accorded their right to access sexual and reproductive health services. Furthermore, young people themselves have also been in the forefront of promoting safe sex amongst people with disabilities, which is increasingly more relevant in face of higher prevalence of HIV and AIDS across the country.

DISABILITY AWARENESS

In most countries children with disabilities face widespread violation of their rights, and unfortunately, in some cases, the major violation of their rights is perpetuated by their very own parents. Some parents are simply ashamed of having children with disabilities, or they are not comfortable with the neighbours and community knowing that they have a disabled child. As a consequence of this felt stigma, children with disabilities might be kept indoors for years without going outside. In Zimbabwe, just as in several other African countries, media has widely reported about children who are hidden in the backyard of their houses (Rugoho and Maphosa, 2017). These children are inevitably negatively affected by this situation as they are not allowed to socialise, mix and mingle with other children, and therefore not able to develop in a healthy manner.

Understandably, having a child with a disability can cause stress to parents (Rugoho and Maphosa, 2017), and in worst case, the birth of a disabled child may eventually result in divorce between the parents. This is seen as a means of counter-accusation on the cause of the disability emergence. Namely, across many African countries, disability is largely attributed to the practice of witchcraft by parents or relatives, and disability is considered a result of punishments by the gods or ancestors. These cultural and religious beliefs are at the centre of many of the divorces between parents of children with disabilities, and unfortunately a sustaining problem.

Correspondingly, children with disabilities are also often denied the opportunity to go to schools or hospitals because of the

same reasons (Mutepfa, Mpofu, Chataika, 2007). UNICEF (2013) estimates that more than 80 per cent of children with disabilities live in developing countries and have little or no access to appropriate services. In Zimbabwe, Chakuchichi (2013) has estimated that more than half of the 600.000 children with disabilities of school going age have no access to proper education, and one of the contributing factors has been the absence of information available to parents.

Youth with disabilities, especially those that are involved in the Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe “The Young Voices” project, have done a significant job raising awareness about the situation of children with disabilities. Over the years, the organisation has raised awareness in different communities about the rights of people with disabilities and have investigated on children with disabilities who are kept in the backyards. They have worked with communities to demystify myths on disability. In other words, youth with disabilities are taking a leading role in educating communities that disability is not caused by witchcraft practice and to construct a sustainable counter-narrative.

Against the backdrop that parents and stakeholders in most of the Zimbabwean communities do not have proper information about the opportunities for children with disabilities, “The Young Voices” leaders are making the youth sit down with community leaders and parents to discuss, amongst other relevant topics, the need for children with disabilities to go to school. As a result, many parents and communities have benefited largely from the initiatives led by Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe, and increasingly many children with disabilities do nowadays have the opportunity to go to school compared to before.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

One of the major challenges faced by people with disabilities is access to assistive devices: wheelchairs and crutches are beyond the reach of many people with disabilities, and especially for those who resides in the rural areas. In Zimbabwe, people with disabilities who resides in rural areas have limited resources, and find

it therefore difficult to buy their own assistive devices. As an attempt to change this situation, Zimbabwean youth with disabilities have used social media and other digital platforms to highlight the plight of certain individuals in need of an assistive device. They have encouraged other people with disabilities who have extra wheelchairs or crutches to donate them to those in need, and quite a number of people with disabilities have been helped by their counterparts with disabilities. This is an example that youth with disabilities are encouraging each other to assist one another in any form, without waiting for the intervention of people without disabilities or officials. They have also referred other people with disabilities to Leonard Cheshire Disability Zimbabwe in order to be assisted in obtaining necessary assistive devices.

TRAINING

A number of youth with disabilities have recently improved their competences through educational and training programmes, and some now even have tertiary education. “The Young Voices” project encourages youth with disabilities to volunteer in any way possible, and through the various organisational initiatives and activities, they have transferred knowledge to other people with disabilities. With the help of the organisation Signs of Hope Zimbabwe, groups meet monthly to learn about and discuss different subjects such as business management, entrepreneurship and many others. For instance, trainings on financial literacy is provided to those people with disabilities who are into informal sectors of the economy. The results of these projects are that many more people with disabilities are improving their employability and ways of doing business, which in turn hopefully will result in decreased unemployment among this group.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

Social media has been used by youth with disabilities to lobby at the government to improve the welfare of people with disabilities,

and as a consequence of their efforts, the youth have been invited to give evidence on issues that are affecting their own life quality at the parliament. The youth have also engaged with several political parties in an effort to lobby for increased inclusion of people with disabilities in political and societal structures. As a result of these lobbying and advocacy efforts, several political parties in Zimbabwe are now including people with disabilities, and some have even begun to field them as political candidates.

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THE INTERNET AS A TOOL FOR SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGE IN AFRICA, THE AFRICTIVISTES EXPERIENCE

AISHA DABO

INTRODUCTION

In Africa, youth are a force to reckon with as voters but also as change agents. More and more young people are becoming aware of the challenges their communities face and they want to effect change in various ways.

Many barriers that existed before Internet have gradually crumbled as the layperson's use of the Internet has been increasing. Before a more democratised access to the Internet, people had a structured, static form of coming together through associations, often limited to neighbourhoods that required memberships, physical presence at meetings for decisive moves to be made. All, also depending on how fast the information could get to members or communities. Now we have other ways of meeting and taking decisions facilitated by online spaces like mailing lists, public forums, blogs, social media such as Facebook and twitter, the use of VioP Viber and the most commonly used WhatsApp.

I will be focusing on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as sets of tools through which youth

share, gather and create information in order to contribute to socio-political change in Africa using as example the contribution of the League of Pan-African Bloggers and Activists for Democracy: Africtivistes, a term we use to name our network, composed by the words, Africa and *Activistes* (Activists in French).

Internet is an opportunity for Africa, a tool that can help achieve so many things. The Internet has no physical barriers nor borders. It has created solidarity in the most unimaginable ways and it has made solidarity among Africans a reality, though virtual. One does not need to travel or the headache of getting a visa to know, see and experience what is happening in another African country. With this new found ease, many have been able to be inspired by what is happening elsewhere but most importantly, they have been able to see similarities in the social injustices, lack of adequate health services, lack of quality education, abuse of power by those elected, corruption, bad governance etc. Furthermore, they have adapted to their local context solutions that have worked elsewhere for impact.

Internet has the power to amplify messages and causes. In terms of democracy and economic progress, activism by using the Internet commonly referred to as cyberactivism, is a way for citizens to participate in any discourse, and have a platform to be heard, hold the elected accountable, mobilise for causes, raise funds, advocate and bring about change.

ACTIVISM WITH INTERNET: CYBERACTIVISM

Cyberactivism complements real-world activism. There are many examples from different African countries: upholding the Constitution #Article59 campaign in Togo, getting Burkina Faso to pass a law allocating 1 per cent of mining contract to the development of communities in a mining area #Justice1Pourcent; provide water to a community during water shortage #EauSecours, raising funds for underprivileged #SunuCause or #GiveBloodChallenge, all in Senegal; whistleblowing, real time monitoring and observation of elections

with #Sunu2012 in Senegal, #GhanaDecides, #GuineeVote, #NigerVote, #CIV2010 in Cote d'Ivoire and #Vote229 in Benin, just to name a few.

Africa has experienced several other citizen initiatives after elections to monitor the implementation of election promises and holding leaders accountable with Mackymètre in Senegal, Buharimeter in Nigeria, Presimetre in Burkina Faso and Talonmeter in Benin.

In any given situation, Africtivistes assesses the best approach suitable for a given country and which would have more impact. It has used solely social media and the web for campaigns like the one in support of the African Union Campaign to Restore the Dignity of Women and to Ensure Accountability in South Sudan in 2016 against impunity, sexual and gender-based violence through the hashtag #4WomenOfSouthSudan.

Africtivistes has used a hybrid (online and offline) approach in The Gambia with several campaigns, offline in partnership with civil society organisations, and online from 2015 to end the dictatorship such as #JammehFact to document abuses committed by former President Yahya Jammeh since 1994.

There was a time when low literacy rates were cited as a barrier to the development of cyberactivism. But that statement is less relevant every day as there are new applications that take into account non-literate people. For instance, Malian Mamadou Gouro developed an oral-based Facebook-like platform, Lenali app, with French and local African language options, or WhatsApp audio message options. WhatsApp was the most used medium to share information and it did wonders in The Gambia during the last years of Jammeh as the access to Diaspora-based online radio not favourable to Jammeh were blocked. People will use VPNs to download the shows then share the audios on WhatsApp. Furthermore, during the political impasse (December 2016 to January 2017), people continued receiving updates on the situation until the arrival of West Africa regional ECOWAs troops through WhatsApp as radio stations that attempted to open up and give a platform to the opposition that won the elections were shut down.

CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY 2.0

Africtivistes is the epitome example of what online solidarity can achieve. It focuses on the "Consolidation of democracy" not only at the level of each country but also and especially at the continental level.

The consolidation of democracy means any action moving towards a real democracy, participatory democracy, e-democracy, e-governance and an effective anchoring of democratic culture in our respective countries. Also, apart from the occasional issues of crisis resolution, in some countries, Africtivistes is determined to intervene directly or bring in stakeholders together during processes of political and social change. It leads and drives development projects and citizen involvement in democratic systems. It obviously develops strategies to monitor and supervise the political leaders in their actions and in the realisation of their promises to encourage transparency and good governance. The network's areas of intervention are Participatory Democracy, Good governance, Transparency including Open Data, Fight against Corruption, Culture of Peace and Cybersecurity.

In 2015, African youths, who developed trust and working relationships online over the years, came together to launch an umbrella continental platform that stands for values they believe in. Africtivistes network brings together 200 youth from 37 African countries (mostly working in French, English, Portuguese and Arabic) united by the following values:

- We pledge to conduct our activities within the boundaries of the law.
- We promise to uphold democracy in our country and in Africa through participatory citizenship.
- We renew our commitment to a non-partisan citizen policy.
- We commit to guarantee electoral and democratic processes.
- We pledge to support participatory democracy movements and initiatives.
- We reaffirm our commitment to promote good governance and strengthen African solidarity and defend human rights.

The strengths of Africтивistes are its members with different expertise and professional background who come together to achieve results and make change happen. It is these diverse profiles who when faced with a situation come together and combine forces to find a solution.

Africтивistes created national relays to spread its message and approach to contribute to the creation of democratic spaces, ensuring access to and free dissemination of information, holding power brokers to account, and ensuring delivery and respect for human rights and dignity. Africтивistes as a network of activists across the continent has, since its launch, been able to work hand in hand with national ICT communities (hubs, bloggers associations, webactivists, incubators, and makerspaces) and traditional civil society organisations. Citizens have learnt to coordinate and implement campaigns online and on the ground on good democratic practices in their respective countries to have a direct or indirect impact. The network is a sentinel of democracy in Africa. As such, the League is committed to directly intervene or advocate for the involvement of stakeholders in the various processes of political and social change. It leads and pilots development projects and citizen involvement.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO STRENGTHEN HUMAN RIGHTS

Africтивistes launches in July 2017 an ambitious project, Africa Media CyberSecurity in order to train at least 500 journalists, bloggers, web activists and citizen or civil society media actors on cybersecurity in 11 countries in West Africa. The goal of this project is to train participants in the use of the tools and knowledge they need to work securely, communicate with a peace of mind, mitigate the risks of infiltration and hacking, bypass Internet censorship, and surveillance technologies.

The project is gradually putting in place a community to share best practices and offer mutual assistance between French-speaking and English-speaking media actors in West Africa. They receive regular updates on anti-censorship technologies with

which they have been familiarised during training. Almost 300 people have been part of this project and at least 200 more will be trained in 2018.

This project has been an opportunity for Africtivistes to share its experience and approach of responsible activism and the use of social media and the Internet. The unit in each country is set to promote participatory democracy, to become sensitive about both traditional and new civil society players, to be instruments for the protection of fundamental freedoms for socio-political change such as freedom of press, freedom of speech, the right to access information and the right to know.

AFRICTIVISTES CAMPAIGNS

The network has held several campaigns. In The Gambia, it worked with civil society organisations, journalists and activists on campaigns and trainings on the safe use of ICT tools and the Internet, data protection and circumventing censorship, and surveillance in hostile environments. Through a long term investment, Africtivistes had prepared the ground for action. The network heightened its collaboration with civil society organisations, youth movements and partners from the presidential campaign period to the election period (December 2016 to January 2017) when the political impasse ended with the departure into exile of former President Jammeh.

When on 30 November on the eve of 1 December 2016, the then Jammeh regime blocked the Internet and international calls to control the flow of information, Africtivistes worked with a handful of Gambian civil society actors to get the information (election results) out to the world. When on 9 December, Jammeh changed his mind on the elections outcome, Africtivistes continued collaborating with its partners and joined hands with the new social movement #GambiaHasDecided. The collaborative approach involved multisectoral campaigns using social media, the media, sending bulk SMS to the military officers, lobbying and petitions for the “will of the Gambian people to be upheld” and deter

soldiers from supporting Jammeh's illegal move and/or possibly firing on civilians if people were to go out on the streets to protest. The Gambia example shows that sometimes the struggle is a marathon (long term process) and happens both online and offline using several campaign approaches for lasting impactful results.

In Togo, we have been keenly following the situation and working with partners on the ground since the new round of protests demanding an end to the over 50 years long Gnassingbe dynasty in August 2017. We had launched a campaign in 2015 #Article59 demanding constitutional term limit. We automatically continued the fight when a new struggle with a much bigger momentum started in 2017, being hopeful that Togolese will end up making their country a democratic and prosperous nation.

During the 2nd Africтивistes Summit held in June 2018 in Burkina Faso, "Digital Democracy in Africa: Collaboration Mechanism between Governments and Civil Society Actors", special attention was put on Togo and Chad. This does not mean that other African countries do not have problems, rather it was an opportunity to put them on the spotlight and for their stories to be heard on a continental platform. For example, to analyse the fact that the head of State of Chad, Idriss Deby, in power since 1990 recently changed the Constitution and reintroduced a two term limit for the president though not retroactively, and remove the position of Prime Minister further concentrating power in his hands.

WHY BE AN AFRICTIVISTE

Africтивistes are pro-active citizens who are able to identify problems, propose solutions, and when possible contribute to solutions. We are first committed, engaged citizens in our respective countries. We believe in Africa and *her* youth, and in their capacity to bring about change. An Africтивiste must walk the talk and must be a motivator showing commitment through her/his behaviour.

The work of Africтивistes becomes even more relevant in present day contexts where governments, faced with the inability to control the discourse or flow of information online, are passing

laws to restrict access, spy on people, and control access to information, not only on the Internet but directly targeting social media. (For example, recent laws in Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda). Sections of these laws infringe on their citizens' most basic human rights.

NEW AGE DEMOCRACY: A PLEDGE TO BE GREAT

Democracy is not only holding regular free and fair elections to choose our representatives. It is also allowing citizens to participate in decision making processes more directly, enriching representative democracy with more participatory forms of democracy. Citizens' participation should not stop after elections. It should be ongoing, with elected officials engaging with, listening to and learning from and with citizens. Citizens' participation should promote democracy and its key principles: limits to power, respect for human rights, law-abiding security forces (not at the service of a particular person or regime), judiciary independence, and equality before the law.

The challenge to deepen democracy is that some people entrench themselves and do everything to keep themselves in power. Youth have decided otherwise. Mandela said "Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great, you can be that generation". That is the pledge this 21st century generation of African youth have made. If you look at African history, youth have been change agents. In the 21st Century, we do it better with ICT tools, Internet and social media.

**#BACKWAYSOLUTIONS #CANDLEOFHOPE:
GLOBAL YOUTH WORKS APPROACHES TO CHALLENGING
IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

MOMODOU SALLAH

INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of people, young people mostly from Sub-Saharan Africa, attempt to escape the “horrendous situations” they live in, in search of greener pastures. There are significant push and pull factors that catalyse into fatalities and occur as a result of the dangerous routes taken to get into Europe, some evidenced by the news, showing videos of migrant boats capsizing in the Mediterranean or Atlantic Ocean, on a regular basis. This method of travel is known as the “Backway”. During the journey from Sub-Saharan Africa to Mainland Europe, via Libya, not only do many young people lose their lives, but there are many increasingly heart-breaking stories of these young people being sold as slaves in open markets in Libya for a price of \$200 – \$500; subjected to sexual abuse, kidnapping, and even reports of being used for organ transplants.

This chapter shows how Global Hands has worked with its partners to utilise the pedagogic tool of Global Youth Work (GYW) in order to provoke consciousness about this sorry state of affairs. It also shows how these initiatives have supported disruptive action

that challenges and finds solutions for the destructive trend of irregular “Backway” migration to Sub-Saharan Africa. In doing this, we hope to highlight the agentic forces of some African youths and present a counter-narrative to dominant configurations of ways of knowing and being and contribute to the development of Global Youth Work Theory and understandings of social action.

THE BACKWAY

In 2016, the deaths of 5085 migrants were recorded in the Mediterranean Sea (IOM, 2017) and far many more are assumed to have died whilst trying to cross the Sahara Desert. Based on interviews with 258 migrants, an Oxfam report (2017) found that 74 per cent of respondents witnessed their travelling companions being murdered or tortured; 84 per cent claimed to have been subjected to inhumane or degrading treatment whilst 70 per cent claimed to have been tied up at some point. 256,000 migrants were identified as being in Libya, 11 per cent being females, as of September 2016 officially whilst this number is believed to be three times higher in actuality (UNICEF, 2017); with up to 70 per cent being exploited and abused as reported by the IOM from a sample of 9000 (The Independent, 2016). To illustrate impact at the national level, of the 363,401 who arrived in Italy in 2016 through the “Backway” for example, 11,929 were from the Gambia (IOM, 2017). This represents a significant drain on the human resources, for a population of only 1.8 million.

Due to a dysfunctional educational system in a significant number of Sub-Saharan countries, (Rodney, 1972 is still relevant!), where the education system evades teaching functional skills; resulting in significant numbers of youth unemployment; and poor economic policies resulting in local, national and globally generated structural violence; coupled with security and political precariousness as encapsulated in a UNICEF report (2017).

On the other hand, the forces of cultural globalisation that peddles a Eurocentric narrative of the *good life*, steeped in colonialism and the ideological constructions of “West is good and the

South is bad”, where the “streets of Europe are paved with gold”. This hopelessness can be summarised in the mantra of “Barça or Berserk” (Sallah, 2012); to get into Barça (Barcelona, Spain – symbolic of Europe and the West) or die trying. This has produced a scenario of intractable development challenges, where Sub-Saharan countries are haemorrhaging significant numbers of youths on a daily basis, with fatal consequences.

GLOBAL HANDS

Setup as a Community Interest Company in the UK and Charity in The Gambia, Global Hands aims to raise consciousness about local and global issues through community engagement. In its approach of working with people to build their capacities, it considers itself a pedagogic innovator with a clear focus on using participatory methodologies to place those most disadvantaged at the centre of finding sustainable solutions to the problems they face. The core business of Global Hands is education and public engagement; international development and publication of critical Southern voices. We continue to work with communities and individuals through a wide range of methods to initiate sustainable development.

GLOBAL YOUTH WORK

Whilst there are a wide range of approaches to generating development and bringing about change, we will for the purposes of this chapter, focus on the pedagogical approach of Global Youth Work. It is as a pedagogical approach which seeks to use informal and experiential learning approaches that transcend surface learning into the realm of deep learning, that correlates the personal, local, national and global; with an explicit aim to provoke consciousness and support action (Sallah, 2014). This approach has been explored in great detail in the works of (Bourn and McCollum, 1995; DEA, 2010; North-South Centre, 2010). Using Global Youth Work as a conceptual framework, this chapter positions this approach by

Global Hands as a disruptive tool of transformation to project the tragic story of the “Backway” into the global imagination, linked to concrete actions at the personal, local, national and global levels.

THE CAMPAIGN

The sad and paradoxical scenario consecrated by the “Backway” scenario, given the historical significance of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, has led to a concerted intervention from Global Hands and its partners, especially De Montfort University, to provoke consciousness about the situation, as well as support people taking action: #Candleofhope #Backwaysolutions campaign. This aims to raise awareness of the “Backway” and to provoke consciousness that leads to action, as too many young men and women are losing their lives, every day, unnecessarily. The aim of the project was to provide solutions and to find other options to save the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters.

#CANDLEOFHOPE #BACKWAYSOLUTIONS CHALLENGE

The #Candleofhope #Backwaysolutions challenge was a social media campaign to highlight the horrible situation of hopelessness that drives young people, largely from Sub-Saharan Africa, to attempt to get into Europe at all cost in search of greener pastures; often resulting in many fatalities as evidenced by the constant stories on our TV screens, of migrant boats capsizing in the Mediterranean, for those in the West; and for those in Sub-Saharan Africa, knowing someone who has embarked on this journey or whose corpse never came back; stories of young men and women losing their lives across the Sahara desert or in the seas is a daily occurrence.

This campaign was a call to action; an active statement of intention to develop solutions to this travesty. Building on Global Hands’ previous year’s successful #takandiga challenge which had an estimated 50,000 audience, linked to the #Run4Africa which

took place on the 29th April 2017 both in Leicester, UK and The Gambia, organised by Global Hands.

The #Candleofhope challenge encouraged individuals and groups to light candles of hope in the darkest and most desolate places, literally and symbolically, and suggest #Backwaysolutions. These were recorded as images or videos and shared as widely as possible on social media.

This campaign culminated in the Run4Africa that took place on the 29 April 2017 both in Leicester (UK) and Manduar (The Gambia) simultaneously. There was also a #CandleofHope Africa festival, immediately after the Run4Africa 2017, at Abbey Park, in Leicester as a culmination event.

The objectives of this social media campaign were: a) To raise awareness of the need to build a better world, given the grotesque inequality that exists; b) To shed light on the sad stories of hopelessness emanating from Sub-Saharan Africa, symbolic of the struggle for human dignity, the world over. As most people cannot enter through the "front way", Sub-Saharan Africa continues to haemorrhage significant numbers of your men and women through the "Backway"; otherwise also known as "illegal migration". We wanted to shed light on this as well as encourage a participatory approach to developing sustainable solutions; c) Engage 1000 people in The Gambia and 1000 people in Leicester to raise funds to set up a Youth Opportunity Fund with a focus on capacity building projects for those at risk or most affected by the "Backway" and its attendant consequences. The following activities were developed:

- *Backway Music Video*. "Backway" was a new single created by an artist from The Gambia, Silver P, and an artist from Leicester, Ayolah Hanley, in March 2017, with a focus on raising awareness about irregular migration from mainly Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe.
- *Backway to Europe: Gateway to Death*. This is a short documentary produced by Hexalens in collaboration with Global Hands and James Skinner Films, exploring the "Backway" phenomenon (irregular youth migration)

mainly from The Gambia in Sub-Saharan Africa, via Libya to mainland Europe, released in April 2017. The documentary speaks of the hopelessness that drives youths from Sub-Sahara into perilous journeys across the desert and Mediterranean, often resulting in fatalities.

- *Run4Africa 2017*. The Run4Africa is an annual event held in Leicester, UK and The Gambia; the 29th April 2017 version focused on the #Candleofhope #Backwaysolutions. The event was open to all ages to come along and run, walk, dance or crawl their way through 5km. The run focussed on #Candleofhope and #Backwaysolutions to highlight the dire plight of young migrants involved in the "Backway". There was also a #Candleoflight Africa Festival immediately after the Run4Africa at Abbey Park, featuring various artists, internationally chosen to interpret the "Backway" theme.

CAMPAIGN IMPACT

Through a Global Youth Work pedagogic approach, we wanted to focus on a case study of how young people, both in Europe and Africa were mobilised, with both local and international media houses being engaged, to feature the campaign as well as young people in Africa taking the lead in provoking consciousness and taking action. It reflected on the transformative power of young people to mobilise and bring about transformative social change, starting with the establishment of counter narratives and the generation of hope.

It can be stated that the project had two main objectives; the first was to raise awareness about the "Backway" situation so that the general public and relevant authorities could understand its causes, consequences and solutions; second was the need to take concrete action to redress this hostile situation. In relation to the first objective, we can report that the music video and song has been widely shared on social media, including 1302 hits on YouTube; the documentary was also widely shared on Facebook with a 2818 hits on YouTube and Facebook reach of 3572 and 27 shares. Additionally, both the song and documentary were given 2

x 1 hour slots on Interface TV (syndicated to GRTS in The Gambia; Malmo's TV in Scandinavia, and BEN TV in the UK, shown on Sky TV. Whilst there are no concrete viewing numbers, all these TV platforms have both national and International coverage as well as online replay facilities. The #Backwaysolutions #Candleofhope campaigns were also covered on BBC Africa TV with a powerful international audience, as well as on their Facebook page which drew over 133,186 views, 893 shares and 804 reactions as well as 120 comments. This demonstrates a significant reach and impact as well as significant success raising awareness on the issue. Additionally, the Run4Africa in The Gambia drew over 100 participants and the run in Abbey Park, Leicester, UK, drew over 200 participants. Whilst we did not reach the targeted 1000 for the runs as projected, the participants who took part shared their photos with the hashtag Run4Africa, #Candleofhope #Backwaysolutions. Significant evidence has been gathered to illustrate that this campaign has been a contributory factor in bringing the subject to the attention of some members of the public for the first time.

In relation to taking action, it is significant to note that two groups of young people, both in The Gambia and UK, were at the heart of drawing the concept paper for the campaign. Working with a group of politics students from the De Montfort University's Faculty of Business and Law, Global Hands Leicester volunteers, and Global Hands Gambia volunteers working in conjunction with Manduar Development Hub staff, all the projects were conceptualised and operationalised with young people, through a Global Youth Work pedagogical approach. Additionally, young vulnerable people to the "Backway" were also directly involved in designing and implementing the initiative. A conference was organised by young people in June 2017 at the Manduar Development Hub in The Gambia to explore: causes, consequences and solutions to the problem. Various stakeholders from the statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors were engaged, in addition to young people who have attempted the "Backway". The Run4Africa 2017 with a focus on #Backwaysolutions and #Candleofhope also raised over £2500 which went to support projects to counter the "Backway", including a library, the conference, and other capacity building ventures

now happening at the Manduar Development Hub like food processing and solar energy training.

CONCLUSION

The #Candleofhope and #Backwaysolutions demonstrate the potential of a group of young people who have identified a social problem and their transformative power to provoke consciousness and take action. There is often a popular narrative dominant in public discourses, about the inability of young people, especially those most affected, to take a lead in social transformation. This case study demonstrates how a group of determined young people can make a difference; and how the power of social media can be harnessed to make a massive difference, transnationally.

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PART 3
YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY

ROSEBELL KAGUMIRE

INTRODUCTION

The struggle for women's rights has always been interwoven with those of a nation's freedom. One cannot fully grasp the journey of women in a particular society without considering its history. In Uganda when we are taught history in school, even pre-colonial history, often it is a history void of women's contributions. We learn about great kings who resisted colonialism and expanded their empires but little about women like Queen Muhumuza or Queen Anna Nzinga and their roles in shaping our African societies. Too often their struggle and successes are reduced to some fictitious occurrence. In 2018 Ugandans saw their hopes of seeing their ageing president give way to a younger generation blown away and feminism was made the word of the year.

This chapter looks at the efforts by young feminists in Uganda to raise their voices in an environment often hell-bent on silencing women's contributions beyond stereotypical reproductive and care roles. It also looks at how young women have embodied the feminist identity and pushed back against narratives that often leave women out.

Uganda is the second nation with the youngest population in the world with about 55 percent below the age of 18 (Myers, 2016). The future relies on how a young women choose to engage and contribute to the society by questioning the place they find themselves and pushing the very limits society has imposed on them. Young feminists are building on the history of women's rights activism while exploring new ways of expression. The young female voices are not only struggling against a patriarchal system but also a political one whose goal posts shift according to the wishes of a president that has been power for over three decades.

DR NYANZI, A MUCH NEEDED FEMINIST VOICE

Young women are increasingly self-identifying as feminists. This group has never seen any other president except 74 year old Yoweri Museveni. A lot of their struggles and social change pathways are rooted in and impacted by this fact and their feminism often challenges the current political system.

Feminism may have become the word of the year largely due to the #MeToo movement in America but in Uganda 2017 was the year feminism was firmly at the centre of the political arena. Probably the most popular woman has come to be an academic, writer and Facebook user Dr. Stella Nyanzi who continuously deploys sexual language to discredit and challenges government officials and policies. She has used sexually charged language to bring forth debate on taboo topics and to critique those in power. She has resurfaced the radical rudeness Ugandans used against colonial powers. Her writing and her enormous following brought her in collision with President Museveni's government when she called the president a #pairof-buttocks, a hashtag that would later trend upon her arrest. She was charged with offensive communication, cyber harassment and disturbing the peace and privacy of the president. All this stemmed from Museveni's failure to honour his election campaign promise to provide free sanitary pads to vulnerable girls that dropout of school and his wife, First Lady Janet Museveni who doubles as a minister for education telling the nation the government had no money for such.

What interested feminists was the way Nyanzi carefully chose her *modus operandi*, her language was intentionally deployed to provoke and offend the status quo. She is a feminist who is unafraid of rallying around causes of social justice from the popular to the scorned up LGBTI rights. In a country where protests are more or less banned, social media platforms become places of resistance, they are the once vibrant *Ebimeeza*, banned weekend broadcast of critical public debates. Her rise has seen young women galvanised by a voice willing to speak truth to power. For that she spent 33 days in jail after she was charged with two counts of cyber harassment and offensive communication contrary to provisions of the Computer Misuse Act. While Nyanzi is certainly not the bracket of young feminists, she happens to occupy a space, a sort of bridge between a generation that witnessed the horrors the mid-eighties political turmoil and those that were born during those years.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, POLITICS AND COMPLACENCY

As guns became the only power that mattered in the eighties, women's contributions became invisible as they were often behind the scenes supporting new movements. Few women were fights in Museveni's rebel group, National Resistance Army which took over power in 1986. When Museveni took power his openness to expand women's empowerment was shown through ventures like girl child education where young women got an added 1.5 points to their mark to increase numbers entering universities on a government sponsorship in a bid to increase national literacy figures. The 1995 constitution was also generally gender sensitive emphasising historical discrimination and need for gender equality. He was seen as supporter of women's rights, however, the longer he has stayed in power, the murkier his stances have become. He's for women's rights as long as these women do not pose a valid competition to his power, as long as they are forever grateful to him to the point of never mounting a challenge to him. In 2000 with the appearance of Dr. Kizza Besigye, his former personal doctor who challenged his power, Museveni's approach became aggressive

and controlling. The human rights situation deteriorated, including that of women's rights. Set against this political backdrop, even with the gains secured by the earlier generation of feminists that arose with Museveni, younger women still have mountains to climb to realise their rights not just as citizens but as women.

WHERE A WOMAN'S BREAST THREATENS THE SOCIETAL MORAL FABRIC

The statement "the personal is political" has never been truer. With the narrowing of political and civic space have come a general backlash and argument that a lot has been done for girls and therefore we should not be shouting about gender inequality, even when all evidence shows we still have hundreds of years to actualise equality. To distract a restless generation that wants more, moral policing and legislations continues to be used to threaten the lives of young women and minorities.

In 2013 the anti-pornography bill referred to women's bodies and targeted women to curtail their dressing. This bill, known as the "anti-mini skirt law", emboldened men to undress young women whose dressing they judged "too short". Women's rights groups pushed back against sections that infringed on women's rights. However, to date, young women have been charged under that law over content posted online, many victims of revenge pornography. In 2014 relying on the same illogical argument about young women not covering up, a Ugandan Youth Affairs Minister, Ronald Kibuule said that police should scrutinise all rape cases to find out how the victims were dressed and that if a woman was found to have been indecent, the victim should instead be charged for "inviting rape" (Daily Monitor, 2013). Despite the existence of recordings, he denied he was victim blaming. Young women took the issue to online platforms and #KibuleMustResign trended. However, he remains a minister to date.

The fear of homosexuality also drives a big amount of morality legislation and recently led to the ban on sexuality education. In 2016, Members of Parliament raided a private primary school

in Kampala where more than 100 books were impounded on the basis that they contained sexual literature. Following the raid, the Parliament passed a resolution banning all forms of sex education in schools. The lack of sex education heavily affects girls in a country with a 25 percent teenage pregnancy rate. It was not until 2018 that a Sexuality Education Policy was passed. The Minister of Education and First Lady Mrs. Janet Museveni said they had rejected calls to implement sexuality education because it would promote homosexuality (Daily Monitor, 2018).

Despite Uganda having passed a law to protect and provide relief for victims of domestic violence, in 2018 one lawmaker said wife beating was important in solving domestic matters. Onesmus Twinamatsiko said “you need to touch her a bit, you tackle her, beat her somehow to really streamline her” (Reuters, 2018). These statements are worrisome as they do not only contribute to sustained unfair structures and practices but also influence negatively policies, affecting, in the end, women’s rights.

The women’s movement continues to engage but many of these struggles will have to be explored and taken on by younger generation, fearless, outspoken and fighting against isolation.

INSPIRED YOUNG FEMINIST VOICES IN THE INTERNET AGE

The internet has offered a platform to create greater visibility and solidarity among younger feminists and Stella Nyanzi’s case shows this. But this also comes with the backlash against gains made in women’s rights and for young feminists this backlash is a daily lived experience. The backlash is both from formal institutions like parliament and also those socially discomforted by the visibly free woman who is often seen as sign of looming danger to earlier enjoyed male privileges.

Nyanzi connects feminist generations but she is certainly key in the re-emergence of feminist organising, mobilisations and solutions being brought forward by young feminists. After decades on the side-lines of the women’s movement, young feminists are

organising in ways that do not constrain them within the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) complex. They have benefited from the advent of social media platforms. Many have found their voices and made themselves heard in this new fashion of networked, leaderless movements.

Besides Nyanzi, scholars and feminists like Prof. Sylvia Tamale have always made the case for radical social transformation. Without radical changes in a patriarchal society the achievements are gained on a borrowed ground which could shift. Tamale has defended rights of minorities, spoke and wrote on taboo topics like sexuality and sexual identity being even when few Ugandans could come out to identify with a sexual minority. Being outspoken earned Prof. Tamale a vote in the a leading newspaper for the 'worst woman of the year' in 2003 where she graced the cover pages together with the Lord's Resistance Army rebel leader Joseph Kony. A feminist scholar thought to pose the same level of threat to society as a rebel with blood of thousands on his hands speaks volumes about the society within which young feminists are demanding their rights and visibility. That is why the two women are top inspiration when I asked 10 young feminists.

Among top young feminists, we find Godiva Akullo, an advocate and Deputy Director for Chapter Four Uganda, an organisation that defends civil liberties. Akullo is unapologetic, pushes boundaries and is not afraid to assert herself as a thought leader. She has advocated and defended university female students who face dress policing and sexual harassment from lecturers. She has been instrumental in exposing sexual predatory behaviour and practice at Makerere University. Like most young feminists, Twitter is her battleground. In a 2017 interview to AfricanFeminism (AF, 2017), Akullo spoke of online abuse she faces, "I've been verbally abused, received death threats, rape threats, been called all sorts of names (on and offline) and had people try to bully me into silence... I'm very aggressive about protecting my space and energy...online, I block, mute, unfollow at the slightest hint of unkindness, meanness and bigotry".

This backlash against feminists has also extended to older generation of women advocates as seen in January 2018, when

Winnie Byanyima, the Ugandan Executive Director of Oxfam International rightly questioned the practice of women kneeling for men and older people. There was a national outrage blaming her feminism as the reason for her *attacks* to tradition norms. Comments both on Twitter and in news posts were disrespectful and disparagingly targeting her and her family. Later we would see labels such as “Madam feminist” and opinion pieces in daily newspapers claiming feminism is destroying families. While these kind of personal attacks have been around as long as outspoken women have been, the internet makes toxic trolling in large numbers possible, often locking many women out of conversations.

Many young people fear the backlash and some young feminists admitted to holding back on some opinions because they had been targeted. The term *tweminist* is often deployed to derisively diminish the views of young feminists and the space they occupy online with hope that feminism will capitulate. However, online spaces give young feminists the opportunity to place their experiences and debates in a wider context, nationally and internationally. In many instances these young feminists have brought their online organising and solidarity to the streets. It is young feminists that walked to police headquarters amidst riot police deployment to protest the targeted killings and kidnapping of women in Kampala that started in 2017 and not relenting. On June 30, the young women organised a Women’s March, the first a protest was accepted by the police in a long time, against rampant kidnappings, torture, rape and killings (Voanews, 2018). Over 45 women were killed between 2017 and mid-2018. We have also witnessed increased African feminist solidarity often whether there’s an attempt from online users to silence a feminist voices or if one is facing trumped up charges to everyday conversations.

It is because of such platforms that young feminists like Patricia Kigula started *Black No Sugar*, an online series to provide space for feminist talk. The host Elizabeth Kemigisha shared with me that she and her colleagues were “intrigued by the kind of conversations they were having with friends, most of which were not thought to be important in the Uganda mainstream media channels”. For the young feminist hosts of *Black No Sugar*, it

was important to create space that does not start conversations on feminism from a point of ignorance as it is often the case in mainstream media. "We wanted something that says our opinion matters and our opinion is not always going to be about how we look or who we are taking care of as always portrayed of women in media," said Kemigisha.

Indeed research has shown that only 20 percent of news sources in Ugandan media were women (Mutebi, 2016, UMWA, 2014). Most current affairs debates are dominated by male presenters with male panellists that the use of the word #Manel to counter this marginalisation has become frequent exercise for young women on Ugandan Twitter. These alternative spaces like *Black No Sugar* are influencing the thinking of young Ugandans by driving conversations that are not given room in the traditional media and along the way changes perspectives and perceptions of women.

Female produced media like *Wulira* podcast continue to capture and bring forward today's feminism struggles and linking them to the past. Akullo who is also host on this podcast engages the common perception that feminism is un-African: "Our foremothers were practicing feminism long before anybody started theorising about it. And look at all the amazing contributions African Womyn (both from the continent and the diaspora) have made to feminist theory...Feminism was born from womyn's desire for justice, what's more African than that?" (AF, 2017)

Indeed long before Nigerian and Africa's most celebrated contemporary novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie issued that call "We Should All Be Feminists" my own mother had long taught me that I am as valued as my brothers. Before Adichie (2016) wrote in "Dear Ijeawele or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions" that: "The knowledge of cooking does not come pre-installed in a vagina. Cooking is learned." my own grandmother had taught her son how to cook, groom himself and not expecting to rely on a woman for all this. These pushes for both men and women to be defined outside prescribed dominant societal boxes were happening and young feminists in Uganda are relying on these experiences in their family to speak loud about them and own them.

WHY GO FOR FEMINIST?

When I asked young Ugandan feminists why they had chosen to be bold through and in their online communications, one said: "I took it on once I realised silence wasn't going to do me any good". Another one explains it has been a journey and she had not quite put a definition to the resistance she had been in since at a young age until she started reading feminist theory. Others explained they were lucky to have been raised in fairly gender inclusive environment but they had not been conscious about other women's realities outside their home until their early twenties. Others were not as lucky. But no matter how they arrived at embracing feminism as an identity, these young women are here and every day they do their part to raise the conversation higher, online and in various media in the country. For those outside quickly looking to use the feminist label against these young women, it is obvious they have done their homework through study and personal experience that no amount of attacks will make them vanish. They are here.

We see these young voices in conversations from equality in workspaces, security, employment, education, sexual harassment to meaningful women representation in public life. On these various issues, young feminists are outspoken on the need for redistribution, recognition, representation, and participation of all women and deploy the intersectional understanding of oppression to defend and show solidarity to minorities like the LGBTI community, something that was and still not well accepted by older generations in the Uganda women's movement. Feminist, a word long avoided by mainstream women's rights advocates, has gained momentum as young people look for more radical changes. Ugandan feminists increasingly express themselves: they say I am here, my struggle, my opinion, my voice and my story matters. It is during these times that the words of Valérie Bah and Felogene Anumo (2017): "The revolution will not be NGO-ised" resonate louder. Feminist organising in Africa is slowly moving outside the well-funded NGO sector. Daring forms of resisting and nonconventional organising that challenge power structures and norms are here to actualise meaningful and substantive participation.

These platforms have made it possible for feminists to advance their thought and debate without having to pass through heavily regulated, legally, politically and in societal construct, media. Nyanzi describing President Museveni as #pairoffbuttocks sparked political debate on state failures. In response to the anti-pornography bill, the hashtag #SaveMiniSkirt was used to protest it, forcing parliament to leave out clauses that mentioned exposure of woman's body parts as equivalent to pornography.

Increasing talk about feminism, however negative, is a sign that younger generation of men and women are already questioning power, privilege and patriarchy as a system of oppression and how it interacts with other systems to inhibit the potential of millions of African young women. It is clear that it is largely those that are opposed to the idea of equality for all that do the attacking when young feminists speak out and push boundaries ranging from social norms, bodily integrity and control, identity and sexuality, contraception, abortion to political inclusion and media exclusivity in the internet age. The continent will have to harness these new voices and new movements to effectuate more rights for more African citizens and give room for young people to actualise their potential.

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YOUNG PEOPLE CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS THROUGH *OURO NEGRO* RADIO PROGRAMMES IN MOZAMBIQUE

ELENA COLONNA

INTRODUCTION

Like most African countries, Mozambique is a very young country: about 35 per cent of the population consists of young people⁴ (CIADAJ, 2016). The Government of Mozambique has devoted special attention to this generational category in its governance agenda. In 2013, the Parliament approved a Youth Policy⁵. Despite these advances, young people still face many challenges. They struggle to make their voices heard and in being able to exert influence on policies that affect their daily lives. In Mozambican society, power is traditionally attributed to elders, both in the family and community as well as in professional and political settings. Mozambique is historically dominated by an ideology of gerontocracy and seniority: the youngest owe submission and gratitude to elders and obedience is a skill that can even be rewarded (Biza, 2007).

4. In the Republic of Mozambique, young is any person in the age group of 15 to 35 years.

5. http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Mozambique_2012_Draft_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

However, facing challenges and unequal power relations does not mean one has to be silent or passive. Honwana (2014) argues that difficult situations can inspire young people to engender creative solutions. This chapter aims to present how young people in Mozambique use the radio and, specifically, the *Ouro Negro* radio programmes, to transform their lives and the lives of those around them. Examined changes are related to the promotion of children rights and gender equality, since they are the main issues discussed in these programmes.

In the first sections of this chapter, I present the *Ouro Negro* 360 cross-media strategy and, in particular, the radio-drama and live show. I also briefly describe the theory of change supporting these programmes and present the experiences of change that the young people who participated in these programmes underwent. This is an exploratory study, based on an analysis of 2 case studies, one of a young woman and another of a young man from two different provinces of Mozambique. Abiba is from Nampula in the North, and Manuel is from Inhambane, in the South.

Materials for the first case study were collected through phone interview surveys with radio drama listeners, and developed by the author between 2017 and 2018. The second case study was developed through content analysis of an edition of *Ouro Negro ao Vivo*⁶. The two stories illustrate the potential of radio programmes to promote and strengthen the role of youth as agents of change in their communities.

THE *OURO NEGRO* 360 STRATEGY

Communication for Development (C4D) is understood as a two-way process of sharing ideas and knowledge to empower persons and communities to take action and improve their lives. For UNICEF⁷, this kind of communication is an important tool for

6. Available on <https://soundcloud.com/ouro-negro-ao-vivo/pai-que-e-pai-deve-acompanhar-o-desenvolvimento-infantil-dos-filhos-x11-04-18cits-hwa>. Thanks to John Luzo the translation of the Portuguese Xitshwa.

7. To see <https://www.unicef.org/cbsc/>

promoting children and adolescent survival, development, protection and participation. Communication for Development includes a set of communication tools and approaches, which involve understanding people, and the beliefs and social and cultural values and norms that shape their lives.

In 2014, UNICEF Mozambique invited the PCI Media Impact to produce a long-running radio-drama in Portuguese, a product of “edutainment” to promote children and adolescents rights and well-being in the country. In 2015, radio-drama broadcasting started on Radio Mozambique (National and Provincial Stations) and on community radio stations, members of the Mozambican Social Communication Institute (*Instituto de Comunicação Social*). Radio-drama stories address issues related to health, education, child protection and nutrition, among others.

Young people have been identified as the primary target audience of radio dramas for different reasons. Some of these include a better understanding of the Portuguese language (the radio-drama language); Knowledge for their current and/or future role as parents and child caregivers; and to promote a greater openness to innovation and change in younger generation.

Between 2016 and 2017, the programme developed and became *Black Gold 360*⁸, a cross-media strategy based on the radio-drama, recycling the same content in different formats (radio drama, live radio programmes, theatre plays, etc.) and platforms (radio, television, social media, etc.), reaching different audiences, from young people to elders. The entire strategy is based on the theoretical assumptions presented in the next section.

TELL A STORY, CHANGE THE WORLD

The central idea guiding all PCI Media Impact work, including the *Black Gold 360* strategy, is simple: stories can change the world. According to this view, people do not change because someone tells them to change. In many cases, only after making mistakes,

8. For more information, see <http://ouronegro.org>.

do people experience the consequences of their ways of thinking and acting, and decide to modify their behaviour. For example, only after having health problems, many people learn that their habits (diet, smoking, alcohol, etc.) are harmful and decide to make changes to their lifestyle.

However, the good news is that not everyone needs to make the same mistakes to learn. Every day, people learn from the stories of their relatives, friends and neighbours experiences as well as stories created with of fictional characters. Yes, we can also learn from the mistakes made by characters in books, movies or soap operas!

This is why *Ouro Negro* was created and is effective. It is a radio-drama in Portuguese situated between two fictional contexts based on reality: the rural village of Jambolane, a traditional community in Mozambique where a foreign mining company arrives to extract coal; and the second in the town of Daraja, an urban context where a company engineer lives with his family.

Mozambican reality, apprehended from observations and scientific research, inspires the creation of the story and its characters. Throughout their stories the characters make several mistakes, learn the consequences of their actions, and finally understand that people, are the real *black gold*, the greatest wealth of the country.

Ouro Negro ao Vivo is a live radio programme produced in the national languages by the Radio Mozambique Provincial Stations and community radio partners. It addresses the same issues of the radio-drama, but here the stories and characters are real. In each edition, two community members are invited to share their own experiences, mistakes and learnings related to a specific topic for that episode.

ABIBA: YOUNG WOMEN CHALLENGING HUSBANDS AND OLDER LADIES

Abiba is a 25 years-old young woman who finished high school. She lives with her partner and their two children, aged 3 and 7, in a rural community near Memba, Nampula province, in northern

Mozambique. In her community, there is no electricity and so she does not have television. But she enjoys listening to the radio, like many others in her community. She says that “without the radio, the community doesn’t feel good. We sell beans and peanuts, to buy batteries and be able to listen to the radio. People never go to the town to sell beans and peanuts and come back without batteries”.

She listened to *Ouro Negro* radio-drama on the radio for the first time by chance. She liked it and began listening to it regularly. What Abiba specifically enjoyed was an episode about a pregnant woman who didn’t have any support from her husband and who had not attended any prenatal medical exams. The woman gave birth while she was working in the fields and she died. Then, Bisheik, a kind and caring man, tried to help her and, after her death, he took care of the baby. According to Abiba, this story provided an important lesson to her and to other women in their community, encouraging them to influence their husbands. Abiba explains: “Important that I say is that women no longer do what they did. After listening to the programme, they already know how to take care ... I know if this man wants my good or not ... this man should advise to go to the hospital, attend the childbirth ... others do not do it. Now some men already do these things ... it sounds like a joke, but now, after listening to (*Ouro Negro*) they do. Women put men to listen (to the radio). Men complain that the programme came to ruin their lives ... But now they know what to do, they go to the fields together, they help ... this (happens) thanks to *Ouro Negro*”.

From listening to radio-drama story, Abiba and her friends began to explain to their partners the risks of not having proper care during pregnancy and giving birth at home. The Men, initially suspicious, looking for more information, began to listen to the radio-drama with their wives and discovered that what they had said was true. When we asked Abiba about her husband, she explained: “He used to be (one of those who did not help at home), but now this has passed. Through the radio, it was through the radio. Now we listen (to *Ouro Negro*) together and if there is a part we haven’t understood, we pay more attention to the next episode”.

However, much change is still needed. According to Abiba, the *mamas*, that is, older ladies are a major problem in her

community in relation to child care. These ladies argue that children should be cared for as they have always done with their children in the past: “*with our children, we didn’t do it, but they survived and they had children by now, like you*”. So many women, especially those who give birth at home, do not usually take their children at the Health Centre to receive vaccines.

In this context, once again, the radio-drama *Ouro Negro* offers to Abiba and other young women the opportunity to become agents of change in their community. When older ladies hear about vaccines in radio-drama, they begin to ask: “What vaccine are they talking about?” So Abiba and other younger women explain that this is the first vaccine against tetanus, which is important for the baby and protects him in case of wound. She argues: “No, Mom! You cannot rely on what happened before, we have to take our children to the vaccine”. And so, with *Ouro Negro* support, young women manage to convince the elder ladies, and some of them have begun to take their babies to the Health Centre.

MANUEL: PROMOTING A NEW WAY OF PARENTING

Manuel is a 30 year-old man working as a taxi-driver. He is the father of three children and lives with his family in the city of Inhambane in southern Mozambique. He is aware that the first years of life are very important for a child’s development and is therefore committed to ensuring the best opportunities for his children. He would like to enrol his youngest son in kindergarten to learn more. He has not succeeded yet, but is hopeful he will be able to do it soon.

Manuel thinks that many parents of his city are not involved in their children’s education and delegate these tasks to women. So he accepted an invitation to participate in the *Ouro Negro Live* programme and share his experiences as a father. Through the radio, he motivates men to change their attitudes: “We have to love our children, we must be attentive to resolve any issue that happens with our children and we cannot have no time for this task, we cannot claim a lack of time as a reason for not taking care of our children”.

In many cases, men work and have no time to take children to the hospital. Sometimes, men travel for work reasons and spend a few days away from the family. However, for Manuel, these reasons do not prevent them from participating in children care. Even without going personally to the hospital, fathers should be informed about what the doctors and nurses have said. For example, if they said that the child is underweight, fathers must understand what it means, what the causes are and what actions should be taken. According to Manuel, when traveling, a man should always keep in touch with his wife. So if there is any emergency situation with the children, he will be able to be involved.

“We have to be the first to take care of our children, we cannot leave them alone with their mothers”. This is the recommendation that Manuel leaves to *Ouro Negro ao Vivo* listeners. He has changed his way of being a father in relation to past generations. Now, he hopes that more and more men become leaders in the care and education of children.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I show how radio programmes can support young people to become agents of change in their communities. Specifically, I analyse ways in which two young Mozambican parents challenge and reshape prevalent gender norms in their societal contexts. These social norms tend to attribute all responsibility of household chores and child caregiving to women, exonerating men from these activities.

Relationships between radio programmes and young people agency can take different directions as these case studies have illustrated. In the case of Abiba, radio-drama stories acted to motivate young people to change their lives and influence those around them, as partners, friends and neighbours. On the other hand, as in the case of Manuel, young people who have already adopted innovative behaviours can use the radio as a platform to share their experiences and promote new ways of thinking and acting to a wider audience.

In this process, storytelling plays a key role: stories inform, intrigue, thrill and motivate listeners. It is through storytelling that people better understand themselves and their reality, and build knowledge that guides their actions (Bruner, 1997). It is through stories that young people gain the motivation to change themselves and motivate others to change.

As reflective social actors, young people interrogate and understand the complex and problematic situations presented in the stories and learn from the experience of the characters (Dewey, 1910). Young people are also able to share their stories in order to enable others to question and transform their own experiences. Radio acts as a creative learning space for young people outside the formal context of school, as well as an important platform for youth voices (Wilkinson, 2015).

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YOUNG WOMEN IN THEATRE AND FILM PRODUCTION: THE CASE OF UGANDAN *ARTREPRENEUR* KEMIYONDO COUTINHO

JOSEPHINE OLUFUNMILAYO ALEXANDER

INTRODUCTION

Kemiyondo Coutinho is a young Ugandan *artrepreneur* who writes, acts, directs, produces, curates and organises events to disrupt prevailing narratives about Africa. Styling herself as an *artrepreneur* engaged in multiple arts projects, Kemiyondo challenges society's belief that one can only be good at one thing and, even worse, that one should choose one thing to be good at. Kemiyondo believes that in taking on multiple roles, she is showing society that to be an active citizen "one must use *all* their superpowers and *all* their talents to achieve a sole purpose" (Coutinho 2018).

Kemiyondo's passion and interest in acting started at primary school in Swaziland, starring in a play and relishing the attention. Later, completing her International Baccalaureate Diploma at Waterford Kamhlaba United World College of Southern Africa, also in Swaziland, Kemiyondo was gripped by the need to tell a story about African women. After failing to find a suitable story, Kemiyondo created her own one-woman play *Jabulile*, fulfilling her passion for "the missing narrative, the silenced narrative, the narrative we choose to ignore" (Coutinho 2018). *Jabulile* was to launch Kemiyondo as an *artrepreneur*.

This chapter demonstrates how Kemiyondo uses her agency to create artistic platforms addressing social issues confronting African women, empowering young artists and challenging perspectives on the arts in Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Young people are increasingly creating their own spaces outside traditional engagement in politics and civic life, uncovering new ways in which they can influence their communities. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp have emboldened them to unleash their potential for social transformation in new ways. For example, social networks played a major role in the involvement of young people in the Arab Spring of 2011. The extraordinary activities of African youth are also being brought to the fore in the media more often than ever. In the May 2013 edition of *New African* magazine, Belinda Otas showcased fifty trailblazers for “breaking new ground and making Africa proud and propelling it into a future of great hope”. Most of the trailblazers were between the ages of 15 and 35. *Forbes* magazine also publishes an annual list of the extraordinary achievements of young Africans in different sphere of life.

Kemiyondo belongs to a generation of young people who are creating new spaces for themselves. Her work is contextualised against the background of the status of women and of the arts in Uganda. Her projects have been well received both in her country Uganda and in the USA, where she is now based.

Uganda, like many countries in Africa and around the world, is a patriarchal society with a stark inequality between the genders and where the domineering power of men keeps women subjugated and subservient. In the *WomanStats Blog* an American researcher, identifying herself as CJ (2012), recounted her experiences of gender roles after spending four months living in the slums of rural Uganda as follows:

One of the biggest issues for me in Uganda was the gender roles. Men expect their women to be docile and subservient. Men expect to get a woman on the

merits of having money or professing love within moments of meeting her. In familial relationships, men would generally get to make the decisions. I met men who were proud of the fact that they had cheated on their wives. I met many more men who brashly told me that they would cheat on their wife if I was willing to have sex. I often saw men drinking away their money while women were trying to feed and clothe their kids with what little money they could earn alone. I heard first hand from destitute women how men were unwilling to use condoms or negotiate sexual activity with their wives – even though the men already had several uncared-for children.

CJ also noted a disturbing attitude held by many women: “What was surprising to me, and what I have not heard often discussed in informal spheres, was that the women were perpetuating this oppressive culture. We usually talk of issues like this in terms of what the men do, but we do not always mention how the women are continuing their oppression.” To buttress this claim, CJ gave an example of how school-age girls would exchange unprotected sex with older men for small amounts of money. She saw pregnant teenage girls dropping out of school while the men simply disappeared. The problem, she continued, “is greatly exaggerated by the fact that the girls feel as if they have no self-worth”. She concludes by highlighting the roles that mothers play to perpetuate this oppression: “The girls know no other way of life, because this is what their mothers teach them. The children learn from watching their mothers that the women are to be subservient to the men. The children learn from their mothers’ actions that boys are to be treated preferentially. The women push their girls into making money any way they can and belittle them. The mothers in this society, and perhaps many others, are teaching their girls to feel as if they have no worth and to be subservient to men”.

According to Coutinho (2018) women are not valued in Uganda. She is angry that in the wake of the recent murders of 26 women, the authorities failed to act. Coutinho also sees a recently passed law that effectively banned miniskirts, in response to the harassment of women, as victim-blaming and counter to government claims to address gender inequality and to empower women (Isanga 2015).

While Kabayambi (2016) acknowledges progress in Uganda to close the gender gap in the enrolment of girls in education and in the participation of women in business, genderised disparities and discrimination remain dire and unacceptable. She identifies four obstacles to achieving gender parity in Uganda: "poor or non-existent maternal health services causing high maternal morbidity and mortality; poor quality education with a high dropout rate of especially girls in primary schools; cultural impediments to land, asset and property ownership and security for women and cultural attitudes and practices which have led to rampant gender-based violence".

Despite these obstacles, Uganda still came 58 out of 145 countries in a 2015 UN Gender Gap Report which assessed a combination of economic, education, health and political indicators.

A look at the Ugandan arts scene is relevant in contextualising Kemiyoondo's work. The history of the arts in Uganda can be traced from precolonial times, through the missionary and colonial eras to postindependence politics (Wilde 2006). Ntangaare (2001:143-193) describes the four main constituents of theatre in Uganda as "traditional/community theatre, commercial theatre, education theatre and development theatre." Despite this, she identifies institutions such as The Uganda National Cultural Centre and The International Theatre Institute largely as business enterprises. This follows the killing, during Idi Amin's draconian rule, of Byron Kawadwa, Wycliffe Kiyingi and Robert Serumaga, three prominent dramatists who operated under censorship to produce political theatre. The oppression and exile of artists thereafter reduced theatre to be conservative and commercial.

Kaiza (2013) recounts how an experienced theatre hand with memories of quality, professionalism theatre in the 1960s and early 1970s told him what the National Theatre descended to: "They had plays without order, without plans. Then later, how they paid the actors depended on who became the most popular that day on the stage. The most popular actors got the most money, and popularity depended on how you were received on stage. So each actor tried to be more popular. Even if you were coming on stage for five minutes, you tried to use that time to become popular, so

you walked in a funny way, you changed your voice to sound funny. The five minutes became 15 minutes and they had to take you off stage. If you refused to pay heed to the director telling you to get off stage, other actors would come to pull you away. You refused and fights ensued”.

Audiences were reported to be unruly, sometimes slapping actors, spitting and holding up plays for several hours. Actors were not paid and lived in danger. Ultimately, because of this degeneration, a directive was issued that theatres should produce scripted plays delivered to a schedule. This demand caused a general move away from local or traditional drama towards western plays. The space to tell the African narrative was removed, derailing any attempt at decolonisation of theatre. Furthermore, only expatriates with significant financial means could afford to stage plays. An exception was the Kampala Dramatic Arts Society.

Ugandan theatre was given a breath of life in 2005 with the production of *Dance and Drama in Uganda: The Pearl of Africa* –a collaboration between folklore exponent Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare and New Zealander Susan Battye, both researchers, playwrights and teachers. Theatre practitioners also became freer after two decades of civil war but the freedom, according to Wilde (2006), was limited by the ongoing demands of commercialisation and privatisation which made the production of quality new plays prohibitive.

A break came in 2012 with Judith Adong’s *Silent Voices*. Kaiza (2013) in an online journal describes it “as a courageous dramatisation of the war in northern Uganda” as the play “caused fears of a backlash, brought back the kind of quality and professionalism we had ceased to think possible in the country”. Kemiyondo is one of the actresses featured in the play. The rebirth of quality theatre and professionalism was however short lived as government clamped down in late 2012 on the staging of another play *The River and The Mountain*. Kaiza (2013) describes it as “a brilliant play, brilliantly directed by Angella Emurwon, the staging of which gave air to some of the brightest, young acting talent in this country.”

Coutinho (2018), describes the arts scene in Uganda in 2012, when she made her debut, as redundant “people went to the same

events, listened to the same artists and no-one was putting the newcomers on a stage or giving them a chance to say something. In some ways the art scene emulated our government. Everyone was afraid to try something new”.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kemiyondo's projects can be analysed and discussed within the theoretical framework of feminism. Contemporary postcolonial concepts such as otherness, hybridity and disruption, with roots in the works of Said (1991), Bhabha (1992) and Spivak (1995), are used as part of a discursive strategy while reference is also made to Sen's (1999) female empowerment and Adichie's (2014) and Gordon's (2017) postmodern feminism.

Feminism as a global ideology is concerned with confronting the oppression and inequality between men and women in patriarchal societies. It advocates for the equal rights of females in a world where male dominance permeates social, political, cultural, family, religious and economic institutions. Feminist theorists interrogate the invisibility of women in all spheres of life and fight for the emancipation and empowerment of females. According to Crossman (2018), feminist theory shines a light on social problems, trends and issues that are otherwise overlooked or misidentified from a historically dominant male perspective. Crossman (2018) identifies the key areas of focus as discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender, objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression, and gender roles and stereotypes.

In the 1960s, postcolonialism emerged as a critical reaction to Eurocentric approaches to evaluating texts and is associated with the rise of advocacy groups on race, gender, ethnicity and democracy (Mongia 1996:5). Since then, postcolonial theory “has been transforming and transmuting in accordance with the intellectual climate of the day” (Kalua 2014:66). In this chapter, a contemporary view of postcolonial theory is adopted to locate feminism in postcolonial discourse. According to Young (2003:7):

"postcolonial theory involves issues that are the preoccupations of other disciplines and activities, particularly to do with the position of women, of development, of ecology, of social justice, of socialism in the broadest sense. Above all, postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledge into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different people of the world".

Both feminism and postcolonialism are disruptive and present a challenge to the existing order. In *Orientalism*, Said (1991) criticises the Western representation of the East and particularly Muslims as marginal, peripheral and inferior, thereby casting Orientals as 'Others'. The concept of Otherness within postcolonial discourse is linked to the construction of binary identities in which one opposite is vested with power and controls the other. In feminist discourse, the power relation casts female as the *Other*, defined and differentiated with reference to the male. This concept will be used to analyse and discuss Kemiyondo's projects in order to highlight the marginalisation of women and how they have been defined as *Other* in patriarchal societies.

Unlike Said, Homi Bhabha (1992, 1994) perceives the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised as "inherently unstable" rather than fixed in terms of binary opposites. This perception leads to the notion of hybridity (Bertens 2008:167). Bhabha recognises the movement and interaction between colonisers and the colonised in both directions. He acknowledges the fluidity (the possibilities of continuous and repeated changes that allow for free movement) between the two cultures, creating a "colonial hybrid". Bhabha argues that the cultural interaction of coloniser and colonised leads to hybridity - a fusion of cultural forms which blurs the binary opposites identified by Said. This concept of hybridity, as the fusion of forms made possible by fluidity of interaction, is utilised as an analytical strategy to examine Kemiyondo's ability to transcend boundaries by fusing arts forms together and in examining her as an artist with a hybrid identity.

Spivak is acknowledged as the first postcolonial theorist with a fully feminist agenda (Bertens 2008:169). She insists on the

inclusion of feminist perspectives in postcolonial discourse thus facilitating the interconnectedness between postcolonialism and feminism by paying attention to the difference between male and female representations. She questions why Western feminism operates from white, middle class and heterosexual perspectives and pays consistent attention to those she has called the subaltern. A description she ascribes to the lower layers of people in colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial societies. These are the groups of people in society with the least power of all. Spivak focuses on the female subaltern, describing them as doubly marginalised, in patriarchal societies under colonial/neocolonial control, with no history and no voice (Spivak 1995b:28). Spivak's attention to the female subaltern, according to Bertens (2008:170) is borne out of her desire to save them from misrepresentation rather than to speak for them. One of the major themes in Kemiyondo's projects is the desire to tell the story of the female subaltern in Uganda and Africa by challenging the way in which they have been misrepresented by Western narratives.

Sen's (1999) female empowerment is also useful in discussing Kemiyondo's feminist agency to transcend boundaries by empowering herself and other artists. Gordon's (2017) definition of postmodern feminism can be adopted to describe Kemiyondo in the spirit of Adichie's (2014) invitation that *We must all be feminist* in terms of interrogating subtle nuances of discrimination and oppression in language and attitude and in debunking the idea of feminism as a purely female endeavour by advocating for the involvement of men.

METHODOLOGY

A single case study design is used, within the qualitative methodological approach. According to Stewart (2014:144), a case study is an exploratory form of inquiry, providing an in-depth picture of the unit of study, which can be a person, group, organisation or social situation. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it is used for the in-depth study of a phenomenon. The purpose

according to Mills and Birks (2014:9) is to examine phenomena that impact on the lived reality of individuals or groups in a particular cultural and social context.

The population for this study is mainly Kemiyondo Coutinho and selected artists who have worked closely with her. The participants were purposively selected and interviewed. Purposive sampling, according to Patton (2015), leads to the selection of information-rich cases from which a great deal can be garnered about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. The main person interviewed is Kemiyondo Coutinho herself, followed by artists involved in her projects.

In terms of the data collection method and procedure, an online ethnography methodology was employed. Online ethnography, according to Skågeby (2011:410) "envelopes document collection, online observation and online interviews". Since watching a live performance of Kemiyondo's first play *Jabulile* in 2006 I have followed her career, mainly online, through her undergraduate years and Master's programmes. I listened to programmes broadcast on radio and television about her work, consulted magazine articles and watched a YouTube documentary and commentary on her work.

My interest in Kemiyondo's work led to being asked to contribute this book. I immediately contacted Kemiyondo asking for her permission to write about her work and armed with that consent, I emailed details to her so that she could be fully informed about the book project. I also sought her assistance in gaining access to some of the artists who worked with her, requesting their consent to discuss the influence of her work. I applied to the ethical clearance committee of my institution to interview her and the selected artists. There were two sets of interview questions, one for Kemiyondo and the other for the artists.

The data sources are: a) Kemiyondo's arts projects; b) the interview response from Kemiyondo; c) interview responses from selected artists as supportive evidence. These multiple sources enrich the analysis with different perspectives.

The in-depth written interview was conducted electronically. The interview questions were compiled and sent via email to those who consented to take part in the study. Email is being

used because the participants are in different parts of the world including Uganda and across the USA. Selected content from KemiYondo's projects are analysed.

KEMIYONDO'S CREATIVE ARTS INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS

KemiYondo's projects can be explored within the broad concepts of agency and empowerment, through the lenses of feminism and contemporary postcolonial discourse.

FIRST PLAYS

Jabulile (2006) tells the story of the inequality and patriarchal oppression faced by female market vendors in Swaziland. Creating, writing and acting in *Jabulile* crystallised KemiYondo's commitment to feminism and women issues in Africa. She describes this as follows: "In interviewing Swazi women for a one-woman show I was writing, I was able to correlate their issues with gender equality. This began my vicious and intense exploration of gender and the way it was affecting those around me. It became clear that hot topics like poverty, HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment could all be linked to being a woman".

In *Jabulile*, KemiYondo deconstructs the stereotypical single narrative about African women and gives voice to the plight of voiceless female subaltern in patriarchal societies. The play was first performed internationally at the 2010 National Arts Festival in South Africa and subsequently in Uganda, Canada and the USA.

KemiYondo's second play, *Kawuna...you're it!* (2012) in her own words, "interweaves three stories surrounding HIV and the stigma it presents: an orphan left behind because of HIV, an ex-rebel soldier who contracted HIV as a result of war, and an elite woman who contracts HIV within her 'monogamous' marriage." The play explores how three Ugandan women support one another and once again gives voice to the voiceless women who never normally feature in theatre. In this play, KemiYondo disrupts the

stigma associated with HIV/AIDS by demonstrating that HIV/AIDS affects all of us. More importantly, the play highlights the type of positive support needed to break the stigma around HIV/AIDS. *Kawuna...you're it!* premiered at a Gender Studies Symposium at Lewis and Clark College in Oregon, featured at the Sky Festival in San Francisco, and was selected for a New York Global Spotlight Reading and a Gates Foundation HIV/AIDS commemoration day.

FIRST FILM: *KYENVU*

Kemiyondo's film debut with *Kyenvu* (2017) was inspired by the passing of Ugandan 2014 Anti-Pornography bill commonly referred to as the "miniskirt bill". The bill blames pornography and not men's attitude for the sexual abuse of women and children. According to Walker (2018) the bill emboldened men to sexually harass women for their choice of clothing. The film provided a means for people to engage in conversations about the issue and to take the first steps towards change.

The film depicts the taunts that a young independent woman experiences daily in using public transport in a patriarchal society that entitles men to sexually harass, abuse and rape women whose appearance is perceived to be revealing and provocative. Kemiyondo infuses the difficult subject of violence against women with humour, love, joy and colour by setting the story around the day to day activity of getting to the bus stop, boarding the bus and disembarking from the bus at designated stops around Kampala. In doing this, she disrupts the single narrative of the West about Uganda and by extension about Africa and African issues.

Kemiyondo founded a company called *Kemistry Klass* to produce *Kyenvu* and other films challenging standard narratives about Africa, and in particular to encourage female film directors. Kemiyondo feels that *Kyenvu* tells "the story in the film but also secondly, the story of the film." She comments:

We need to watch ourselves to make change. Even as a director/actor, I watch myself on the playback and make adjustments from what I am seeing. It is harder from within the scene because I am in the scene. This is like life. We

are living and very rarely do we get to watch ourselves. It is important to me that people saw the role they were playing in the violence against women. That harmful sexist joke doesn't seem so funny when you realise how it contributes to the culture that perpetuates these cases. The choice not to correct your male friends when they say something out of line doesn't seem so passive anymore. It was important to tell a story that allows for the reflection of us as a society and how much we value or rather don't value the female body.

Kemiyondo had been inspired by another film, *Ayanda*, and how South Africa had been portrayed. She wanted Uganda to be shown in the same authentic light with all its complexity – the beauty, the bad, the good, the ugly – and so wrote the story that had long been in her heart. Lacking funds, she reached out to the Ugandan arts community. She asked people who were familiar with her work to be Executive Producers and approached three production houses for support. Then, with no screen or directorial experience, she decided to direct and act in the film. In her own words: "I decided it! I hope that more women and specifically African Women decide they are qualified to do the thing that is on their heart. I am willing to bet that if it is on your heart, something within you already knows how to do it".

Kemiyondo's determination to follow her vision and trust the process of making *Kyenvu* brought her to prominence in the movie industry. The film used real life experiences to call attention to harassment based on stereotyped perceptions of female appearance. *Kyenvu* also, deliberately, used a 100 per cent Ugandan cast, crew and soundtrack in order to disrupt the narrative that Ugandans need to import talent to produce industry-standard work. *Kyenvu* made its world premiere at the Oscar-Qualifying Pan African Film Festival, winning the Grand Jury Prize for Best Short Film. *Kyenvu* has since won Best African Talent Award at the Zanzibar International Film, Best International Short Film Award at the Johannesburg Short Film Festival and Harness Social Impact Award at the NBCUniversal Short Film Festival. In addition, it has been the official selection at Black Star Film Festival, Bronzelens and San Francisco Black Film Festival. It has been screened at the Cannes Film Festival, in several cities in the USA and submitted for an Academy Award.

Kemiyondo's projects demonstrate her quintessential passion and the unique agency she has to challenge oppression and inequality, shape new perspectives and empower women. Jejeebhoy (2000) defines empowerment as women gaining control of their own lives vis-à-vis family, community, society and markets. Kabeer (2001:6) describes empowerment as "thinking outside the system", challenging the status quo and "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices", previously denied. Both definitions capture Kemiyondo's creative imperatives. At core lies Kemiyondo's personal agency which, according to Mayr (2011), is the capacity to operate freely in a predetermined world. Kemiyondo's agency is her extraordinary ability to identify, pursue and achieve her own goals. In so doing, she breaks through the norms that have defined and constrained agency for African women. Kemiyondo's metacognitive self-awareness underpins her capacity, at a deep level, to understand and empathise with those who suffer injustice as is the case in *Jabulile*, *Kawuna...you're it!* and *Kyenvu*.

As a feminist, Kemiyondo uses her woman agency (Sen, 1999) to facilitate social transformation, specifically her artistic presence, to reduce exploitation and inequality within patriarchies. *Jabulile*, *Kawuna...you're it!* and *Kyenvu* are driven by her fierce and courageous refusal to accept the depiction of women as *Others* (Said, 1991) or *subalterns* (Spivak, 1995). According to Umutesi (2018) Kemiyondo is always looking out for the underdog.

As a postmodern feminist, Kemiyondo's work portrays how subtle social assumptions about women, and how they should be regarded, are created by social discourse and language. According to Gordon (2017) postmodern feminism is concerned with the relativity of social understanding, emphasising deconstruction, critical questioning and the examination of language and meaning. Kemiyondo's postmodern feminist ideals are demonstrated in the love story in *Kyenvu*. She believes that a man cannot just say he likes a woman without knowing the woman so when the man trying to woo the independent woman said to her "I like you" the independent woman replied by saying "You don't know me so you can't like me." When eventually the man followed her well enough to know that she likes yellow she let her guard down and accepted

his date invitation because he has made an effort to know her rather than basing his likeness on her looks or how beautiful she is.

The discomfort felt by the audience in the scene after the rape also highlights Kemiyondo's postmodernist perspective on feminism. She questions the action or non- action of other men who stand by and do nothing against the perpetuation of violence against women. In an interview with Aramide Tinubu of *SHADOW AND ACT*, Kemiyondo states: I told this story because for me, it's less about acts, and it's more around the people surrounding the protagonist. I wanted to investigate the allies – the good guys. I wanted to see what happens when you are seeing these things happen at the hands of your fellow man. An ally does not ask: 'What were you wearing? I'm sorry, that is not an ally'".

Her feminist perspective matches Adichie's (2014) call for everyone to become feminist in order to achieve the desired equality between men and women because being an ally according to Kemiyondo means "getting uncomfortable. If you want to see change, we've got to get uncomfortable – all of us." Both Adichie and Kemiyondo also advocate for the exposure of unconscious subtle nuances of discrimination against women. They both believe that feminism should not be women's issue alone but that men should also speak out against sexual violence and discriminatory practices that subjugate women as *Others* in patriarchal society. In the interview with Tinubu Kemiyondo asserts: "Feminism is not just for women. This fight is not just about women. Men need to speak up. In fact, I think that's who really needs to speak up and they also have to start listening to women and be there for them."

Martin (2018), having worked with Kemiyondo, attests to her feminist boldness: "She was creating deeply profound feminist work before the hashtag #thefutureisfemale even existed. She was creating unapologetic work concerning gender dynamics and gender politics before the #metoo movement hit its recent second wind".

Kemiyondo's work has disrupted long-held cultural perspectives about African women as subjugated, dominated, silenced, voiceless, powerless and therefore inferior and othered in comparison to men. Contrary to Butler's (1988) argument that we are constrained and restricted by social taboos concerning gendered

spaces, KemiYondo has shown that this notion can be disrupted and that expectations and taboos, in Uganda and elsewhere, can be broken. Her work has also led to consciousness raising about feminist identity. According to Kawe (2018), the producer and co-curator of Kampala International Theatre Festival and KemiYondo's mentor, she is unapologetically feminist.

THE NUVO ARTS FESTIVAL

The *NuVo Arts Festival*, New Voices (2013), was conceived, curated and directed by KemiYondo in Uganda. The week-long festival promoted HIV/AIDS awareness under the theme HIV/AIDS: NO STATISTICS ALLOWED. It was created to foster the arts and to give Ugandans an opportunity to be inspired by their own arts and artists. KemiYondo used the festival to draw attention to how arts can become a powerful catalyst for change in addition to its entertainment and educational roles. She targeted young Kampala professionals/students and older high school students as audience and brought a San Francisco based African photographer, two Kenyan poets/storytellers, a Black American who had never been to Africa and an American theatre arts practitioner and some more talented artists from all over Africa. Martin (2018), who participated in the festival, describes it as an example of how KemiYondo carves out space and uses artistic expression as a catalyst for social dialogue and change. In addition, she states that KemiYondo did not wait for someone else to create the space, she created and produced the festival out of thin air - all within a few months and while pursuing a masters' degree. Martin sums up what KemiYondo did in the one-week festival in the following words: "She was making *Kampala* an epicentre for art, entertainment, music, theatre, fellowship, learning, education, and growth - a place that most Americans sadly would not even be able to point out on a map of Africa - she was making that place *the* place. She was giving Africa an opportunity to be vulnerable, sexy, fun, artsy, talented, poetic, open, free."

The festival demonstrates KemiYondo's multitalented ability to fill missing gaps and to promote arts for change by creating the

change she wants to see. She also disrupts society's expectations that one can only be good at one thing by taking up multiple roles at the festival and equally performing with equal ability in the different roles.

THE A KA DOPE COMPANY

The *A Ka Dope* company (2016) was created to give a platform for little known Ugandan artists. Kemiyoondo describes it as "a collection of events that aim to disrupt the current entertainment scene in Uganda with new, fresh and unconventional acts". The monthly events feature actors, musicians, painters and poets. She describes it as "the melting pot of creativity, which brings artists from across genres and disciplines, allowing them to share an audience and platform". *A Ka Dope*, she says, is about changing and reinventing the way we participate in art.

It is in this project that Kemiyoondo's multi-dimensional agency comes most into play. She collaborated with and mentored many Ugandan budding artists, promoting fluidity between arts forms and creating hybrid performances for example by fusing singers from different genres to produce NEW ART, in which artists are pushed beyond their boundaries. The disruption even extended to the narrative that certain music genres cannot be mixed, by putting six artists with completely different sounds together. Kemiyoondo uses *A ka Dope* events to disrupts the music industry which has been dominated for a long time in Uganda by established old musicians branded as superstars by creating alternative music and style. In founding and spearheading *A ka Dope* Kemiyoondo says she "wanted to see new art and to develop a new audience to appreciate that which they did not already know". She states that she learnt two things in doing this in Kampala, first that new art, new faces and new voices were waiting to emerge but had no platform and second that audiences can be trained and cultivated to have a curiosity for the unknown. Reflecting further, she says: "So with A Ka Dope we have built an audience that now attends an event where they don't have to know an artist but they come to discover artists. There is a trust in the brand for quality and thus audiences come

knowing that they will discover a new gem they didn't know about. A new risky but ground-breaking way to consume art in Uganda".

A ka Dope takes place every first Friday of the month and trends as #1 twitter topic in Uganda on the day of event. In addition, from an audience of 120 at the first show the audience has grown to 550. It has attracted over 150 artists from versatile and diverse genres in Uganda and has been showcased at the largest Ugandan music arts festival, Nyege Nyege. It featured as part of BBC's "Across Women's Lives." It affords Ugandans the opportunity of watching high quality entertainment in the form of music, poetry, songs and rap.

Kemiyondo's multiple identities allow her to experiment and achieve success by thinking out of the box. As a cosmopolitan who by nature is a hybrid of many cultures and therefore a walking culture clash, she is able to bring multi-dimensional perspective to her work. For example, she is heavily influenced by music as demonstrated in *A Ka Dope* events and *Kyenvu* and by visual arts as seen in the images she uses in her plays. She admits that she coaches singers like actors and believes in the fusion of knowledge to create something new rather than compartmentalise what we know.

Many Ugandan artists spoke glowingly about *A Ka Dope*. Kawe (2018) describes it as a perfect example of Kemiyondo's art and entrepreneurship skills, creating a fun space for Ugandan music lovers. *A Ka Dope* according to Kawe has become a household name among music lovers in Kampala, young and old. New employment and mentorship opportunities have also been created. Juliet Yiga, a director for Anchorage Media gained experience on *A Ka Dope* and *Kyenvu*; rapper, producer and singer Lagun Owor was mentored for *A Ka Dope* while Afsa Umutesi became a co-producer for *A Ka Dope*. Oyenbot (2018) also attests to Kemiyondo's use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter in promoting her work.

One of Kemiyondo's challenges has to do with her identity as a person. Born in Uganda and relocating with her parents at an early age to Swaziland, now Eswatini, and studying for her undergraduate and Master's degrees in the USA, Kemiyondo is a potpourri of cultures and does not belong solidly to anywhere, making her identify as "the other". She was the only black student in her college to

graduate from theatre arts. She endured institutionalised racism in her undergraduate years. This according to her “lit a fire in her to provide stories that combat what she experienced”. As a former student of Waterford Kamhlaba United World College of Southern Africa, Kemiyondo often finds her worldview more expansive than those around her at rehearsals. This means that she is never really integrated and immersed in any of the cultures she is part of. So for example she is African and black in the USA but is made to feel non Ugandan in Uganda because of her accent, lighter skin colour and her postmodern feminist ideas.

However, finance has been her main challenge. For example, she says *A Ka Dope* has struggled because it is hard to get finance without people changing the vision. Lack of finance also limits her desire to shoot a new film each year in Uganda. Although this would create jobs it remains difficult to find finance or secure funding support from government.

Other challenges include getting Ugandan audiences to pay for art. This is because paying for art is a relatively new development and audiences are still reluctant to pay prices high enough to support artists. The artists she works with are also still relatively unconvinced that art can be a job and not just a passion. Some find it difficult to defer to Kemiyondo and bypass her to ask a male member of the cast for clarification, even though she is the employer: she remains just a woman. Her limited experience in the film industry also makes her vulnerable and unsure when promoting her work in the film industry.

In terms of criticism, her work is too radical for African culture and not radical enough for new wave feminism. *A ka Dope's* audience has also stagnated and needs to continue growing. In Uganda, she is regarded as privileged and the success of her work is attributed to her class position rather than on merit. This latter criticism is unfair and discriminatory as her work has attained global and continental recognition.

Kemiyondo has won several awards and featured on international television and radio. Her awards include: Young Achievers Award, 2012, Arts and Culture; KCACTF Playwright, 2012; Dorothy Berkson Award, Gender Studies, 2012; Best Lead

Actress, Broadwayworld.com, 2015; Gypsy Rose Lee award for best actress, 2015; Leo Africa Institute Fellowship, 2016. KemiYondo was also profiled on CNN's African Voices (2017) and BBC's Across Women's Voices (2017). She was named as one of Forbes' Under 30 Achievers in June 2018.

KemiYondo's work is globally relevant because it enhances the current conversation to empower as many women as possible to speak out against sexual abuse by coming out to tell about their own abuse. In addition, she is changing the Western monolithic narrative of Africa as a continent of war, poverty and disease and of people who are inherently inferior. In its place she is creating truthful stories of Africa that reflect a balanced perspective of the complexities of Africa in a multi-dimensional way. As an artist of global repute, she serves as a role model for young African artists. She provides them with the courage to dare without seeking permission from anyone and without limiting themselves. KemiYondo is also showcasing Ugandan talents globally especially with *Kyenvu*.

Within Ugandan society, her works have opened up conversations on difficult subjects concerning violence against women with the long term goal of changing society's perspective about women and of achieving equality between men and women. On the art scene, she has empowered young artists rather than the institution by creating a platform for them to share audiences and by pushing them through training, workshops and rehearsal on how to excel in their work as well as how to collaborate with other artists to create something new. Her works push the limits and the boundaries in order to create the change she wants.

CONCLUSIONS

KemiYondo is a storyteller focussing on women and the arts, Uganda, the African continent and Africa in the diaspora. KemiYondo is a strong-willed young woman who breaks boundaries and creates newspaces where needed. Her story of social transformation and hope, strengthens belief in our human capacity to innovate and challenge taboos. KemiYondo's artistic endeavours

transcend stereotypical perspectives on women and art. She believes that art, in all its diverse forms, can inspire individuals and collective power to change the world. Most importantly, as Martin (2018) succinctly puts it, Kemiyondo wants to shed a more truthful light on Africa: on how Africans see themselves and on how the world sees Africa.

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IT TAKES A VILLAGE: YOUTH-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN RWANDA

BRYNN A. CHAMPNEY

INTRODUCTION

In post-genocide Rwanda, orphans and vulnerable young people have created youth-headed households as a strategy for mutual survival. This is an example of youth in Africa working as agents of change in their communities on many different scales, from household-level leadership to village-level advocacy and even national-scale organising. It is concerning what these young people are forced to take responsibility for and sacrifice and the constrained choices they must make without proper recognition or adequate support. A first step in addressing these challenges is acknowledging the nuanced challenges youth face, which are far more complex than the labels that have previously been ascribed to their life circumstances.

Through a contextualised discussion of life in one village of youth-headed households, I hope to illuminate both the challenges facing youth caregivers in Rwanda, and the creative ways they are tackling constraints on their individual futures, their families, and their communities. Although I do not pretend that one snapshot can represent the whole, I do believe that engagement

with individual lives and the telling of these stories can help us understand human struggles in ways that statistics and reports often leave wanting. As populations of orphans and vulnerable youth continue to grow throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the examination of youth-headed households and youth coping mechanisms only increases in relevance.

JUNE 2008

Within a week of arriving in Rwanda, I was surprised to meet a twenty-three-year-old village chief. The villagers called him "Fath-Jacques," short for Father Jacques. Even the *old moms* called him this. The village went by the name Kinyinya, but more often, was referred to as "Nsanga," after the organisation founded and run by Fath-Jacques.

Much has been published about the history of Rwanda and the Genocide of 1994. To summarise, ethnic conflict in Rwanda (that had been institutionalised and greatly exacerbated by colonial agendas) reached a violent climax between April and July of 1994, when between 800,000 and one million Rwandans were slaughtered, in what was mostly close-contact combat with neighbours and acquaintances. It is estimated that ten percent of Rwanda's entire population was killed within the span of one hundred days. In the aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda struggled with an estimated population of 500,000 orphans (Powley, 2007). The situation did not improve over time, and in 2009, UNICEF documented 690,000 Rwandan orphans (Maclellan, 2005). This was, and continues to be, the lethal result of violent conflict, pervasive poverty, and HIV/AIDS.

YOUTH-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Because of the extreme loss of life and community in Rwanda, traditional family structures for absorbing orphans into existing networks were not sufficient following the 1994 genocide. Orphanages

that opened post-genocide had mainly been shut down by 1996, and the government's policy of encouraging reunification and absorption of orphans into families (called "one child, one family") still left a suffering population of vulnerable children without basic necessities or care (Maclellan 2005). Lacking other options, many children stayed together, working toward group survival. In 2001, the Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development (ACORD) estimated that thirteen percent of Rwanda's households were headed by children (ACORD, 2001). These were usually referred to as "child-headed households" or "orphan-headed households".

These orphans were unsupported by their government until a dozen heads of households, like Jacques, organised and advocated for themselves, forming the Association Des Orphelins Chefs De Menages (AOCM for its acronym in French), an association for the heads of orphan-headed households. Because of AOCM's advocacy efforts, which occurred at a national level, the Rwandan government was forced to respond, in part by providing land and simple shelter to these families, like the village in Kinyinya. The formation of the AOCM was revolutionary in Rwanda; youth organised on a national scale and successfully brought about a tangible response from their government.

KINYINYA AND THE ORPHANS OF NSANGA

Kinyinya was created in 2005 when the Rwandan government worked with international NGOs to provide 110 crude houses and land plots for Kigali's most vulnerable residents. Jacques, who was both educated and employed, was elected chief of the village at age nineteen. He had been involved with organising and advocating for families like his own: orphaned genocide survivors, with youth acting as heads of household, caring for siblings, and in most cases, other adopted orphans as well.

Even after the Rwandan government provided shelter in Kinyinya, the new residents had to struggle to meet their other basic needs. In 2005, three children in Kinyinya died because of their living conditions. They had no electricity, no plumbing

or sanitation, no drinkable water, and very little food. Jacques couldn't stand to see the continued suffering of the people in his village, and, with the understanding that an official organisation could attract more attention and illicit more funding from donors, he founded the Association of the Orphans of Nsanga (AON), and began fundraising campaigns to improve the lives of everyone in his village.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

Jacques Sezikeye's leadership at a young age and appeals to the international community are the kinds of actions I witnessed repeatedly from young men during my short time living in Rwanda. The fact that I only witnessed young men, with their heightened access to educational opportunities, language proficiency, and urban domains, successfully creating public organisations for advocacy is evidence of the existing gender disparities experienced by the vast majority of Rwandan youth. Alongside the formal, business-oriented initiatives I saw springing forth from young men, I want to highlight the crucial, domestic, and unfortunately overlooked societal contributions of girls and young women in post-genocide Rwanda.

Let's consider the case of my close neighbours in Kinyinya. In this household, a twelve-year-old girl, whom we will call Bertha, cared for four younger biological siblings, and four informally adopted children in a two-room dwelling. All eight of her dependents were between the ages of four and ten. They subsisted on what Bertha could grow in the communal garden plots at the bottom of the village hill and what she could beg from her neighbours. The first time I visited their home, Bertha called all eight children to gather beside her in a line to pose for a photograph in front of their home. All nine of them are barefoot, but clothed. Many of the young children wear oversized t-shirts that hang past their knees. Bertha, as well as a few of the children, look into the camera, smiling. One of the youngest children holds up a soccer ball made of plastic bags; another sticks his tongue out at me. Bertha does not even dream of attending school; she is now a *mom* of eight. When

asked about her future desires and prospects, she reveals that these children are now her life, and her future. She doubts that she will ever get married. She sees her occupation in life as raising these children, enabling them to attend school, and supporting their successful transitions into adulthood occupations and marriage, even at the cost of her own prolonged youth-hood, and eventual *old-maid* status in Rwandan society. In no way do I want to frame this as a noble or romantic sacrifice; in most cases girls are forced to make these *choices* regardless of their desires or their equal right to have a childhood themselves. Bertha's *choice* is a constrained one; acceptance of her new life is a default coping mechanism in a situation with no viable (let alone desirable) alternatives.

At the time of my research in Rwanda, it was estimated that as many as ninety percent of youth-headed households were led by girls (MacLellan, 2005). Even if an older male was the *head* of the household by name, it was usually a girl or young woman who took care of the responsibilities for the entire family and enabled its members' survival. This is an extraordinary, unconventional way in which female youth in Rwanda act as agents of change. Throughout the country, hundreds of thousands of girls are forced to sacrifice their education, career, and marriage prospects in order to provide as-stable-as-possible *homes* and *families* for cohorts of younger (and sometimes older!) youth they care for. Unfortunately, these girls and young women have little organisational representation or advocacy; the difficulty of gathering reliable statistics about their prevalence and location alone speaks to the relative invisibility of this cohort of *super-girls*. For this is what they are. Every girl labouring to run a youth-headed household enables several children to survive and have the chance to thrive. One girl, and one household at a time, this was and is helping enable Rwanda's incredible economic and lifestyle advancements. Although credit for the 10 per cent economic growth rate and the rapid modernity of the country may go to President Kagame and his partners in international aid, I argue that the *success* of the country in the decades following the 1994 genocide is largely due to the sacrifice, resolve, and industriousness of its youth: particularly girls and young women who are 'raising' their communities.

LESSONS FOR POLICY

Several points should be made to inform policy and practitioners in these settings in the future. The first, and most central to this collected volume, is the resiliency, strength, and good-naturedness of youth. Youth in Africa, and particularly in post-conflict nations, are often depicted as unemployed, hopeless, angry, and potentially violent masses. While youth in Rwanda *are* desperate for economic opportunities, this generally doesn't translate into violence, or even the selfishness that one could argue is certainly warranted by such desperate circumstances (Sommers, 2012). Instead, the tendency and preference of children and youth to stick together and form structures of mutual aid speaks to the resilience and empathy that a phenomenon like youth-headed households – especially those with nonbiological members – demonstrates. This is further exemplified by the actions taken by those *successful* orphans who make it out of the cycle of daily desperation to turn back towards their communities and try to provide the most helpful and hopeful circumstances within which other children and youth can succeed. Although this comes dangerously close to romanticism, it is crucial to highlight across literatures and mediums in today's world of afro-pessimism.

The second point I argue is for the use of consistent language across disciplines and frameworks which reflects the lived experiences for vulnerable youth in Africa. In this discussion alone, the difference between definitions of *child* and *youth* are murky, yet crucial, for the recognition and support of vulnerable families everywhere. Any studies employing the very restrictive, western concept of a *child* as anyone under the age of 18 and applying this to *child-headed households* ignores the cultural understandings of *youth* in Rwanda as any unmarried individual, with *youth* pointed to as the transitional stage between dependent childhood and (married) adulthood. Depending on the policies of the government or humanitarian organisation, *youth* can encompass individuals from the age of thirteen to thirty (Maclellan 2005, Sommers, 2012). I constantly bumped up against government and development programme representatives who insisted that every

child-headed household could only be categorised as such because its head of household was below age eighteen. The truth *on the ground* is that it is difficult to find these households; the majority of vulnerable families who claim this status are headed by youth in their late teens or early twenties. As it is, these youth feel coerced to lie about their ages or about whom heads the family in order to qualify for the often-life altering support made available to them if they are considered under the extra-vulnerable category of *children*.

This also applies to the common belief that a youth- or orphan-headed household is categorised specifically by the absence of any adult presence. This excludes all households of youth (and there are many) whom are responsible for themselves, despite the physical presence of an adult relative, who may be physically or mentally disabled or otherwise unable to fulfil the role of provider and caretaker. The use of the term 'orphan' when referring to vulnerable households discounts all youth who, despite having living relatives, are still left to fend for themselves (MacLellan, 2005). This can be due to second marriages, incredible poverty, psychological trauma, tension with step-relatives, and any number of other domestic issues which create *orphans* of lived experience, despite not qualifying as orphans according to the generally accepted western use of the word. The designation of *orphan* varies between Western, African, governmental, and humanitarian contexts. As I have argued, this is also true of the words *child* and *youth*. *Who* counts, and *what qualifies them as counting*, are essential factors which currently obstruct efforts to accurately map, designate, study, and support individuals living in youth-headed households.

CONCLUSIONS

While many chapters in this book have highlighted larger-scale, organised action in political and social realms, I believe much of this chapter's importance lies in its depiction of youth persistence on the individual, household, and village level, despite dire circumstances and daily struggles beyond what most readers can comprehend. The perseverance of Rwandan youth is incomprehensible.

The contributions of girls helping their kin and communities survive needs to be recognised, investigated, and supported by both national policies and international organisations. Youth, if we not only *let* them but appropriately support them in doing so, are capable of raising the next generation out of post-conflict chaos and into a more peaceful future.

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PART 4
YOUTH, SOCIAL COHESION
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STORIES OF AFRICAN YOUTH MOBILISING FOR CHANGE

OBI PETER ONYEIGWE, ONYEKACHUKWU UGWU NNAEMEZIE
AND TAOFIK ABIDEMI SANNNI

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes some of the contributions young people in Africa have made in different areas of endeavour: development, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, peace, security and health. A selection of examples from Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria will help us correct the negative views held about young people in Africa. These examples show young people have demonstrated creativity, skill, and unshaking commitment and determination to overcome prevailing forces of poverty, unemployment, growing frustration, governments' brutality and impunity, and terrorism among others.

ADVOCACY FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE IN GHANA

Young Peace Brigades (YPB) is a youth-led organisation which developed community engagements with key stakeholder, to help resolve divisions which prevail in Obuasi, in the Ashanti region in Ghana. Through visits to the District Chief Executive, who is

the government representative in the district, and the Director of the Education Service, the continued division among communities, and the concomitant infrastructural deficiencies and education malaise were addressed. In the words of Rashid Zuberu, the Founder and Coordinator of YPB (cited in UNOY, 2014): "In order to get the communities working together I had to understand the root causes of their feud and to place myself in their situation. I helped set up an alternative dispute resolution committee comprised of three chiefs and elders. This was well received and it had members from all three communities".

Through the resourceful use of community volunteers, the organisation successfully set up a clinic and community development centre. Rashid continues to be a community leader and a mediator. He has also supported other young entrepreneurs and peacebuilders in the region and in other countries as a trainer. He continues to work in collaboration with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, the organisation which trained him when he was 18 years old.

This example shows how a young person with mediation and leadership skills was able to bring parties together and create a space for dialogue. Rashid was able to inspire other young people and motivate them to continue working on the challenges identified through peaceful means of conflict resolution.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON YOUTH PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

In 2016, Search for Common Ground Nigeria with support from North East Regional Initiative and USAID/OTI organised a regional Youth Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel Region. Over 7000 young people from five participating countries (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Mali) were trained and mentored as advocates of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 of December 2015 (UNSCR 2250), a resolution that urges states to involve youth in peacebuilding processes, based on five pillars: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Youths for Peace-Building and Development in Africa (YOUNPEDA) and Advocates for Youth Health and Development (AYHD) were active participants in the conference and decided to remain involved so as to promote the implementation of the resolution in Nigeria. They did so by organising information sessions and promoting it through the use of arts and messages in local languages. They also significantly contributed to the Global Progress Study of the UNSCR 2250. The organisations also engaged with relevant stakeholders such as UNDP Nigeria, to get their commitment and support for implementing the resolution. Efforts have also been made to establish a sub-agency working group on Youth, Peace and Security in Nigeria, while a strategy for the resolutions' implementation in Nigeria is being developed.

In this example, young people show that if they are given the chance, they are able to engage and contribute to policy processes making them their own, bringing in their inputs and sharing information with their peers.

STUDENTS AGAINST CORRUPTION IN EDUCATION IN LIBERIA

Students Against Destructive Action and Decisions (SADAD) was launched to address the challenging trends of bribery and corruption in the Liberian education system. As in the words of Mohammed Foboi, its founder: "Over the years, SADAD has become an important youth organisation in the areas of peacebuilding, youth development, civic engagement, community service, and gender mainstreaming, all the while contributing to achieving higher standards in education. As a result, exams were successfully overseen to reflect expected standards and students' performances, while a youth media outlet *myspace* was started as a platform to engage relevant stakeholders in finding solutions to youth education and development".

This initiative shows how the efforts of a single individual can spark the formation of an association which in turn makes an impact in society. This example is relevant as it shows how youth

themselves are able to identify a problem that affects them directly, that is, the corrupt practices in education, and they work with other young people to resolve it.

SUPPORTING FORMER MILITANT YOUTH IN NIGERIA

The oil boom of the 1970s which sparked an increase in oil production and revenue, led however to neglect of environmental standards resulting in severe environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Arising from this development was the emergence of violent armed groups whose aim was to work against these environmental degradations which are fuelled by systemic corruption. In view of this, Preye Ketebu Brown (2018), a youth advocate in this region and one of the coordinators of the World Youth Centre (WYC) founded in 2005, made his mark by engaging militant youth in preparatory sessions on how to leave arms, use non-violent means and make strong appeals for amnesty. By 2009, 30.000 militants were granted unconditional amnesty. To sustain this milestone, WYC initiated economic empowerment and political participation programmes, training over 2.000 militants on diverse vocational skills, artistic ventures and trade, which greatly helped to restore tranquillity in the once troubled region.

This example shows how youth can help create programmes to address the root causes of violence, which in this case were, among others, unaddressed feelings of frustration and anger about the negative effects of oil production and unfair distribution of resources.

THE RISE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

Young social entrepreneurs through their start-ups have contributed significantly and valuably to the business environment in Nigeria and in Africa. They have created opportunities for social and economic for youth. Notable cases can be found in the mobile, digital, entertainment, fashion and style business sectors.

For example, the Chief Executives of Techno Phones, African Hair Summit, Mina Stones Gemstone and Jewellery Exhibition in Nigeria and Africa happen to be young people who are dedicated to contributing positively to economic development. The economic impact can be seen in the creation of jobs, skills transfer, in the increase of exports as evidence by economic development indicators.

In Lagos and some parts of the North, youth have distinguished themselves in the agricultural sector by capturing the market in supply and demand of their goods and services; thereby also increasing the production capacity for export and consumption.

In Aba Ngwa, Abia State youth have turned the region into a flourishing business environment. The popular slang for quality products and materials "*Aba made*" is as a result of this. Young men and women have contributed enormously to the economic and social development of the region. To this, Aba is called and known to be the Japan of Africa; young entrepreneurs have transformed the city into a mega business hub in Nigeria and Africa. The youth have placed the business hub on top of the smart social entrepreneurial chart, trending in best and excellent quality bags, shoes, fashion, electronics, machines and other resourceful business trading activities. Young people coordinate activities and manage the production, distribution, marketing, financing, exporting and general opportunities. In one of our interactions with one of the female youth - a social entrepreneur and innovator in Aba, she said: "It is because of the strength, energy and inestimable contributions of young people... their involvement in engineering technology, manufacturing of deluxe goods and services with global standard is the greatest contribution anyone can talk about" (Chiamaka, 2018). Another young business entrepreneur also said: "I am an Ngwa man, and in Aba the business hub of the Southeast state, linking the south- south is flourishing because of hardworking youth from across the states and Nigeria. Now look at my shop and all around other shops here. What do you see? There are youth working and creating innovations in their work. Some of them you see are graduates and professional designers. Take a look at the malls, plazas and markets. You don't see a lot of old people, but you see more young people, who are dedicated, selfless and

business- oriented, working to change their communities and the world of business and entrepreneurship” (Udochi, 2018).

These examples show how young people are able to take initiative and put all their energy and innovation capacities at the service of their communities.

IMPROVING HEALTH OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN NIGERIA

Writing her name in the sands of time, the young vibrant Health Professional, Chinomso Ibe has reached out far and wide, to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Guatemala, France, India, the USA, among others. This young Nigerian started Moms and New-born, delivery of clean birth kits, under the umbrella of her organisation, Traffina Foundation for Community Health (TFCH), delivering innovative health-saving approaches for both the mother and child. Through this initiative, over one million pregnant women and babies have been saved at birth. Within three years of active, collective philanthropy and free distribution of over one million safe delivery kits reached internally displaced camps across 10 states in Nigeria. Chinomso has also coordinated the free distribution of more than 2 million reproductive health and maternal healthcare kits across the country, in general hospitals, primary health centres and private clinics to facilitate family planning services and healthy living for mother and child.

This example shows the commitment and determination of a young professional who is able to identify urgent needs and contributes to design innovative and practical solutions to address them.

INCREASING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

The Not Too Young to Run Campaign, the largest and most successful youth movement in recent times, emerged as a movement of youth and civil society groups, advocating for the lowering of age for running for elective offices for young men and women in

electoral politics. The movement is driven by the compelling need to restructure the country's political system, to address the deeply entrenched system of political exclusion, and institute inclusive politics, transformative leadership and electoral competition in the electoral process.

The campaign, which started in 2016, led the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA) Africa, was aimed at facilitating the process of a constitutional amendment bill to remove age restrictions for running for office (YIAGAAfrica, 2018). The amendment reduces the age criteria for President from 40 to 35; and for members of the House of Representatives and State Assemblies 30 to 25. The movement comprises of over 100 youth and civil society organisations drawn from different parts of the country, working to promote youth issues in policy making and the constitution review process. The movement engaged with the leadership of the national and state legislatures, through visits and personalised letters to all 109 Senators, 360 members of the House of Representatives and the 990 members of the 36 state houses of Assembly. This movement was sustained through National Days of Action in 24 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with an estimated 10,000 people participating; through appearances on all the major media stations in Nigeria and the international media; and through sustained interactive social media conversations, among others. The campaign was then adopted by the United Nations, African Union and the Economic Community of West Africa States, was replicated in other countries in Africa, including Kenya, Gambia, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Cameroon and Sierra Leone. As well as this, the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth initiated this as a global campaign in partnership with partners like UNDP and the European Youth Forum while at the regional level, ECOWAS and the Africa Union endorsed the campaign.

In 2017, the National Assembly, in a historic vote, passed the age reduction bill popularly known as Not Too Young To Run Bill. On February 15, 2018, the age reduction bill was passed by 24 out of 36 state Houses of Assembly, while on 1 March 2018, 34 states Houses of Assembly approved constitutional amendments,

to reflect the bill's content. In 2018 the President signed the bill. Today, an estimated 6 in every 10 Nigerian youth are motivated for political participation and leadership.

CONCLUSION

This chapter shows how youth have led processes of social, political and economic change. It is necessary to recognise these important contributions, and fully unleash young people's potential through actions that would strengthen even more their capacities, and build on their creativity and enthusiasm. National and regional institutions should work in a coordinated way to develop and implement youth policies, which would respond to both challenges facing youth and involve them as valuable partners.

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WORKING FOR EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

ALAIN KAMBALE MABOKO

Every time I seek to know where youths are politically and socially engaged in terms of positive change in the country because rare are those who struggle explicitly in this perspective.

ALOYS et al., 2013:6

INTRODUCTION

Young people with disabilities struggle to access quality education in any circumstances, but even more so in an environment of high political instability such as the one in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In this chapter, I explain how, despite numerous challenges and constraints, the project “Promoting Youth through Education” (PYE) is creating educational opportunities, and developing citizenship skills for young people with disabilities. Also included are the personal and organisational reflections that emerged from this experience. It highlights how youth civic engagement contributes to better access to education, and to the raising of community awareness.

Firstly, I offer a brief account of the project. Secondly, I explain how I personally started my journey of becoming an agent of change, and what motivated me to take action. Thirdly, I explain how we implemented the PYE activities, and lastly, I reflect on our lessons learned, and how we have been agents of change.

CONTEXT

DRC is a youthful country, with 65 percent of the population under the age of 25. Children and youth grow up in an environment of conflict, where they are often seen as agitators or victims (USAID, 2015). Following a decade of disruption and uncertainty due to political instability, which led to the dysfunction of the educational system, and since the last ethnic conflicts and tension in the country in 2006–2011, youth in the North Kivu Province want to return to school.

The DRC Constitution guarantees the right to education. Article 45 states: “Education is free. [...] All persons have access to establishments of national education without discrimination on grounds of place of origin, race, religion, sex, political or philosophical opinions, physical, mental or sensorial condition in accordance with their capacities. [...] The public authorities have the duty to promote and to ensure, through teaching, education and dissemination of information, the respect of human rights, fundamental liberties and the duties of the citizens enumerated in this Constitution.”

However, in DRC access to education is limited. The actions or inactions of the authorities, treat access to quality of education as an act of compassion or as a favour to youth with disabilities, rather than a right to which they are entitled. DRC ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and on 30 September 2015, signed, without reservations or interpretative declarations, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional protocol.

Barriers to access to education include distance, poverty, poorly trained teachers, and discrimination against females and youth with disabilities. More than seven million children aged 5 to 17, half of whom are girls, are out-of-school. Access to, and the quality of primary, secondary, and vocational education and technical training is poor (UNICEF *et al.* 2013). The UNICEF “Out-of-School Children Study in the Democratic Republic of Congo” carried out in 2012 shows that 300.000 of them are children with disabilities (cited in ReliefWeb, 2013).

Youth with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination which lead to their exclusion from society and school. They face discrimination based on negative perceptions of disability. They are stereotyped and portrayed as *losers*, unable to perform any income-generating activities. This perception affects them negatively, as they lose confidence in themselves, and the community as a whole is deprived of their skills and knowledge. Additionally, there is a lack of resources to accommodate their needs. These are challenges faced by both urban and rural youth, but the needs of youth with disabilities seem to be the last on the list. This discrimination is a source of frustration, resulting in apathy. While lack of access to school is an issue, a pressing concern is the inability of the education system to ensure quality education for youth with disabilities. Despite these challenges, youth with disabilities feel a strong urge to access education. They often express "disability is not incapacity".

MOTIVATED BY MY HEROES

Given this situation, I felt the need to take action, and I could not see any path other than education. I was inspired by my heroes: Paulo Freire, a Brazilian pedagogue, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela, all advocates for human rights and freedom of their peoples.

Paulo Freire shows how education is a means towards social and political transformation. Furthermore, I believe that education is a way to build citizenship skills and that social transformation can only take place through the power of civic education (Aloys *et al.*, 2013). I see my initiative for education and civic engagement for the youth to be a catalyst of change. It was necessary to challenge policy makers to take the voices of young people into account, and ensure youth participation in the development process. In order to engage communities, and to create confidence in youth with disabilities, I referred to Paulo Freire's ideas: "The point of departure of the movement lies in the people themselves" (2000:85).

I started by organising boys' and girls' clubs to map and monitor community needs. I was 25, with little experience working with youth with disabilities. I had no clear vision of the work I was doing. I did not know how to manage things, but I was convinced that education was a powerful tool of social change. At the beginning, I started gathering them in small groups of five to ten, in a church building where we were given a room to hold our meetings for free. On a regular basis, I mobilised people in the town of Goma between 2015 and 2017. After many efforts, we finally came up with new ideas which we generated together through exchange and discussions. These discussions led to agree on a common direction: youth education.

After this two-year period, along with the community, we decided to start a community education programme: Promoting Youth through Education (PYE), under the motto "Develop through Education". PYE is now known as a model of youth civic engagement and community empowerment, aiming to promote education for young people. Today more to 400 youth from different backgrounds have taken part in our activities and support the PYE vision. As a youth-led civic education programme, PYE values youth's contributions and welcomes suggestions to improve the situation of young people.

With motivation, I struggled for more than a year trying to have PYE registered. It was not easy. I was frustrated and financially limited. But Martin Luther King was a source of inspiration. He inspired us to be brave, to be courageous, to be bold. To be honest, I failed many times but still, I persevered. Finally, I found my way out through the wisdom of Mandela: "Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again". In 2017 with the support of my friends, PYE was registered under an umbrella organisation Action for Compassion to the Vulnerable Population (ACV) as we share the same vision. We launched campaigns for education of young people and other initiatives. Unfortunately, the political environment was not easy. I was threatened and intimidated by those who saw our actions as a challenge to the local government. Yet, this did not discouraged me.

IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Since its launch in 2015, PYE has built a community of youth activists from different backgrounds. PYE has responded to the failure of an educational system which could not ensure the right to education during the unstable period in the country. Youth leaders designed an education curriculum adapted to young people who had missed classes for a long time, due to their vulnerabilities, for example, internally displaced people and those affected by economic hardships.

PYE identified active youth who demonstrated leadership skills: volunteers, small traders, students and youth in search for work. It built a network of motivated and engaged youth, and provided a body of expertise and knowledge on social transformation, which guided the development of solutions to a number of pressing needs. PYE organised these youth to work for the community interest and to raise awareness about community needs.

PYE equipped youth to raise their voices against social exclusion and worked to increase access to skills for positive youth development, and to create opportunities for youth engagement in Eastern DRC. PYE implemented vocational trainings, special training programmes: literacy in French, English as a second language and special catch up classes. It organised public events on civic participation, and built up youth capacity through peer-to-peer exchange based on mentoring approaches. In addition, PYE organised activities specially targeted at improving youth employability, through training in specific skills, including youth leadership.

Youth engaged in positive social change and participated in the delivery of these services. For example, *Salongo* (a community service day), where youth mobilised the community around volunteer projects. During *Salongo* youth offered different services to the community: taught children about street hygiene and sanitation good practices. *Solongo* is an opportunity for several community awareness campaigns. A second example is *Mafundisho kwa wote*, a sub-group within PYE that serves a peer-to-peer learning space.

CONCLUSIONS: HOW WE ARE AGENTS OF CHANGE

I have found that the greatest success lies in engaging young people and in providing them with tools and resources so that they can take a role in contributing to their society development. I realised there is no bright future for youth if education is not affordable for all, regardless of the condition they are in.

I always value my social activism and I gain strength when communities around me support my work despite the challenges in our difficult situation. These communities have shared my vision but I know life is not always rosy. Some have discouraged me. Unfortunately for them I remain engaged and fully committed to youth welfare. It is so comforting for me to work with communities expressing words of gratitude "we need such many PYE programmes". Surely, I endured and assumed my work for success. I struggled to implement this model of education for the youth affordable for all regardless disabilities. A youth with disabilities representative of boys' club gave feedback: "The public was amazed to see how I made a difference during the event, my aptitude in community mobilisation was appreciated when I shared on the skills I newly acquired from PYE programme".

I strongly agree with Alexander's idea that when youth are engaged, involved, and actively participating, there are benefits for the young people and for the community (2008). Today I am proud of the communities around me. I teach positive values and share good examples of civic engagement. PYE has given an added value to the community empowerment looking at the civic participation in the last 2017 and the upcoming 2018 electoral process in DRC. PYE has developed a volunteer spirit among the youth and the perception of volunteering for public service, raising awareness via community services like *Salongo* and spaces like *Mafundisho kwa wote*, which have engaged and trained more than 400 youth in Goma.

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**DETERMINATION TO FACE CHALLENGES.
THE CASE OF YOUTH IN ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT
IN SIERRA LEONE**

**DENIS S. ANSUMANA, ISATA NGOMBULANGO
AND OTHMAN SHERIFF**

INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone has an unenviable history, ranging from dictatorial rule, brutal civil war, military coups, a dreadful Ebola outbreak and hilltop mudslide, to a tottering democratic system, riddled by tribal, regional and selfish interests. Unfortunately, children, youth and women are hardly considered in decision-making processes, and have always been expendable victims. Youth are especially manipulated, and the word *youth* is associated with violence, drug abuse and robbery.

To address this situation, many youth-serving agencies have been created at grassroots level. While some were formed by the central government in order to win donor funds, others belong to power-thirsty elites, who use the youth as instruments of campaigning during the electioneering process. Unfortunately the lifespan of such politically motivated youth organisations depends chiefly on the availability of donor funds, as the government itself has no mechanism to fund youth empowerment projects.

Youth in Action for Development (YAD), is one of the few non-political, non-religious and non-profit organisations which has managed to maintain its path towards sustainable development. YAD is a nationally registered non-profit organisation with a key office in Kenema city, eastern Sierra Leone. This chapter discusses YAD's success stories and challenges over the years, as it strives to effect positive social changes in post-conflict Sierra Leone, spearheaded by young citizens.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF YAD

YAD was formed in 2002, shortly after the civil war in Sierra Leone, by a few enlightened youth under the name: Youth Alliance for Rehabilitation and Development (YARD). Its main objective was to advocate for scholarships for war-affected youth who had missed the chance to acquire a better education during the war, and to facilitate young citizen's participation in the post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement programmes. The organisation struggled to exist for years, without any official recognition from the government, due to lack of finances, and proper commitment from the founding members, as they themselves were struggling for their own survival. The organisation finally got on its feet in 2007, after some of the founders decided to formally register it with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, as a voluntary community-based organisation under the current name, Youth in Action for Development (YAD).

The organisation later attained NGO status by registering with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, as well as the Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (SLANGO). Since then, the organisation has grown steadily, as it engages in diverse development ventures, aiming to accelerate the attainment of its initial vision. Governed by its voluntary board members, YAD is currently collaborating with all relevant government departments and is partnering with prominent donors abroad.

YAD'S MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the odds, YAD has been able to hold its ground in representing youth in community building. It works mainly with the youth and for the youth, and also women and children. The organisation believes that "When education becomes a human right for every citizen; national politics becomes detribalised and regionalised; youth, women and children are equally recognised in decision-making; there shall be a developed nation called Sierra Leone". YAD's main goal is: "to empower young people, by building peace and democracy through campaigns against political intolerance; promoting gender equality, social freedom and free education, self-reliance through skills training, self-help projects and income generation, as well as the reduction of violence and conflict through dialogue, awareness campaigns and social mobilisation activities".

YAD is a key point of reference for youth in the Eastern part of the country. Its activities are community-driven and focused on achieving the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The organisation serves as an umbrella for more than 25 community-based youth organisations and clubs in diverse localities across the region, including Kenema municipality.

Among 111 applicants from 87 countries, YAD was selected in 2018 as the winner of the King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award for its contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The organisation was praised for the unique, diversified and innovative nature of its interventions, and for the opportunities it creates for youth to take a leading role in their communities' development.

YAD CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEBUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION

The organisation believes that the fastest path to sustainable development is a cost-free educational system, which would allow all citizens to reach their own potential. To achieve this goal, the

organisation is contributing to primary and secondary education. With the support of its overseas partners, Fambul Tik and German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), YAD has built primary and secondary schools in various deprived localities and is currently supporting the pupils with learning materials and teachers with monthly stipends, in order to make education reachable and affordable for poor families.

Beside basic primary and secondary education, the organisation also provides training in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for youth. The classes offered are cheaper than usual, and sometimes free for its affiliated youth groups. The aim is to build up ICT skills among youth to improve their employability.

YAD CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEBUILDING THROUGH SPORTS AND SOCIAL MOBILISATIONS

The organisation has been able to foster peace, sociocultural cohesion and a friendly network among the youth in the eastern district of Kenema, through sport and social mobilisation programmes. In 2013, YAD was chosen from hundreds of applicants, as one of 15 grantees of the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC) Youth Solidarity Funds. The project, called "Youth Sensitisation Campaign against Ethnic Voting, Religious and Cultural Discriminations", created six heterogeneous youth groups with hundreds of participants from the three political zones of Kenema municipality, with the objective of raising awareness of violence, human rights violations, religious discrimination, and ethnic-based politics. The organisation was also involved in promoting social cohesion among youth, through campaigns, workshops and social mobilisation activities, including sports.

Since then, the organisation has supported many community-based youth clubs with coach training, sports equipment and peace prizes. YAD organises annual Youth Cohesion Matches amongst its affiliated youth groups. The matches are organised in

a co-operative spirit, ensuring that no participant is considered the loser, hence all participants are given prizes. This model has maintained friendship and solidarity amongst youth in the region.

In addition to the above, with support of the German Stiftung Nord-Süd-Brücken (North South Bridges Foundation), YAD started the construction of Community Mobilisation and Conflict Resolution Centres in various villages across the region. The centres have social halls, offices, toilets, storage, a water well (given water shortages) and solar electrification. Whilst the concept promotes sociocultural cohesion and peaceful coexistence, it also solidifies local governance and peace at the grassroots level, as it allows community members to meet and discuss community development plans, and settle their differences without police or court involvement.

YAD CONTRIBUTION TO HUNGER REDUCTION

YAD has implemented agriculture and food security projects in the rural areas for the benefit of thousands of poor families, supported by BMZ and Fambul Tik called "Agriculture and Food Security for Youth and Female-headed Households", the project involved cultivation of a large portion of the inland valley swamps, provision of improved seeds and tools, technical training in simple calculation and household income management, grain storage construction – equipped with rice miller machines and dry floors, which enable the beneficiaries to properly manage their harvest.

The organisation has also supported its affiliated youth groups to embark on urban agriculture and vegetable gardening in Kenema municipality, which enabled the participating groups to meet their financial needs.

YAD AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Most of YAD staff work on a voluntary basis, as it has no reliable source of income at the local level. It must be noted that Sierra Leone is a post-conflict country, and even the central government

depends chiefly on foreign donors. This is why the organisation developed over the years a small scale, self-financing scheme which enables it to meet some of its financial obligations without a donor involvement. The programme includes digital photo production, desktop publishing, and event management services.

While struggling to maintain itself, the organisation introduced a microcredit scheme in 2015, through which young photographers are able to attain self-employment while at the same time pursuing other careers. The organisation purchased and distributed digital cameras to young photographers on a revolving loan basis, which they used to take photographs of social events such as birthday parties and weddings. These were brought to the digital lab for final processing. This scheme is innovative because it keeps both the young photographers and YAD volunteers who worked in the lab employed.

A MULTIPURPOSE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT

In 2017 the organisation launched a Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre (MYRC) construction project in downtown Kenema city with funds from Fambul Tik and the BMZ. The centre will include a youth assembly hall, cafeteria, digital library, several conference rooms, administrative offices, and a 20KVA solar system, as well as other training facilities. As the name "Multipurpose" implies, the centre also serves as a complaint-desk where disgruntled or disadvantaged youth can settle their disputes without police involvement; and it provides guidance for many youth who seek advice about their family entanglements and future careers. The aim is that the centre will become self-sustaining and completely youth-run.

CHALLENGES IN RETROSPECT

There are many challenges which can cripple youth organisations like YAD. One of them is the lack of support of local authorities, which is rooted in their lack of respect and recognition for youth

efforts. They place rigid bureaucratic barriers that debar the progress of youth initiatives. For them, a youth activity is only meaningful when backed by a political motive.

The process of acquiring the piece of land for the construction of YAD's Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre in Kenema city is as an example of the many difficulties faced by youth-led initiatives in Africa. In 2015, YAD approached the central government with a request for a piece of land to construct the centre. The process involved several administrative procedures and negotiations, trips to Freetown, calls and meetings which demanded a lot of patience and time and implied costs which were not part of any specific project. If the organisation was not well-focused and determined in its community development ventures, with an unshakable desire to effect positive social changes in the society, it would have abandoned the project. All the above challenges came directly from the very authorities whose efforts are being complemented by the organisation.

A second challenge is youth mobility. The organisation trains young people who often move to bigger cities in search for better opportunities, or even move during the implementation of the capacity-building project. This means that the human capital built is lost, and that the organisation needs to identify and train new young people in less time, affecting project outcomes. It is difficult to build a solid youth club in most communities, as members tend to relocate frequently in search of future goals.

Thirdly, lack of donor confidence is another challenge. Over the years, some donors, including UN agencies, demonstrated willingness to fund youth-led initiatives. However, most of the funding windows have rigid prerequisites, resulting in a limited chance for the implementing youth organisation to build its own capacity with the fund, e.g., short implementation periods with the expectation of targeting a huge number of beneficiaries and realising greater outcomes and impacts. On the other hand, some donors simply do not fund youth-led initiatives at all, either due to lack of trust and confidence or

simply because a youth organisation cannot meet their funding requisites, such as audited reports, track records or prove of financial self-sufficiency.

Despite the challenges, the number of projects implemented by YAD has increased improving educational and employment opportunities for youth in the region.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS AND PROMOTION OF YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN NIGERIA

ASHER ADENIYI AND UKINEBO DARE

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is in a precarious employment and growth situation. Youths (skilled and unskilled) cannot find work. From 2001 to 2008, Nigeria experienced a laudable economic growth rate, averaging about seven percent per annum, a good performance by global standards. However, wage employment was estimated to have declined by about thirty percent (Treichel, 2010). The economic growth did not translate to new jobs, or opportunities for the youths. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2017), unemployment affect six out of ten youths, where half could be severely underemployed.

At the same time, we are hopeful and see light at the end of the tunnel. This chapter describes our efforts, as young entrepreneurs, to improve youth employability. First, we describe the situation of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Second, we explain the initiatives we have led: the Poise Graduate Finishing Academy, and its PSENSE Employability Certification; the Ekobits Academy; and Gidijobs, a firm providing personalised services to young job seekers.

BACKGROUND: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Nigeria is a nation blessed with incredible natural resources. It has over 70 per cent arable land, many natural resources which boasts some of the largest reserves in the world. At the same time, there are untapped resources, tucked away in crevices of virtually every state of the country. In the same vein, Nigeria is losing the vibrancy and potentials of its human capital resource because it has been left largely underdeveloped and stagnated.

In 2017, youth unemployment rate came to an all-time high of 33.1 per cent (NBS, 2017) while underemployment and unemployment both were over 50 per cent. In this chapter, unemployment shall also cover the underemployment category. The massive unemployment has seen itself masquerade into social vices like kidnapping which is rampant in southern Nigeria and some areas in the North, and also in terrorist attacks by the terrorist group, Boko Haram, which takes advantage of the underemployment situation to recruit naïve and poor teenagers and youths without jobs or a hope of survival. The unemployment situation in Nigeria is a national crisis and needs an emergency summit, strategy and planning which is holistic. This means that the idea of resolving Nigeria's unemployment situation must take a holistic framework: from supporting and transforming our educational institutions, to reform of labour policies and the coordination of the Skills Development Programme across the country.

In fact, a Stutern survey (2016) showed that a first university degree does not influence employment rate as most graduates stick with meagre employment because they are not "qualified". For those who are gainfully employed, employers are concerned that they have to retrain them because they have not been well prepared, even with their educational qualification. For instance, it is typical in Nigeria that jobs in ICT need more technical skills as qualification for employment. This makes most Nigerians lose the chance, as most jobs are outsourced even outside the country. When compared with the quality of job done, the time and speed, there is usually a huge difference in the output.

Employers tend to recruit graduates that have technical and life skills. In fact, in a research, most employers rate life skills as equally important as technical skills on core technical areas and life skills as more important in less technical jobs like customer service, sales, marketing and media. Complementary life skills will include skills such as problem solving, critical reasoning, communication, business writing, emotional intelligence, ergonomics, and leadership. In Nigeria, these soft skills are not taught at all in the universities as they are not part of the university curriculum.

There are several causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria: lack of cohesive and consistent national strategy and framework on employment which focus on human capital development (Ogbimi, 2007); lack of industrialisation; and poor and stagnated educational system: with hundreds of thousands of university graduates been churned out yearly, Nigeria still faces a huge skill gap. Employers complain about the high level of unpreparedness amongst the graduates. The graduates who are now referred to as young executives often enter the market with no knowledge about the workplace and how to deal with the rigours and pressure of the marketplace. Employers would usually spend valuable time to train these young executives on their expectations before they can confidently embark on the job.

Apart from the lack of soft skills, most government owned institutions lack recent educational curriculum which covers advancements in technology and learning. Over 90 per cent of youths attend this kind of institutions which means more youths go through an inadequate education platform. More so, more youths do not have access to education because of poverty and inadequate educational facilities.

LINKING EDUCATION, EMPLOYABLE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

One of the most defining aspect of human life is access to education. Education equips learners with skills to help them on their jobs. However, the positive impact of education on national

growth and decent jobs has not been felt in Nigeria because education has not been linked with the rest of the economy directly. The current system of education which is the 6-3-3-4 system exposes the students to essential knowledge, however, theoretical. This defeats the purpose of learning which is to be experiential, personalised and active. In several platforms, it has been deduced that the institutions are doing what they are supposed to be doing which is: educational institutions should be focused on knowledge while the market place will be focused on sharpening the technical know-how and skills of the young workers. It is one of the reasons why the National Universities Commission (NUC) developed a compulsory exercise for students to go on compulsory internship during their academic years. This internship is managed by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) that is set aside to monitor the impact and integrity of this objective.

Emphasising training and employment can accelerate development for many reasons. First, anyone who possesses either of theoretical knowledge and limited practical skills, alone, is a mediocre (Ogbimi, 1991); providing adequate training for the acquisition of complementary practical skills for all graduates of educational institutions would speedily create a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. Second, because knowledge and skills cannot be applied independent of the people who possess them, employment promotes the application of existing and new knowledge on a society. Training and employment are the fundamental basis for linking the educational sector and the rest of the economy.

Education can scale up significantly the quality of jobs that youths qualified for. However, a study has revealed that Nigerian graduates do not possess employable skills to match-up to the requirement of jobs in the present day labour market (Akinyemi, Ofem, and Ikuenomore, 2012). This research also revealed that the number of graduates from colleges yearly far outweighs the employment rate on a yearly basis. Amongst highly sought after employability skills are critical thinking, problem solving, excellent communication skills, interpersonal and social skills, technical and leadership skills (Ogbimi, 2007).

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CLOSING THE UNEMPLOYABILITY GAP

In this section, we describe three initiatives that we have personally led and feel have contributed to increase employability of young people in Nigeria. Ukinebo Dare led the Poise Graduate Finishing Academy between the years of 2010 and 2017, in charge of the PSENSE Employability Certification and Asher Adeniyi is currently a Managing Director at Poise Graduate Finishing Academy and co-founder of Gidijobs.

THE PSENSE SUCCESS

In 2010, Poise Nigeria led industry leaders, alongside government agencies such as the National Universities Commission to launch the PSENSE Employability Certification. Its aim was to address the lack of employable skills among college graduates. Research into the field of skills and talent identified the need for a credible assessment of soft skills, a major requirement in the employability skills map. PSENSE is a testing method which can give employers a true sense of an individual.

A major part of the curriculum approved by the National Universities Commission is driven through Experiential Learning. It allows young executives to participate in exercises that focus on learning through doing and self-reflection on doing. Giving an example, the Sell-a-Product exercise is one in which the young executives are required to think up a unique product to sell, on which they will give a report detailing the execution process and the profits (or loss) made. They acquire first-hand experience with meeting a need and making a business out of it. They gain lessons by reflecting on teamwork – how the team navigated issues on decision making and how the team managed change when it was obvious but difficult. This exercise also allows the team to reflect on successful sales tips that were highlighted in class and if they found it useful or if they came across other useful sales strategies. Perhaps, the most important lesson learnt is related to the way teams solve problems. The team reflects on what they saw as problems and how

they individually reacted to it: optimistic about solving it or pessimistic about it.

In about eight years of existence, over 35,000 youths have been trained. The PSENSE Executive Certification has achieved over 87 per cent employment rate amongst its graduates within their first six months of graduation. Additionally, over 3,000 youths have also been sponsored by Oxfam Novib under the WorkInProgress! project to upskill youths on employability. Approximately, 75 per cent of these youths have been connected with jobs, while about 51 per cent of the youth beneficiaries are women. In total, the certification has been deployed to 38,000 young executives and it is gradually gaining ground in universities across Nigeria.

THE EKO BITS STRATEGY

The ICT sector offers great job opportunities in Nigeria, but numerous individuals often miss the right skills to meet market demands and lack self-confidence to make a positive change. This challenge provides an opportunity for growth in Nigeria where its youth population make up the most vibrant group. Globalisation is increasingly driven by the advancement of technology while we have seen outsourcing of technology-based projects across nations.

In Nigeria, big technology companies such as Microsoft, Google, amongst others now have offices in Lagos with thousands of employees. Andela, a Nigerian start-up with headquarters in San Francisco is renowned for grooming young Nigerians on ICT skills and for creating a hub for the trained youths to work on outsourced projects. Recently, Microsoft bought GitHub, an online platform for programmers to share ideas and tools on projects for 7.5 billion dollars (Lee, 2018). This implies the direction in which technological projects will follow in the future; it will be collaborative and without boundaries.

Eko bits was set up to train indigent youths on digital skills and showcase them to the world by creating a platform that allows them to trade their skills for decent jobs, either by self-employment or otherwise. The economic focus of training these youths is

to enable poverty eradication through the provision of decent jobs that is relevant and offers tremendous competitive advantage.

Youth entrepreneurship is becoming prevalent in Nigeria and the advancement of technology might exclude indigent youths who have had limited access education and technology. Eko bits focuses its recruitment from rural and deprived communities to provide advanced training in the areas of media and ICT (programming, web and graphics design). Over 90 per cent of youth who have passed through the programme are either self-employed or employed, while 100 per cent are confidently pursuing a university degree. While learning at Eko bits, a lot of learning is also developed around self. Youths are expected to develop strongly first within so as to portray good values and replicate the Eko bits model as alumni. It is also important to the outcome of the project that the youths develop confidence and self-esteem. A university degree is now possible for the youths because of their digital skills making them employable.

GIDIJOBS, THE EMPLOYMENT SOLUTION FIRM

It was formed with the passion to connect unemployed youths with jobs. It works with private and government institutions to drive policies in order to reduce Nigeria's unemployment to single digit by 2026. One of the unique solution from Gidijobs is to provide strategic human resource consulting to individuals through career counselling, job matching, job fairs, and coaching. In 18 months, Gidijobs filled more roles than any other firm. It connected 1800 youths with jobs across all the 36 states of the country. The idea of consulting for individuals rather than corporates made more impact in turning job seekers to employees of decent jobs.

CONCLUSIONS

The concerted efforts of young entrepreneurs have increased employability rates amongst youths. It is important to note that, from our experience, unemployment cannot just be solved by creating new jobs; youths must also be prepared for the job market. We are

experiencing success in this area with the adoption of the PSENSE curriculum by several state governments and universities to connect youths with decent work. Lastly, communities in Africa should leverage on using technology to upskill youths especially girls who cannot afford to continue their education in college. The employment rate amongst the trained youths in ICT and multimedia skill is high due to increased demand which is not bound by geography.

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PART 5
YOUTH AND PEACEBUILDING

YOUTH ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE GROUPS TO RECONCILE IN BURUNDI

TATIEN NKESHIMANA

INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, the Conflict Alert and Prevention Centre (CENAP) has been facilitating dialogues on the challenges to sustainable peace, and providing opportunities to propose adequate solutions to them throughout Burundi. Participants in the dialogues noticed a number of issues were resolved on the spot, and requested CENAP to continue organising dialogue sessions on issues of community interest. This led to community dialogue groups including ones for the political party youth wings being initiated so as to allow community members “to exchange information face-to-face, share personal stories and experiences, honestly express perspectives, clarify viewpoints, and develop solutions to community concerns and opportunities” (AAFC, 2018).

Comprising around 40 members each and selected from different political and ethnic groups, and taking into account gender, the youth dialogue groups come together to address issues on which they have opposing views, and that are likely to lead to conflict. Through these groups they also develop solutions and implement them, providing youth with a way to transform their

role from peace disruptors to agents of peace. At the beginning, the main objective set for these groups was to enable the youth to resist manipulation by political leaders especially during electoral periods. However, motivated by their ability to take action, this objective was expanded.

This chapter explores how the Burundian youth, particularly the youth groups affiliated with political parties have been manipulated by politicians, becoming the main peace disruptors in the country. Most importantly, the contribution of the youth dialogue groups to make change happen is also discussed.

CONTEXT

Burundi, a small landlocked country (27.840 km²) in East Africa has been devastated by a series of socio-political conflicts since its independence in 1962. The most well-known crises, that of violence between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi has flared up on multiple occasions, including in 1965, 1972, 1988, and since 1993 for nearly a whole decade. The youth have been playing a significant role in the crises. In 1972, after attacks by a Hutu rebel group in the south and south-west targeting Tutsi inhabitants, there has been a large scale repression by the army, the police and the Rwagasore Revolutionary Youth (*Jeunesse Revolutionnaire Rwagasore*, JRR in its French acronym) youth wing affiliated with the then ruling party, the Union for National Progress (UPRONA in its French acronym) mainly among the Hutu elites and potentials elites.

The 1993 civil war, which began with the assassination of President Ndadaye Melchior, the first democratically elected president from the Hutu ethnic group, after only three months in office, led to Hutu peasants massacring their Tutsi neighbours. Following this systematic repression by the army supported by the *Sans Echechs*⁹ Tutsi youth militia across the country led to a massacre of thousands of Hutus. Another group accused of human

9. Literally meaning "the ones who never fail".

rights violations during the same period of time was the JEDEBU (Jeunesse démocratique du Burundi/ Burundi Democratic Youth), the youth wing of the then ruling party FRODEBU (Front for Democracy in Burundi) of late President Ndadaye.

In 2000, a peace agreement was signed and violence by the youth temporarily ceased. However, since the 2010 elections, a new phenomenon was born: election related violence primarily involving and affecting youth affiliated with political parties both as victims and perpetrators. The youth, who were the most vulnerable to manipulation particularly those facing unemployment, underemployed dealing with issues as ex-combatants “found themselves at the core of the violence that took place before, during as well as after elections” (Paducel, 2016:1). These youth were manipulated through promises of employment and presents such as cars, money and food. Consequently, they were able to be used to harass and intimidate their party’s opponents. Violence not only undermined democracy but also the security, economy, development and human rights in the country. Election related violence has also been exacerbating inter-ethnic divisions as “a person from the other ethnic group is presumed guilty as long as s/he cannot to prove her/his innocence” (Burundi, 1997).

EXCLUSION OF THE YOUTH FROM THE PAST DIALOGUE INITIATIVES

After the assassination of the president in 1993 and the civil war that followed, political party leaders began sessions of dialogue. Since 1998, political actors (armed groups and civilians) have come together for talks in order to find sustainable solutions to the conflict. Finally in 2000, a peace agreement’ was signed. From that time politicians have engaged in a continuous and almost permanent dialogue through the Permanent Forum for Political Parties. Unknowingly or not, they seem to have understood the importance of dialogue as defined in a publication of Clark University (2018): “focused and intentional conversation, a space of civility and equality in which those who differ may listen and speak together”

and acknowledge that it “plays an essential role when trying to get conflicting parties to change their perceptions of each other” as suggested by Southwell (2015). According to Burundian proverbs *Ibigiye inama bigira Imana* (dialogue is a source of blessings) and *Inama isumba ingimba* (dialogue is better than violence).

Despite the dialogue continuing, there has been an absence of any framework to help communities and the youth in particular, participate or contribute to the peace process. Instead, politicians continue manipulating the situation to control them, particularly the uneducated and the less educated youth in order to retain their power or gain more of it.

YOUTH DIALOGUE GROUPS, CATALYSTS OF RECONCILIATION

Burundian youth have faced many years of indoctrination and manipulation by politicians. Once the dialogue groups facilitated by CENAP were initiated, the youth affiliated with political parties have been instrumental in identifying challenges to peace, discussing these issues and proposing solutions. To better do their job, they have been trained and sensitised on a number of topics including, but not limited to conflict prevention and resolution, peaceful cohabitation as well as nonviolent communication (NVC) so as to prepare them with principles to live a life of compassion and collaboration with others. The training on NVC has also aimed at helping them understand how words contribute to connection or disconnection, how to listen to others and disagree in a respectful and constructive manner.

The training sessions have been occasions for the leaders of youth groups to know one another. Many of the participants have testified that the trainings have been instrumental in building relations across party lines: “before the trainings on non-violent communication and peaceful cohabitation, I called the other by his party [party’s name] and with disdain, but today it is Jean, it is Prosper and the party to which he belongs no longer matters much. None is anymore afraid of the other” (CENAP, 2014). The

trainings also served as an opportunity to exchange telephone numbers and consequently, communication between the youth has improved. Now, they are able to exchange information in real time on incidents between the youth affiliated to their political parties. According to other participants, the sessions together made them familiar with each other and when they meet in the streets, they do not quarrel, rather they share and laugh together as a sign of reconciliation.

The youth dialogue groups have also been able to organise cultural and sporting events together as a means of gathering other youth and delivering messages around peace and reconciliation. The events were first organised in the western provinces of Bubanza and Cibitoke. Once the youth of other provinces learnt about the success of the events in the two localities, they officially requested CENAP to help them set up similar groups in their respective localities. This is how the youth dialogue groups in the provinces of Rumonge (Southwest) and Muyinga (North East) came about. While some young people from Rumonge contacted CENAP by telephone before their dialogue group was initiated, the youth in Muyinga wrote a letter to the organisation requesting support.

Shabani Nimubona is the leader of the youth affiliated with the ruling party in the province of Muyinga. Prior to the 2015 Peace Day celebration in the province of Gitega (centre of Burundi) he was informed about the dialogue groups in other provinces and "As there were cases of suspicions among the youth in Muyinga and rumours propagated about [him] across the country, [He] asked CENAP to be invited to the event" (Nimubona, 2015). Shabani had been accused in the local media of harassing members of the opposition. His request to participate in the Peace Day celebration was accepted. He participated in all the Peace Day related activities and at the end of the celebrations, was committed to taking the lead to promote peace and reconciliation among the youth affiliated with political parties in his province (Nimubona, 2015):

I am going to invite leaders of youth groups affiliated with the opposition political parties. I will first share what I have just learnt during the two day

Peace Day celebrations. Then I will ask them to come together and officially ask CENAP to help us start reconciliation initiatives between the youth affiliated with different political parties in our province. This event made me meet the youth affiliated with the ruling party as well as the opposition. I got new friends, I got accustomed to members of other political parties, I shared meals with all of them without fearing one of them could harm me and vice versa. In the morning we shared toothpaste and shoe polish. Media have been propagating only bad news about me and the information has surely damaged my reputation all over the country. I hope they have realised I am not so bad. That is the reason why I invite CENAP in Muyinga. There are cases of suspicions among the youth, we have to stand up and build our province together.

As he had promised, once back in Muyinga Shabani Nimubona invited the other youth for a meeting to share what he learnt during the Peace Day celebrations. The meeting was concluded with a letter requesting CENAP to help them initiate a dialogue group. This is how the dialogue group in this locality was initiated.

In addition to the collective events organised together, there are other cases of success stories in the creation of dialogue groups for youth affiliated with political parties as told by Ntakirutima, researcher and CENAP staff in charge of the youth dialogue groups (2017):

Before dialogue groups were initiated, two young men respectively from the ruling party and the opposition but also from different ethnic groups were not behaving friendly. As dialogue was going on, they happen to get closer to each other that they even start a business together. In 2015, the youth in the opposition once felt insecure and he planned to leave the country. But how? He was among those who participated in demonstrations against President Pierre Nkurunziza and it was not easy to leave the country unnoticeably. Fortunately for him, his friend from the ruling party accepted to help him. On his way to exile, it was impossible for him not to draw the attention of security forces. At a moment he was about to be arrested from a hotel, his friend who was monitoring his movements warned him and he avoided to go back to the hotel. His exfiltration to a neighbor country was facilitated by the youth of the ruling party. As security was improving, his friend arranged his return. For the moment, they continue living together harmoniously, not only as members of opposite political parties but as friends reconciled through a dialogue group.

This is the kind of success story that not only shows change or contributes to change at an individual level, but also at community, provincial as well as national level.

CONCLUSIONS

As this case study outlines, Burundi has undergone, many decades of socio-political conflict with the youth affiliated with political parties playing a major role in violence. However, the peace process since around 1998 has left them out. This chapter highlighted the youth dialogue groups initiated by the Conflict Alert and Prevention Center in Burundi to engage these youth in dialogue and to deter their role in conflict and violence. These groups proved dialogue is a powerful tool in any community. It contributes to lessening suspicions between individuals belonging to different groups with possibility to escape manipulation by politicians. Within the dialogue groups, individuals have deeply changed from peace disrupters to peace agents. The attributes of dialogue groups are essential to achieving reconciliation and, a reconciled community is a violence-free community where development and collaboration is possible.

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LEONARD NDIKIMINWE AND SIDY OUMAR CISSE

INTRODUCTION

The Sahel region, including Mali, is faced by overwhelming challenges, in particular terrorism, transnational organised crime, proliferation of weapons, armed conflicts, environmental degradation and the related food security crisis. In Mali, the escalation of the crisis in 2012 aggravated an already delicate security and social situation. Many fled their homes, impoverished and traumatised, some fleeing to neighbouring countries. Young people are seen mostly as victims of these situations, and at the same time, as perpetrators while they engage in violence. However, many youth are neither victims nor violent. They play a vital role in reducing violence and promoting peace. Mali has a population of 14 million, 40 per cent of it is aged between 15 and 40 (FAO, 2017). This chapter illustrates how young people engage in decision-making processes to promote peace and development in their communities, especially in the city of Gao in the north of Mali, proving they are innovative and courageous.

The active associations of youth in the Gao region include: the Regional Council of Youth, the Communal Council of Youth, Local

Council of Youth, the “Patrollers” and the “Patriots”, two community-based youth association created during the 2012 crisis, the *Nous pas bouger* (We don’t move) and the Network of Young Leaders for Peace and Reconciliation. In the following sections, some of their contributions to peace and community development are described.

YOUTH AND THE LIBERATION OF GAO CITY FROM JIHADISTS IN 2012

Gao is a multicultural city where different ethnic groups and cultures have lived together including Sonrhail, Tamasheques, Arabs, Peulhs and Bozo. In 2012, the city was occupied by armed groups such as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement National de Libération de l’Azawad*, MNLA in its French acronym) with support from their allies, the Movement for the Unity of Jihad in West Africa (*Mouvement pour l’Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest*, MUJAO)¹⁰. During the crisis, serious damages to infrastructure and properties were reported, for example, the systematic elimination of all the State emblems. Looting, theft and gender violence were also reported. The city was exposed to vandalism and banditry of all kinds.

While some youth in Northern Mali joined armed groups as a means of protesting against their social exclusion, according to Sidy Oumar Cisse many youth from Gao city stood up and strongly rejected violence and remarkably demonstrated that they were positive agents of peace (2018). The youth from Gao city, concerned about the future of their city felt their responsibility as active citizens guided by the Malian Constitution (1992). As Cisse recounts (2018), on the night of April 3–4, 2012, following a general assembly of youth leaders, the Gao city youth unanimously decided to take the lead in dealing with the situation. They formed vigilance groups with the main objective of securing people’s lives and their property through night and day patrols in the nine

10. Other large cities like Timbuktu and Kidal were also occupied in the same period.

neighbourhoods of the city in consultations with district chiefs and local leaders.

They also informed the population about the situation who supported them. The outreach was mainly done through word of mouth by explaining clearly the consequences of leaving the city to the hands of armed groups. The main tool used was the telephone network which allowed the population to be updated on what was happening.

In each neighbourhood, a Council of Wise Persons was created (In French "*Conseils des Sages*"). This council was composed by respected and trusted members of the community and it consisted of the neighbourhoods' chief, the Imam of the district, a woman, a youth and two resource persons. The council was tasked to monitor the situation and plan all operations. Youth supported efforts to protect public spaces and valuable cultural heritage sites such as the Tomb of the Askia Saneye, a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site and Yana Maiga High School Library (unlike the mausoleums in Timbuktu which were destroyed). Youth also organised to demonstrate against the occupation of the city and the strict application of sharia law, the amputation of persons, rape cases, robberies, assassinations and other banditry committed in the city. Finally, they vitally contributed to sharing information for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

YOUTH AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

On 5 April 2017 an incident happened between a young Arab and Sonrhai in Aljanabandjan, Ji Ganchoriold, in Gao. Following this incident that resulted in loss of life of the Arab young person, misunderstanding prevailed and conflict escalated between the two ethnic groups. With the involvement of the youth leaders under the coordination of the Communal Council of Youth of Gao, youth succeeded to calm down the situation and worked to restore peace. If youth had not intervened, the incident could have turned into a wider conflict, and possibly, loss of more lives.

Similar incidents occurred in February 2018 when two dead bodies of young Arabs were found in Niger River in Soni Ali Ber

Commune, Gao region. Tensions between Arabs and Sonrais increased while the incident was being investigated. Youth leaders engaged to appease the situation and appealed to the authorities to act swiftly and ensure the rule of law. As a matter of fact, the governor took a decision to establish a curfew of one week and formally prohibited movement of any group carrying weapons except for Malian armed forces, UN and international forces. Youth has played a crucial role in influencing authorities to timely take decisions for the promotion of peace.

THE PARC JEUNESSE PROJECT

Giving the large proportion of Mali's population being young, equipping young people to support the peacebuilding process is vital for the country's development and political stability. Through its PARC Jeunesse Mali project, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) aims to empower young people to become peacebuilders and leaders of change "The project promotes youth leadership through inclusive civic participation. The project empowers them to raise awareness amongst their peers and, rather than being beneficiaries, Malian youth are encouraged to be a partner in this project, channelling their participation through governmental and public institutions" (UNV, 2017a). The activities organised were about the prevention of violent extremism, conflict transformation, mediation and reconciliation. Youth were involved in all stages of project implementation: from design to monitoring and evaluation. The PARC Jeunesse Mali project has been implemented in Gao, Mopti, and Ségou benefiting directly more than 800 young people. In the Gao region, the project completed the rehabilitation and furnishing of Gao's Youth House and offered a training course on project design and management (UNV, 2017b). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides financial support and technical advice to this UNV project. At the end of a two-year period, project ownership will be transferred to participants, Malian youth (UNV, 2017a).

Sidy Oumar Cisse, member of the Regional Youth Council stated in an interview (2018) that this Council is associated with

regional high-level decision-making meetings and youth representatives are responsible for briefing other members about the process and planned activities. This project has created golden opportunities for the youth to meet with government officials and advocate for the inclusion of youth in peace processes and development initiatives. A testimony by Mariama Yedié Traoré, National UN Volunteer shows the importance of this project: "At a time when the perspectives for Mali are darkening, the country needs support from all social classes, and particularly from young people, because they are the cornerstone for development. PARC Jeunesse comes exactly at the right time to support the Malian government and to help building capacities towards its inclusion in the peacebuilding process" (UNV, 2017a).

This project did not only involve youth but also a high number of international UN Volunteers as well as other local actors. UNV also worked closely with local, regional and national authorities as well as with UN entities throughout the country, like the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (*Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation au Mali*, known by its French acronym, MINUSMA).

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YOUTH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA: THE CASE OF THE NEIEF FELLOWS

IBRAHIM MOHAMMED MACHINA, AMINA GARUBA AHMED
AND ISHAKA MOHAMMED BABANGIDA

INTRODUCTION

Violent extremism is a pervasive global threat to international peace and security. It is defined as “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic, or political objectives” (USAID, 2011: 2). The *Jama’atu Ahlus-sunnah Lidda’awati wal-Jihad*¹¹ (hereafter Boko Haram) represents a particularly violent form of extremism which has been a direct threat to the sovereignty of Nigeria and the human security of Nigerians (Walker, 2012). The group’s use of suicide attacks, bombings and raids have spread to most northern states and Abuja the nation capital killing both civilians and security personnel. Since 2009, attacks by Boko Haram, as well as the counterterrorism measures by the government of Nigeria has not only dislocated social and economic activities in North East Nigeria but has led to displacement,

11. The official name of Boko Haram, translated as “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad” albeit, Boko Haram has been frequently reported as being Hausa for: “Western education is a sin”.

the death and abduction of thousands of innocent people. For example, the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in April, 2014 and 110 schoolgirls in Dapchi in February 2018.

Governments have taken action to counter violent extremism, often through a hard power approach, such as military force and physical coercion. However, this approach only tackles the symptoms of the problem rather than its causes (Onuoha, 2014). Hence, as part of a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, government and nongovernmental organisations are working on preventive measures, known as countering violent extremism (CVE) by tackling the drivers and root causes of violent extremism by engaging with communities. While hard-power tactics may have immediate success it cannot establish sustainable solutions, and often exacerbate the problem by adding to the feeling of exclusion and fails to engage key allies such as youth in building resilience against extremism (SFCCG, 2015).

This chapter analyses the contributions of youth in the prevention of violent extremism in North East Nigeria and focuses on the experiences of the fellows of the North East Intellectual Entrepreneurial Fellowship (NEIEF). It also aims to inform policy makers of policy and programming considerations for supporting youth-led and youth-focused initiatives. Finally, the chapter aims to build a common understanding of the contributions of young people in peacebuilding and of the approaches that are needed to contribute appropriately and effectively to the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

FRAMING YOUTH IN PEACEBUILDING

More than 600 million youth live in conflict-affected settings. The discourse on violent extremism predominantly frames young people as victims or as potential perpetrators of violence despite the fact that most young people are not involved in armed conflict or violence (UNDP, 2014). This narrative fails to capture

the fact that most youth are part of the solution (Ekpon, 2017, Elgars, 2016). Youth represents promise and potential, not peril and problems (Al-Nasser, 2016). This framing is a harmful reduction of the role young people play in preventing violence and it critically fails to note young people's vast and largely untapped capacity for peacebuilding (Amman Declaration, 2015; USIP, 2017a, 2017b). While popular culture and public narratives depict young men mainly as perpetrators of violence, and young women mainly as victims, youth in North East Nigeria are highly engaged in building peace and not much research has focused on this paradox.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research relied mainly on qualitative methods to obtain data through open-ended in-depth key informant interviews (KIIs). These interviews (10) explored in details the contributions of fellows in the prevention of violent extremism in North East Nigeria particular Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. These were audio-recorded to enable accurate capture of the data. Audio files were transcribed, and then the researchers undertook close reading of the data to independently identify salient themes. In addition, personal observation and experiences of the researchers as NEEIF fellows was equally used to support some of the findings of the study. The researchers ensured that the voices of women, youth and other relevant voices in the North East were taken into consideration.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NEEIF FELLOWS IN CVE AND PROMOTING PEACE

Though youth constitute a strong force for democracy and development, in most African countries, youth have been groping in the darkness of frustration and despair. Against this background, North East Regional Initiative (NERI) and the USAID

Office of Transition Initiatives (NERI/USAIDOTI) set up the North East Intellectual Entrepreneurship Fellowship (NEIEF) as part of its CVE programme in North East Nigeria. NEIEF is a flagship youth-led programme driving enriched engagement for the next generation of Nigerians. The fellows represent a diversity of cultures, ethnicity and religious plurality; submerged in a healthy mix of active young Nigerians who are eager to pilot a new dawn in CVE. For ten months, NEIEF fellows were engaged in book clubs, training and mentoring sessions on the relevant subject matters and principles and basic steps of a social media campaign and blogs to create messages for various social media platforms to counter and amplify alternatives to CVE.

The NEIEF programme assists young people to understand and articulate the intellectual arguments for a plural democracy and the appropriate role of religion in society. The fellows focus on challenging extremist narratives through online engagements and social media campaigns promoting support for gender and social inclusion; promoting dialogue and religious tolerance. NEIEF fellows realised that using force to advance one's individual opinions is not acceptable; religiously motivated violence is particularly dangerous; religion should be a voluntary aspect of civil society if the country is to remain pluralist, tolerant and open to people of diverse backgrounds and ideologies; pluralism and tolerance create economic prosperity for Nigerian society; and finally, that young people's engagement increases peaceful cohabitation.

Through our experiences as fellows and through interviews with other four fellows during 2018 in Adamawa and Borno states, we see how young people have challenged extremist narratives through online engagements using the hashtag #NotAnotherNigerian on (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Medium blog). The campaign was born out of a need for Nigerians to empathise with people from North East Nigeria who face destruction and displacement as a result of violent extremism. The hashtag advocates for an end to extremist attacks against Nigerians and in Nigeria. It aims to unite people in saying *Never Again* should we go through such pain as a people.

NEIEF fellows work across communities and religious groups to foster trust, dialogue, and mutual understanding, building social cohesion and decreasing marginalisation and injustice. They communicate stories and ideas that counter extremist narratives and instead amplify new stories about peace and positive role models, fostering discussion about a prosperous future without violence. This educates young people on the dangers of radicalisation and how to safeguard themselves from falling into violent extremism and becoming radicalised.

In the following sections we share our testimonies as fellows and explain how we have worked to address violence extremism and educate for peace followed by a few more selected testimonies.

THE STORY OF ISHAKA MOHAMMED BABAGANA

I am a fellow representing Bauchi State. I share my experience in my capacity as Secretary General of the National Council of Muslim Youth Organisation (NACOMYO), Dadin- Kowa chapter, Jos-South of Plateau state, Nigeria. Prior to our NEIEF experience, we were engaged in activities to counter violent extremism in our region and in Nigeria in general (Ishaka, 2004). In 2001 riots erupted in Jos, the state capital of Plateau state, north central of Nigeria. There were clashes between Muslim and Christian ethnic groups over 'indigene' rights and political representation. Even though the incident saw youth in a pitched battle with each other, quite a number of them whose anathema to brainwash is enormous, formed a formidable force to counter all sorts of extremism narratives and out rightly dispelled any form of rancour. They chose a non-violent approach to whatever grievances there were in a diplomatic manner. Ethno-religious crises engulfed many communities in the state, but there were areas that no single discord was recorded. Thanks to the proactive efforts of the youth in those areas. It was not any magic, but the power of resilience. A group in Dadin-Kowa community, in Jos-South under the umbrella body NACOMYO played a major role in resisting

attempts to cause havoc in that community. Peace talks through the process of dialogue were utilised¹².

THE STORY OF AMINA GARUBA AHMED

I am a fellow representing Benue State. I organised security awareness and capacity building activities to counter violent extremism and empowered youth to promote peace and security in Bauchi State. This was done through the Peace and Security Peer Education Programme (PS-PEP) initiated by my NGO, Ikra Foundation for Women and Youth Development. This programme was initiated to combat Boko Haram activities by engaging youths who were the most vulnerable to recruitment for violent extremist activities in activities that; shape youths perception of conflict and guide them to explore alternatives to violence as means to effective conflict resolution; educate youths on ways to collaborate with security agencies to positively contribute to the peace and security; educate youths on security and safety tips and sensitise them on the ways to protect themselves from security threats and recruitment for extremism and establish youth-to-youth connections and peer security education groups geared towards reducing distrust and fostering cooperation with security agencies.

During my NEIEF experience, the PS-PEP training manual was completed, 150 peer educators peace and security clubs were established in 23 schools in Bauchi State. The PS-PEP is executed in partnership with the Bauchi State office of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Bauchi State Ministry of Education. This has enabled the training of youth with the mandate to create security consciousness and promote peace amongst school age children and young persons in Bauchi. Peace and security clubs have been introduced in all schools in Bauchi. The clubs offer mentoring to be peace ambassadors imparting knowledge

12. For more information, see <https://medium.com/@IshakaBab/resilience-against-extremism-the-role-of-the-youth-in-p-cve-f5e4df3e66b5>.

on civic responsibilities and nation building to participants as per the planned modules (Safety and Security, Leadership Development, and Conflict Prevention/Resolution) and encourage students to express their ideas through music, mimes, drama, choreography, essay, debate, art and design.

THE STORY OF IBRAHIM MOHAMMED MACHINA

I am a fellow from Yobe State. As violent extremist groups are recruiting young people and to effectively overcome this threat, it has become pertinent to reach out to the same young people and rally them be part of the solution and not the victims of circumstance.

I work in Yobe, one of the epicentres of the Boko Haram violent extremism. I focus on challenging extremist narratives and ideas through online engagements and social media campaigns. This includes developing alternative narratives that promote a culture of peace, unity and democratic values, support for gender equality and social inclusion, and promoting dialogue and religious tolerance. I was able to inspire and motivate young people online through social media. This was achieved through practical evidence-based online campaigns and advocacy.

Furthermore, one of my responsibilities as a NEIEF fellow was to contribute to the establishment of a network of young people and relevant stakeholders committed to countering violent extremism in North East Nigeria. This includes reaching out; effectively communicating NEIEF objectives and encouraging young people to be part of the #NotAnotherNigerian.

OTHER TESTIMONIES

Other fellows of the NEIEF programme also share similar stories of transformation. Chabiyada Eli a fellow from Adamawa State explains: "I was more on a personal engagement with the youth to create that consciousness and resilience in them to be brother's

keeper in terms of coming together to make peace reign irrespective of their religion or ethnic backgrounds. In addition, it has helped me in shaping the mindset of the youth to use social media to prevent and counter violent extremism. The social media campaign has been very effective in the sense that I was able to influence a lot of youth in this direction". Suzanne Myada, also from Adamawa State, added: "I have been creating awareness to members of my community because most of them were uneducated on the methods of radicalisation, impact of violent extremism, and importance of tolerance in peacebuilding. Through the fellowship, I have been able to identify and raise awareness about some of the root causes and drivers of violent extremism in order to be tackled by government and relevant stakeholders. In the same vain, Dr Mercy Wakawa from Borno State was engaged in an Education Crisis Response (ECR) programme which included gender-based violence, social inclusion and non-formal education multi-grade teaching sub-programmes for victims of insurgency, rape, sexual and all forms of violence in Borno State. In addition, Habu Kale Tijjani also from Borno State added: "People were more sensitised in my community on countering radicalisation of youth, reintegration, and tolerance between internally displaced persons and host communities. It has given me confidence and authority to prevent and counter violent extremism ideas and ideologies. In my capacity as leader among my peers, I constituted a committee to find a way to engage vulnerable youth in sporting and cultural activities and blending these activities and social media campaign to counter and prevent violent extremism".

CONCLUSIONS

Our experiences as NEIEF fellows and of those we interviewed showed us how critical it is to counter the narratives that drive violent extremism in the effort to prevent and counter all forms of violence. While popular culture and public narratives depict young men mainly as perpetrators of violence, and young women

mainly as victims, young people and youth-led organisations around North East Nigeria are working to build peace and prevent violent extremism and are not turning to violence. Youth in North East Nigeria are highly engaged in transforming conflict, countering violence and building peace. The analysis of our stories and those we have interviewed shows that young people are important drivers and agents of change. They demonstrate openness to change and learn. They tend to be more future-oriented, more idealistic and innovative and more willing to take risks by using social media to open discussions on issues ranging from countering violent extremism to gender equality and social inclusion. NEIEF fellows developed and amplified alternative and constructive narratives highlighting real stories of young people addressing grievances in collaborative and nonviolent ways. Yet, young people's efforts remain largely invisible, unrecognised, and even undermined due to lack of adequate participatory and inclusive mechanisms and opportunities to partner with decision-makers. This is why it is vital that governments and relevant stakeholders recognise their special contributions and engage them as partners.

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**CREATIVE ONLINE PEER-TO-PEER PEACEBUILDING
CAPACITY BUILDING: THE CASE OF ADECOP,
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

JULIEN BAHATI AND ROMERAL ORTIZ QUINTILLÀ

INTRODUCTION

This chapter tells our story: a story of two young peacebuilders, one from Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the other from Barcelona, Spain. Till date we have never met in person, but our common passion and commitment towards youth and peace has brought our paths together. We are now friends and colleagues, and both members of the same global network of youth-led organisations working for peace. In 2016, we engaged in a process of mutual learning, and co-led an online capacity building project on peacebuilding competences. That was the beginning of our story, filled with friendship, learning and support, and which eventually has led us to write this chapter.

We hope our story can inspire African and European youth, in fact all youth, on the importance of trans-border solidarity, peer-to-peer learning, and commitment towards peacebuilding. This chapter is a case study presenting the persons behind the story, the context, the online initiative, and the values that have inspired us. First, we introduce ourselves. We found this important because we believe in the inspirational power of storytelling as a model for

commitment and motivation. Secondly, we describe the context and the organisations in which we worked while conducting the project; and lastly, we share our own reflections and provide some lessons learned.

THE STORY OF JULIEN, A YOUNG ACTIVIST FROM GOMA

My name is Julien Mukengerwa Bahati. I was born in 1996, in the midst of the rebellions of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo. My childhood was spent in a community where violence was becoming a means of expression and affirmation of one's personality, and where youth were portrayed either as victims and vulnerable people to be protected or as perpetrators of violence. However, what I saw in my older brother, Guelord Mbaenda, was different. He was convinced about the role of youth as peacebuilders and active agents of change, a hidden and forgotten image he strived to highlight for the great part of his life. At the age of 11, I got inspired by his activism and started my own peacebuilder path as a child parliamentarian. For three years, I advocated for the rights of the child and peace. Through this experience, I realised fostering peace and freedom was the best way to promote human dignity, a task I now have made my life mission. Thus, I came to join Youth Action for Community Development and Peace, (*Action des Jeunes pour le Développement Communautaire et la Paix* from now on ADECOP, its French acronym) in early 2009, an organisation initially founded by my brother, and that has enabled me to further learn and work for peace.

At the time of joining ADECOP, the organisation was reviewing its strategies on how to further evolve. The organisation was beginning to implement some changes in its structure, in order to adapt to new needs and context. Unfortunately, however, the death of my brother, ADECOP's founder, in 2014 plunged the organisation in a leadership crisis, followed by a year of inactivity. Nevertheless, I knew I had to do something about it, at least to honor my brother, and at the end of 2015, I decided to reactivate ADECOP, and to pursue its transformation phase. Since 2007 ADECOP had been a

member of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), a global network of youth organisations working for peace¹³, and I believed this could be a great avenue for support and change. I got in contact with its International Secretariat, and I wrote to Matilda Flemming, one of UNOY's coordinators at that time, to share with her about the revitalisation process of ADECOP and that I was also seeking for support from the network. In return, I received a reply that would change the course of my own activism, as well as the future of ADECOP.

THE STORY OF ROMERAL, A YOUNG ACTIVIST FROM BARCELONA

It is beginning of January 2016, and one of the first emails of the year from UNOY just ticked in: Matilda forwarded me an email from ADECOP, one of their member organisation in Goma, DRC. Julien, the newly elected Executive Director of ADECOP, was looking into opportunities to revamp their organisation. They were going through a transformation phase to strengthen their capacities and to evolve as organisation. While one of the pillar of action of UNOY is exactly to support capacity development of its members, its Secretariat had unfortunately no capacity to provide such support in French, the only language ADECOP could manage at that time. Being lost in translation could have been the end of this story, but instead it was just the beginning of it.

I did not even have to think about it twice, and sent them a positive reply putting myself at their disposition to support this organisation. In these moments, you act based on your values and beliefs: I was convinced that the language could not be a barrier, and that as a young peacebuilder myself, my duty was to support other youth-led processes for peace. I was, in fact, no longer working for a UNOY member organisation at that time, not even based on the same continent, but as a committed young peacebuilder

13. For more information about the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, please, see: www.unoy.org

and strong believer in the capacity of peer-to-peer support and learning, I suggested to create an online training course on youth and peace on behalf of UNOY. This was undoubtedly an incredible chance for me to share my competences with other young people, and to build my capacities as a trainer. However, what I perhaps had not predicted was that this experience would become the most significant lesson of solidarity and commitment. That is, not only did the youth of ADECOP inspired me tremendously, they also opened up to me their reality, offering invaluable insights on their challenges, as well as their vision of youth building peace in their country.

This is how our incredible journey began: Julien and Romeral, two young peacebuilders representing ADECOP and UNOY respectively, conducting weekly online training sessions for more than 6 months to mutually strengthen competences, and to share experiences and lessons learned on youth and peace.

ABOUT ADECOP, A YOUTH-LED ORGANISATION

ADECOP was established in August 2002, at the initiative of displaced youth from two different local communities in the heavily conflict affected and insecure North-Kivu province in Eastern DRC. Lead by Guelord Mbaenda, these young boys and girls met daily to discuss about community issues. They were preoccupied by the wave of serious human rights abuses and the dangerous trend of interethnic tensions that raged at that time; therefore, ADECOP invested in an awareness and advocacy campaign that brought social assistance to improve the situation for the most vulnerable and insecure segments of the local communities. Engaging several actors, ADECOP focused mainly on monitoring and reporting violations of youth rights, established a reflexion group, and mobilised against the danger of a persisting cycle of violence. By questioning the exclusion of young people in the DRC, ADECOP laid the foundations of its commitment to a more resilient and inclusive vision of the management of Congolese society in which everyone can participate individually or collectively toward a better and more sustainable social life.

ADECOP has two missions: first, awakening of the consciousness of the Congolese youth in order to build a generation striving for peace and nonviolence; second, promoting awareness of peace, democracy and development, considering that education is the key to youth involvement in peace. At the community level, ADECOP works to strengthen the advocacy skills among local youth constituencies and other stakeholders, as well as to increase knowledge and inform policy making in the areas of youth, peacebuilding and community-building action¹⁴. In 2007, ADECOP was growing as an organisation, and it joined UNOY as a member organisation in order to become part of a larger family of fellow youth and peace activists, and to further develop by learning from other processes, organisations and contexts.

ABOUT UNOY, A GLOBAL NETWORK OF YOUTH PEACE ORGANISATIONS

UNOY was established in 1989, following a dream of seeing youth recognised as active peacebuilders and change makers. After almost 30 years, UNOY is today one of the key networks of youth-led organisations working for peace around the world. UNOY member organisations work in very different contexts, but common for all is that they are committed to work for a culture of peace and nonviolence. UNOY's vision is a world where young people have the opportunity and skills to contribute to peace, and it therefore works to strengthen youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, facilitate a safe space for dialogue and conflict transformation. It also supports the development of the organisational capacities of its members, and brings the voices of young people to policy makers on both regional and global levels.

14. For more information about the activities of the organisation, please, see: www.congoyouthaction.org

THE START OF AN ONLINE COLLABORATION BETWEEN ADECOP AND UNOY

As of 2015, ADECOP entered a transformation phase in which it intended to transit from a reflexion and documentation group, to become a more developed organisation. Correspondingly, there was a need for organisational upgrading to ensure ADECOP was prepared to fulfill its new mission and vision strategies. While ADECOP was looking to enter a new phase in its organisational development, UNOY was endorsing a strategic plan that included organisational capacity building as one of the key areas of action. It was just a matter of time and willingness before it all fell in place. UNOY's capacities were constrained at that time due to lack of human and financial resources, but young peacebuilders always have had the capacity to look beyond and find opportunities where other could only see obstacles.

So it happened: the power and magic of peer-to-peer support and learning was more powerful than any grant, and the willingness and motivation of individuals enabled UNOY and ADECOP to collaboratively introduce a customised training project aimed at strengthening ADECOP's capacities and competences on peace and conflict. In addition, it was also the beginning of a strong friendship that was to be developed between us, Julien and Romeral.

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN ONLINE TRAINING PROJECT

After a first Skype call, we agreed on an online training for ADECOP and its members. We never had to discuss about the number of hours and efforts we were about to commit, because after the first talk, trust and passion were both already strong enough. At the time we began this project Julien was studying medicine and, Romeral was working full-time, but neither of us were ever hesitant about our commitment.

The main objective of the project was to strengthen the capacities of ADECOP, and to empower its members and volunteers.

Concretely, the online training project would be divided into three modules, each with their specific objectives: to review ADECOP's vision and mission, and to develop its action plan; to strengthen the knowledge of ADECOP's members and volunteers regarding peace and security; and to develop a peace project to increase ADECOP's skills in project development and management, specifically in the area of peace and nonviolence.

Together, we agreed on the modules, the different contents and sessions, as well as on the methodology and format of the training. Through online sessions, ADECOP's young leaders received non-formal training to develop projects for peace and conflict transformation, and to understand key concepts of peace, violence and conflict. Voluntarily, both of us dedicated our time and efforts to this project for more than 6 months, with weekly Skype calls, and in-week hours of preparation, follow-up and implementation. For two hours every Sunday, we would meet with ADECOP members through a Skype call and go through that week's session in a conference room facilitated by Congo Men's Network, a partner organisation in Goma, DRC.

THE POWER OF YOUTH AGENTS OF CHANGE: LESSONS LEARNED

In a situation of uncertainty, change or challenge, the actions and commitments of individuals may vary widely. For us it was a pure and genuine decision to create positive change, to share experiences, to build networks, to bridge the gaps, and to be compassionate and selfless. When ADECOP was being inactive and more isolated, for instance, Julien could have let it be and continue his individual path. However, driven by the firm conviction that he could do something for his community, he instead found the way to reconnect with a global network, to organise the training during his free time, and to inspire others. A weekly six month completely voluntary commitment requiring hours and hours of preparation, delivery, follow-up tasks is not something common or simple, and it could have easily failed. But we were feeding each other's

motivation by our positive attitude and inspiring engagement. The power of youth is also the *power of human relations*: trusting the other and the capacity to jointly transform realities; the *power of volunteering*: seeing the common cause more than anything else; the *power of peer-to-peer learning*: challenging time and distances; the *power of flexibility and resilience*: adapting schedules, methods, languages; the *power of not being afraid*: always catching the opportunity before the obstacle; and the *power of self-directed learning*: believing in one's potential.

In addition, through this project, ADECOP could develop a series of actions that allowed to strengthen the organisation actions and strategies:

- The online mentoring project allowed ADECOP to create its own internal mentorship as an ongoing activity. It benefited its members through information and discussion sessions on new practices and knowledge in the field of peacebuilding;
- The participatory methodology promoted a multiplier effect of knowledge available in the organisation. Even without funding, ADECOP reached a broad community by getting young people to learn from themselves and replicated their knowledge to others in the community;
- Storytelling was inspirational. In every online session, Romeral invited young peacebuilders from other parts of the world, for example, from Haiti, Spain or Cameroun, who would share their own stories as peacebuilders. This exchange of experiences between people and organisations was an incredible learning and inspirational opportunity. This was beneficial to ADECOP as it allowed them to acquire a global vision of peace. In order to work for peace we must transcend local barriers and get integrated into a global dynamic of the local context;
- Online exchanges allowed access to a large share of information in a relatively short time. In the DRC, however, young people still have a limited access to information and communication technologies and infrastructures. Thus,

this type of trainings is becoming a key practice that hopefully will contribute to overcome the funding and logistical challenges that too often hamper the initiatives of young people.

CONCLUSIONS

This case study is not so much about analysing technical or methodological aspects of the project, or its impacts; instead, it is rather meant as a story for inspiration, and demonstrating the power of committed and dedicated youth. We, Julien and Romeral, ADECOP and UNOY, are people and organisations that have been working in the field of youth and peace for many years, and yet what moves us is the passion and the ultimate goal of becoming young peacebuilders. This story shows that any challenge can be transformed into an opportunity, that youth are agents of positive change, and they can create what it needs to make peace a reality. Results of this project can be measured in terms of the number of participants, the competences gained, and the reactivation of ADECOP. Nevertheless, the real impact is that a group of motivated and inspired young people from Goma are now working for peace, and that two restless advocates of the youth and peace agenda around the world now have a friendship for a lifetime, despite the fact that they have never met in person. Boundaries are only in the minds!

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