



POLICY BRIEF

Activating Africa's national youth policies for successful PCRD

Muneinazvo Kujeke

National youth policies in states involved in Africa's Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) programmes are fundamental to the achievement of sustainable peace. This policy brief explores the prospects for and challenges of formulating and implementing these policies in line with the African Union's PCRD framework. It also examines the readiness of the AU to assist post-conflict states to establish policies that promote the role of young people in peacebuilding.

Key findings

- ▶ The AU's PCRD framework is a critical anchor for any youth-focused policy for peacebuilding in Africa.
- ▶ The successful implementation of the AU's PCRD framework is contingent on it prioritising socio-economic and political opportunities for African youth.
- ▶ Youth policies in PCRD states should be understood as reflecting the acceptance by policy makers of the need for sustainable peace.
- ▶ The risk of a resumption of violence is significantly greater if inclusive, youth-focused policies and frameworks are absent during the transition from conflict to peace.

Recommendations

For the AU

- ▶ Prioritise the involvement of youth in the establishment of governance institutions during peacebuilding as this generates a sense of influence, ownership, responsibility and buy-in while also eliminating a feeling of imposition from above.
- ▶ Where youth policies do not exist, advocate their creation by a dedicated youth ministry or department in each member state.
- ▶ Support the strengthening of national youth policies and structures, which can be the best tools for engaging young people in effective PCRD and ensuring alignment with the goals of the PCRD policy framework.
- ▶ All youth policies in PCRD states must be accompanied by an action plan that can be monitored and evaluated for maximum impact and success.

- ▶ In collaboration with the regional economic communities/RMs, popularise the PCRD policy framework among young people.

For PCRD states

- ▶ National youth policy development must be prioritised early.
- ▶ It is fundamental to have a youth ministry or department in place to coordinate youth-related affairs.
- ▶ Youth organisations and civil society should be included when the national youth policy is formulated.
- ▶ Attention should be paid to civic engagement that includes both rural and urban youth.
- ▶ Regular consultation with local AU PCRD liaison personnel and RECs/RM representatives should be prioritised.

Introduction

The risk of a resumption of violence in Africa's post-conflict countries will be significantly greater if states do not set in place inclusive, youth-focused policies and frameworks during the transition from conflict to peace.

This policy brief, for which desktop research methods were used, argues that the African Union (AU) Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework¹ is a critical anchor for any youth-focused response as it maintains that the African vision of regeneration and growth must be underpinned by the pursuit and achievement of long-term sustainable peace and development.²

It shows that the successful implementation of the PCRD framework is contingent on prioritising socio-economic and political opportunities for the youth,³ who comprise the majority of Africa's population. It explores the concept of youth-oriented policies and related programming and how they assist the emancipation of African youth in post-conflict states. The analysis focuses on the prospects and challenges of using national youth policies to spearhead youth inclusion in peacebuilding, while analysing the AU's attempts to put youth at the core of peace efforts. It then recommends ways in which youth inclusion can be strengthened to ensure sustainable peace on the continent.

The AU's PCRD goals

In the past 25 years the AU and its regional economic communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs),⁴ have increased their efforts to facilitate the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts and ensure the implementation of peace agreements. Interventions in Burundi and the Central African Republic (CAR), among others, are examples of these efforts. It was in this context that, in 2006, the AU PCRD Policy Framework was adopted

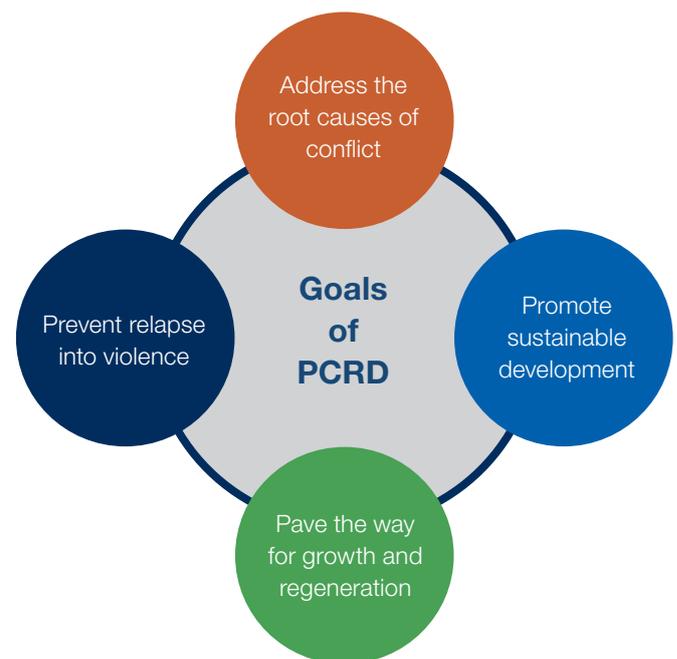
to ensure that peace agreements are complemented by timely, effective, coordinated and sustained post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts, with a view to addressing the [often multi-dimensional] root causes responsible for the plague of conflict in member states.⁵

The PCRD framework was developed in response to the fact that many of Africa's post-conflict policies and missions have been fragmented and largely ineffective. By developing a structure that enabled the implementation of a range of activities that would address the causes and drivers of conflict, the AU would be better able to reduce the risk of peace processes relapsing into violent conflict.⁶

It proposes

further comprehensive policies and strategies that pave the way for growth and regeneration in countries and regions emerging from conflict to ensure consolidation of peace, the prevention of a relapse to violence and the promotion of sustainable development.⁷

Figure 1: Four key goals of the AU's PCRD Policy



Source: AU PCRD Framework

In 2016 the AU noted that:

- Quick and targeted interventions that are effective, coordinated and provide equal opportunities for men, women and the youth to undertake socio-economic activities are critical to sustaining peace efforts in post-conflict countries;
- The absence of opportunities for youth in many countries threatens peacebuilding efforts, increasing the likelihood of relapse;

- The issue of youth empowerment is multi-layered, straddling the generational, educational and gender divides in society;
- While religion may be a factor in the radicalisation of youth, marginalisation and exclusion, poverty and loss of dignity are also factors that need to be addressed; and
- Despite the multiple indications of political support for PCRDR at the strategic level, political will is largely lacking in most instances.⁸

The analysis of the transformation of PCRDR countries on the continent revealed three main categories of states: those that, like Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda, have been fairly successful in re-establishing the state; those like Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which are in a transition and stabilisation phase and those like Somalia, South Sudan and Libya, which are trapped in cyclical conflict.⁹

In all three cases the states cited have a large rural and youth population. The more marginalised they are, the less successful the PCRDR processes. Young people from all walks of life must be consulted and engaged as peacebuilding processes progress.

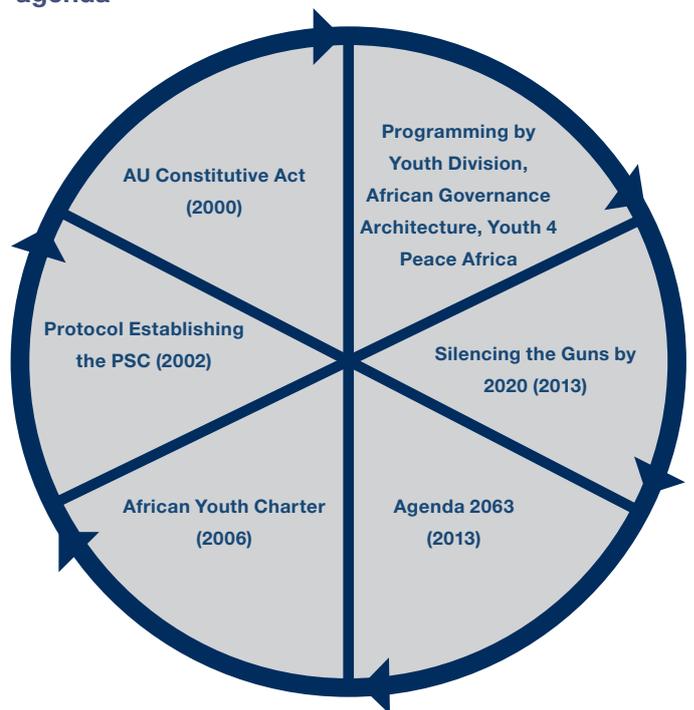
After 2016, the tenth anniversary of the launch of the PCRDR, a five-year results-based framework was established. The document was developed by the Inter-departmental Task Force on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, which was formed in May 2016 and comprises all departments of the AU Commission and representatives of RECs and RMs. Despite the lack of a comprehensive roadmap for youth engagement in PCRDR, the framework refers to mainstreaming the topics of women, gender and the youth.

Creating expectations

The AU, which categorises youth as people between 15 and 35, has presented them as both protagonists and/or spoilers in the implementation of the PCRDR policy framework.¹⁰ It is necessary to address the needs of the youth, not only in the interests of stabilisation but to ensure their ownership and the sustainability of processes.

Since 2000, when the Constitutive Act was introduced, there has been gradual progress in enhancing youth-focused policies and initiatives. Among the initiatives are the establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the adoption of the Africa Youth Charter (AYC) in 2006 by the Assembly of the AU and the institutionalisation of the Youth for Peace Africa (Y4P) programme, dedicated to promoting the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The road to a youth, peace and security agenda



Source: Compiled by the author

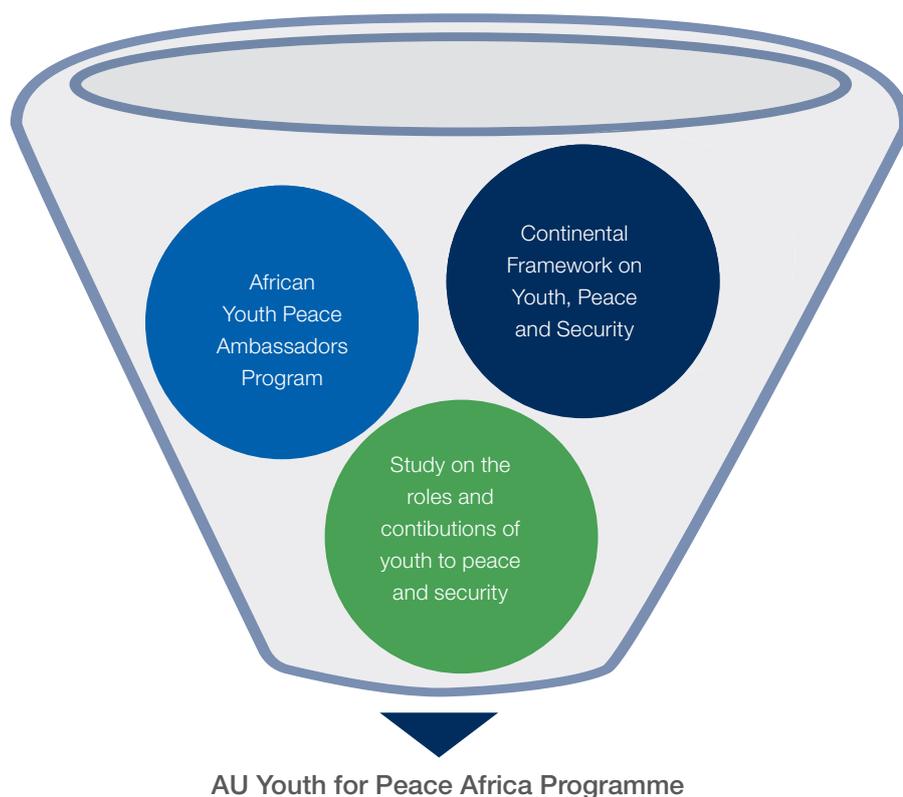
In 2017 the AU Commission reported that a lack of financial and human resources was preventing it from enhancing youth-focused programming for vulnerable young people. In response, the commission’s Peace and Security Department launched the Y4P Africa Programme in September 2018 in an effort to promote the meaningful participation of youth in all areas of peace and security and contribute to the ‘Silencing the Guns’ initiative. The programme seeks to promote and support the efforts of young people to build sustainable peace on the continent, specifically in their previously war-torn countries.

Y4P Africa is convened by experts from the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division with the aim of implementing Article 17 of the AYC and United

Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) by promoting the meaningful participation of youth in peace and security via strategic engagement, involvement and collaboration with individuals and organised groups. Y4P Africa is the vehicle through which the AU hopes to dissuade youth from acts of violence and encourage member states to implement key provisions that will boost youth involvement in peace processes.¹¹

An early indicator of the programme’s success was the key decisions of the 807th communiqué of the PSC emanating from its first open session on Youth, Peace and Security, held in November 2018. Among other things, the communiqué institutionalised a dedicated annual open session on YPS; requested that five regional African Youth Ambassadors for Peace be appointed and endorsed by the Assembly of the union, to work with the AU Youth Envoy to champion the cause of peace and security on the continent; called on member states to develop national action plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the YPS agenda and finalised the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security and the study of the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa.

Figure 3: Progress of the AU’s YPS agenda



Source: Developed by the author

In order to foster meaningful youth inclusion in peace and security efforts at a continental level the Y4P Africa programme is finalising the development of a five-year strategy plan in line with the African Peace and Security Architecture for 2020-2024. The plan provides for enhanced action and imposes a timeline

SEPTEMBER

2018

Y4P AFRICA
PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

to ensure urgency. It also identifies stakeholders who will be engaged in the youth, peace and security process.

The potential of national youth policies

In accordance with Article 12 of the AYC, most AU member states have ratified the charter and developed youth policies using a variety of age categories, although some have adopted the AU age categories. The focus of the policies is on redressing systematic exclusion and addressing the grievances and needs of the youth.

Most youth policies are drafted for five-year periods. Unfortunately, this seems to bear little fruit, in part because the goals tend to be broad and the means of implementation generalised. Government restructuring and frequent changes in leadership exacerbate the problem. Responsibility for youth policy implementation bounces from one bureaucracy to the next, resulting in a lack of continuity and further reducing the accountability of policy makers.

Despite all the efforts, the formulation and implementation of national youth policies for post-conflict states remain a challenge. Problems range from a lack of financial and human resources to poor coordination by local policymakers. National youth policies are governed by existing constitutions, the AYC and various other relevant policies from RECs/RMs. In PCRD states policies must be closely informed by the existing AU guidelines, which increase the chances of a focus on the role of youth in peacebuilding efforts.

Responsibility for youth policy implementation bounces from one bureaucracy to the next

Youth policies in PCRD states should be understood as reflecting the acceptance by policy makers of the need for sustainable peace. Firstly, the overarching objective should be to empower, promote and support youth-led programmes and interventions aimed at contributing to the reduction and mitigation of structural causes of conflict. This is the case in Côte d'Ivoire. Since the conflict ended in 2011 young people have increasingly been engaged in civic activities. In 2016 the government created a Ministry for Youth Promotion, Employment and Civic Services that ushered in a national youth policy developed in consultation with youth organisations, civil society and the private sector. The experience in Côte d'Ivoire demonstrates clearly that the establishment of a dedicated youth ministry or department creates a conducive environment for policy development.

Secondly, the aim of national youth policies in PCRD states should be to address socio-economic inequalities and poverty reduction by providing vocational educational and employment opportunities, among other initiatives. For example, in 2009, two years after the



YOUTH POLICIES SHOULD
FOCUS ON REDRESSING
SYSTEMATIC EXCLUSION
AND ADDRESSING
GRIEVANCES AND NEEDS

peace agreement was signed in the CAR, a National Policy for the Advancement of Central African Youth was drafted in terms of the National Youth Guidance Programme.¹²

The targets, which included civic education, literacy programmes and support for the establishment of social and educational facilities, could potentially have empowered the youth and reduced the numbers recruited into armed rebel groups. Unfortunately it was never implemented because of the resurgence of conflict in 2012.

Today the CAR's National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (2017-2021) recognises that youth remain marginalised in governance and peace processes¹³ despite the fact that 75% of the country's population of about 4.5 million is under 35 years old.¹⁴ CAR's transition from conflict to peace could have been more sustainable if key interventions by the United Nations and the AU had highlighted the urgent need to formulate and implement a youth policy. Today few of the country's young people know about the existence of any efforts to increase their role in peacebuilding.

Young people tend to be the most vulnerable community in a post-conflict setting and it is easy for them to be manipulated, exploited and radicalised

Thirdly, one would expect PCRDR states to have youth policies that seek to develop abilities as part of a long-term plan to create opportunities for the youth to participate in and take advantage of a conflict-free setting. Liberia, one of the earliest targets of the AU PCRDR policy, has managed to move beyond the transition phase and has stabilised and re-established the state. Since the end of its civil war the West African nation has instituted a number of legal reforms, national strategies and peacebuilding activities to address the root causes of violence.

The election of a 'youthful' president gave many young people hope of emancipation and empowerment, specifically through targeted policies for their socio-economic and political development.¹⁵ President George Weah brought a Bill before the House of Representatives in 2019 titled 'An Act to Endorse the National Youth Policy of Liberia: An Agenda for Action'. The primary objective of the Bill is to commit policy makers to re-designing existing youth programmes and projects. The country has never been short of policies, but implementation has been a challenge, thus Liberian youth remain the leaders of a threat of a resurgence of conflict.

Successful implementation of the PCRDR framework is contingent on the prioritisation of socio-economic and political opportunities for young Africans. Young people tend to be the most vulnerable community in a post-conflict setting and it is easy for them to be manipulated, exploited and radicalised.



MOST YOUTH POLICIES ARE
DRAFTED FOR
FIVE-YEAR PERIODS

If they are not included in governance and peacebuilding processes their grievances, particularly those related to unemployment and a lack of access to adequate education, may lead to their participating in unlawful activities to vent their frustrations.

This has been the case in Libya, where there is chronic gun violence, corruption, inept governance, displacement and a lack of basic service delivery. The country has no functioning youth policy or strategy. An attempt was made to create a two-year national action plan, with help from the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The plan, according to UNSMIL, ‘would have served as a starting point to develop a multidisciplinary, multi-dimensional national youth strategy for Libya’.¹⁶ Frequent eruptions of violence, the harsh socio-economic climate and the lack of sufficient technical support from the existing government has meant that no progress has been made in this regard.

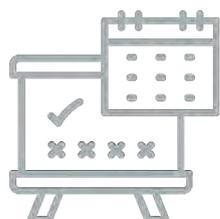
Finally, it is imperative that the AU and the relevant RECs/RMs support member states in developing national youth policies to facilitate the incorporation of key elements of the Continental Framework on YPS, the AU PCRDR policy and other PCRDR policies at regional and international level. In particular, the Y4P Africa programme should also support the states to develop NAPs on YPS, as requested by the PSC. These plans should take into consideration the incorporation of different policies relating to peace and security and align them with the national youth policies and the continental YPS framework.

Aligning national youth policies with the AU PCRDR framework

Table 1 suggests possible ways of aligning the aims of the AU PCRDR with the need to include young people in the framework.

Table 1

Action	Goal
Conduct research into the needs of each specific PCRDR society, especially those of the youth.	This will contribute to a tailor-made national youth policy that considers post-conflict dynamics.
Ensure that the AU PCRDR policy is disseminated to local communities through existing liaison offices.	The policy must be acknowledged by the local population if policy makers are to align the national youth policy with it.
Increased participation of the AU Y4P as a stakeholder in the drafting of national youth policies by PCRDR states.	This will put the AU at the disposal of local lawmakers, thus ensuring that the language of the national youth policy is aligned with the vision of the AU.
Youth representatives and civil society groups must be informed about the fundamentals of peacebuilding.	This will give them the ability to understand what is required to ensure sustainable peace.
Create platforms and networks for youth engagement.	Necessary for the creation of a safe space for stakeholders, especially youth from all walks of life, enabling them to contribute to the development of policy while sharing experiences for rich homegrown input.



ALL YOUTH POLICIES
IN PCRDR STATES MUST
INCLUDE AN ACTION PLAN

Common impediments that may threaten the use of youth policies to effect PCRDR include poor monitoring and evaluation and a perceived lack of political will, coupled with insufficient human and financial resources.

Fragile governance systems prevent the establishment or effective functioning of a dedicated youth ministry, without which it is difficult for states to spearhead the drafting of a national youth policy. In addition, isolated violent incidents disrupt plans to formulate policies as the attention is focused on physically silencing the guns. This has been the challenge in states like South Sudan and CAR, whose post-conflict agreement environments remain fragile.

Several national youth policies lack comprehensive, systemic approaches to existing problems

Some countries that have national youth policies do not have the concrete action plans necessary to implement them. In addition, weak reporting and communication tools defeat the purpose of an active policy. Unless the youth, both rural and urban, know about the policies and how to make use of them they will have very little impact.

Conclusion

Few young Africans are aware of the AU PCRDR policy and even if they are, the implementation of the policy varies from country to country. It is not enough to align national youth policies with the AU or RECs/RMs Youth Charter and Policies alone, they should include a dedicated section that aligns with the PCRDR framework while according with the stage of transition in a particular state.

Several national youth policies lack comprehensive, systemic approaches to existing problems and are ineffective, poorly targeted and formalistic. They fail to focus on young people's needs or roles.

In the future PCRDR states must partner with the youth to ensure that they are conscious of their ownership of their country's youth policies. They must be exposed to vigorous awareness and sensitisation programmes. If the youth are able to speak the language of

peacebuilding and lead the struggle for sustainable development PCRDR may become a lived reality on the continent.

Recommendations

For the AU

- Prioritise the involvement of youth in the establishment of governance institutions during peacebuilding as this generates a sense of influence, ownership, responsibility and buy-in while also eliminating a feeling of imposition from above;
- Where youth policies do not exist, advocate their creation by a dedicated youth ministry or department in each member state;
- Support the strengthening of national youth policies and structures, which can be the best tools for engaging young people in effective PCRDR and ensuring alignment with the goals of the PCRDR policy framework;
- All youth policies in PCRDR states must be accompanied by an action plan that can be monitored and evaluated for maximum impact and success; and
- In collaboration with the regional economic communities/RMs, popularise the PCRDR policy framework among young people.

For PCRDR states

- National youth policy development must be prioritised early;
- It is fundamental to have a youth ministry or department in place to coordinate youth-related affairs;
- Youth organisations and civil society should be included when the national youth policy is formulated;
- Attention should be paid to civic engagement that includes both rural and urban youth; and
- Regular consultation with local AU PCRDR liaison personnel and RECs/RM representatives should be prioritised.

Notes

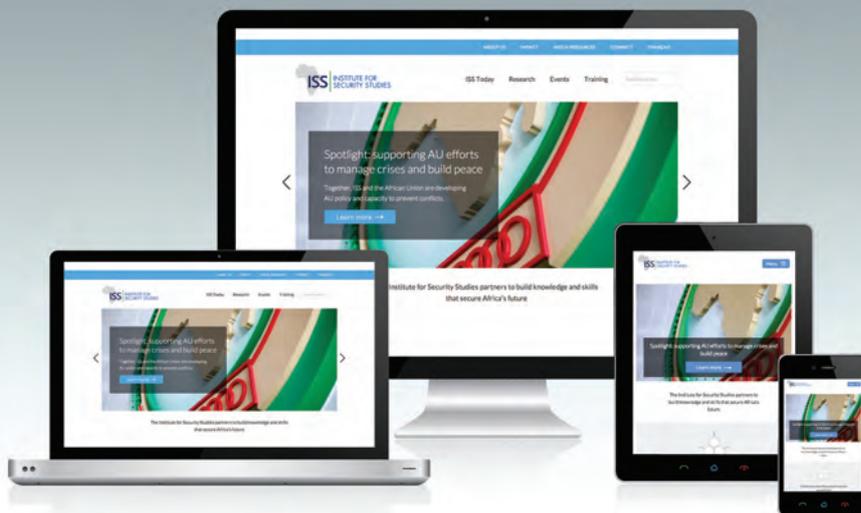
- 1 African Union Commission, African Union Policy on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development, 2006, www.peaceau.org/uploads/pcrd-policy-framwovork-eng.pdf.
- 2 Ibid.

- 3 The question of what constitutes 'youth' in Africa is controversial. Age brackets have been imposed to define the term. The UN defines youth as between 15 and 24 years old, while the AU targets those between 15 and 35. For some, the concept of 'youth' is gendered, often used to describe a young male (rather than a female of the same age) who is neither in school nor in gainful employment, lives on the social fringes of society and is predisposed to engage in violence.
- 4 RECs are described as the building blocks of the AU system. They are increasingly involved in coordinating AU member states' interests in areas such as peace, security, development and governance. They also represent a united regional front that often centres on common languages, markets and cultures.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Barnett, M, Kim, H, O'Donnell, M and Sitea, L. Peacebuilding: What is in a name? *Global Governance* 13(1), 2007, 35-58.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Report of the Workshop on Ten Years of the African Union Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy Implementation.
- 9 African Union Commission (n2).
- 10 African Union Commission, Report Of The Workshop on The Ten Years Of The African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy implementation, 2016, www.peaceau.org/uploads/10th-anniversary-report-distribution.pdf.
- 11 Article 17 of the African Youth Charter reflects the positive role young people should play in the creation and sustainability of peace and security on the continent; UNSC Resolution 2250 deals with the topic of youth from an international peace and security perspective. Recognising young people's contributions to peacebuilding, it provides a set of guidelines for policies and programmes to be developed by member states, the UN and civil society. UNSC Resolution 2419 calls on all relevant actors to consider ways of increasing the representation of young people in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements.
- 12 Zukane, M and Tangang, A T, The State of Youth Policies in the Central African Sub-Region, *Africa Educational Research Journal*, 2017, 156-169, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1214159.pdf>.
- 13 Central African Republic, National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan 2017-2021, 21.
- 14 UNFPA, UNSG Youth Envoy Amplifies the Voice of Youth from Central African Republic, 2016, <http://car.unfpa.org/en/node/5137>.
- 15 Kujeke, M and Weah-Weah, S, Weah cannot afford to fail Liberia's youth, *ISS Today*, 29 January 2018, <https://issafrika.org/iss-today/weah-cannot-afford-to-fail-liberias-youth>.
- 16 UNSMIL, Libyan and Tunisian youth develop national action plans in support of efforts of building peace culture, 2016, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/libyan-tunisian-youth-develop-national-action-plans-support-efforts-building-peace-culture>.

The Institute for Security Studies partners to build knowledge
and skills that secure Africa's future

Visit our website for the latest analysis, insight and news

www.issafrica.org



Step 1 Go to www.issafrica.org

Step 2 Go to bottom right of the ISS home page
and provide your subscription details

About the author

Muneinazvo Kujeke joined the Institute for Security Studies in 2016 and is currently a Research Officer with the Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Programme. Her area of focus is Africa's youth in peace and security processes. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Politics and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg.

About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. The ISS is an African non-profit with offices in South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal. Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible policy research, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society.

About ISS Policy Briefs

Policy Briefs provide concise analysis to inform current debates and decision making. Key findings or recommendations are listed on the inside cover page, and infographics allow busy readers to quickly grasp the main points.

Development partners



This policy brief is published as part of the Training for Peace Programme (TfP), which is funded by the government of Norway. The ISS is also grateful for support from the members of the ISS Partnership Forum: the Hanns Seidel Foundation, the European Union and the governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

© 2020, Institute for Security Studies

Copyright in the volume as a whole is vested in the Institute for Security Studies and the authors, and no part may be reproduced in whole or in part without the express permission, in writing, of both the authors and the publishers.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the ISS, its trustees, members of the Advisory Council or donors. Authors contribute to ISS publications in their personal capacity.

Cover image: © AMISOM/Flickr

ISSN 2617-829X Print
ISSN 2617-8303 Digital

