



REPORT

Youth Consultations on Peace and Security: Findings from Focus Group Discussions and Interviews Including Hard to Reach Youth in Tunisia.

Informing the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security and the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2250.

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Acknowledgements.....	3
Acronyms.....	4
1. Context.....	5
1.1 Project Context.....	5
1.2 Country and Research Context	5
2. Methodology and Description of Research Activities	8
2.1 Objectives and Key Research Questions	8
2.2 Data Collection Tools	9
2.3 Data Collection Activities and Population of the Study	9
2.4 Approach.....	11
2.5 Data Analysis.....	11
2.6 Limitations	11
3. Findings	12
3.1 Main Peace and Security Challenges Affecting Young People Consulted.....	12
3.1.1 Youth’s Experience of Violence: Differences According to Age and Gender	12
3.1.2 Why Do Youth Use Violence?.....	13
3.1.3 How Do Young People Resist Violence?	15
3.1.4 Escaping Violence with Other Forms of Violence	15
3.1.5 A Cultural Desert and a Feeling of Emptiness.....	16
3.1.6 Being at the Margin: A Feeling of “Hugra” and “Tahmich”	16
3.1.7 Youth and Media: At Odds	18
3.1.8 Lack of Trust in State Institutions.....	19
3.1.9 What about the Situation of Young Women in Tunisia?	20
3.2 Factors Preventing and Encouraging Youth Involvement in Building Peace	20
3.2.1 Skepticism for the Notion of Peacebuilding	20
3.2.2 Difficulty in Accessing Peacebuilding Initiatives: Information and Outreach Issues.....	21
3.2.3 Difficulty in Accessing Peacebuilding Initiatives: Mobility, Social and Gender Issues.....	21
3.2.4 Lack of Confidence in International Institutions and Organizations	21
3.3 Enhancing Young People’s Contribution and Leadership in Building Sustainable Peace	22
3.3.1 The Need for Real Transformation	22

- 3.3.2 Development Programs 23
- 3.3.3 Prevention and Treatment of Drug Addiction..... 23
- 3.3.4 Prison Reform 23
- 3.3.5 State Involvement and Political Will 24
- 3.3.6 Involvement of Young People in Decision-Making 24
- 3.3.7 Establish a Culture of Dialogue and Listening with Different Groups and Institutions 24
- 3.3.8 Suggested Areas for Age-specific Programmatic Interventions Based on Age group Priorities and Interests 25
- 4. Recommendations..... 26
 - 4.1 Key Messages 26
 - 4.2 Specific Recommendations by Hard to Reach and Active Youth 28
- 5. Summary and Conclusions 30
- 6. Annexes..... 33
 - 6.1 Locations Selected for the Study 33
 - 6.2 Data Collection Tools: FGD and KII questionnaires..... 35

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The content of this report does not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations.



Acronyms

AQIM:	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
ILT:	Institutional Learning Team
IS:	Islamic State
KII:	Key Informant Interview
PBSO:	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
SCR 2250:	United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250
Search:	Search for Common Ground
SFCG-T:	Search for Common Ground Tunisia
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
YPS:	Youth Peace & Security

1. Context

1.1 Project Context

In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (SCR 2250) on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). SCR 2250 recognizes the important and positive contributions of youth in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, affirms their critical role in the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts and stresses the importance of empowering young men and women as contributors to the sustainability of peace rather than stereotyping them as victims and perpetrators of violence. It also urges Member States to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels, as well as in institutions and mechanisms to prevent and resolve conflict and counter violent extremism.

The resolution requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to “carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contributions to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels”. The study, co-led by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), is designed as an independent, evidence-based research and operational report that will propose a forward-looking agenda for the international community.

As part of the Progress Study’s participatory research process, consultations with young people in all regions of the world were commissioned in order to document young women and men’s involvement in peace and security issues. The results of this process will feed into the Progress Study.

In 2017, Search for Common Ground (Search) conducted research activities in five countries to support data collection for the Progress Study in Burundi, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia. The research in Burundi, Nepal, Nigeria and Tunisia was made possible through funding from UNFPA. The research in Niger was made possible through a grant from PeaceNexus.

The current report presents results from research conducted in Tunisia with 158 young people (35.5% are active in civil society and 64.5% are hard to reach youth). “Hard to reach youth” are understood as young people who are less involved in mainstream life and activities – either out of their own will and/or as a result of exclusion by mainstream society. They often face stigmatization and additional hardship. Out of the main networks, they are harder to reach by development programming and international organizations that work with youth, which contributes to making them invisible and unheard. For this reason, consulting with them was especially important for the purposes of contributing to the Progress Study.

1.2 Country and Research Context

In Tunisia, young people today live in fragile and volatile contexts. The Tunisian population forms a very young society: 51% of its population is less than 30 years old. Young people are more affected by unemployment, as those aged 18-29 represent more than 70% of the unemployed

population. 100,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 19 (18% of this age group) are neither in education nor in vocational training nor in the labor market.¹

They are among the most affected by the often interconnected forms of violence: from political violence to organized crime and terrorist attacks harming their country and communities, resulting in enormous and lasting human, social and economic costs. They live in a society in which criminality is rising (the Ministry of Interior recorded 187,316 in 2015, an increase of 5.5% from the previous year).²

Although Tunisia is currently undergoing a successful democratic transition, it has also seen a growing violent extremist movement since the Tunisian Revolution in 2011. When the revolution did not alleviate widespread poverty and unemployment or expand political and socio-economic rights and opportunities, many youth became disillusioned with the government and with the unfulfilled promise of a return of civic engagement. Many young Tunisians furthermore lack a strong national identity.³ These factors, combined with community-specific grievances, have created a fertile recruiting environment for extremist groups such as Da'esh, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and others. This has made Tunisia one of the countries that export the largest number of jihadists to conflict zones.⁴

Through a qualitative approach, this two-month study sought to provide an opportunity for hard to reach young women and men from six localities (Jendouba, Siliana, Greater-Tunis, Kasserine, Bizerte, Medenine) to express themselves openly about issues of violence, peace and security. This was done with a view to better understand how to develop policies, programs and solutions that are better suited to the real needs of young people most affected by violence – especially those whom national governments, the international community and other key actors have so far been unable to reach and engage successfully, working with them to ensure meaningful options of change for their lives. The collected data and subsequent analysis and recommendations can serve to develop more relevant policies and programs to address their needs and aspirations.

The six localities (Bizerte, Ben Gardane/Medenine, Greater-Tunis (including Douar Hicher), Kasserine, Jendouba, and Siliana) selected for this research have experienced different forms of violence since the Revolution. Recent research⁵ also indicates that these areas are the most targeted by terrorists in view of their geographical and socio-economic character. More than a third of Tunisian foreign fighters originate from three of the selected areas: Ben Gardane (15.2%), Bizerte

¹ International Labour Organisation (ILO), National Observatory of Employment and Skills. (2014, June). Work4Youth Publication series No. 15. Retrieved from:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_247560.pdf

² Tunisian Ministry of Interior, <http://opendata.interieur.gov.tn/fr/catalog/statistiques-des-faits-criminels-sur-tout-le-territoire-de-la-republique-durant-l-annee-2015-en-comparaison-avec-l-annee-2014>

³ Search for Common Ground Tunisia. (2016). Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities.

⁴ The Soufan Group. (2015, December 4). Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. Retrieved from:

http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf

⁵ Search for Common Ground Tunisia. (2016). Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities.

(10.7%), and Tunis (10.7%).⁶ Finally, they also face high rates of poverty, unemployment and marginalization.

A brief profile of the six locations is included in Annex 1.



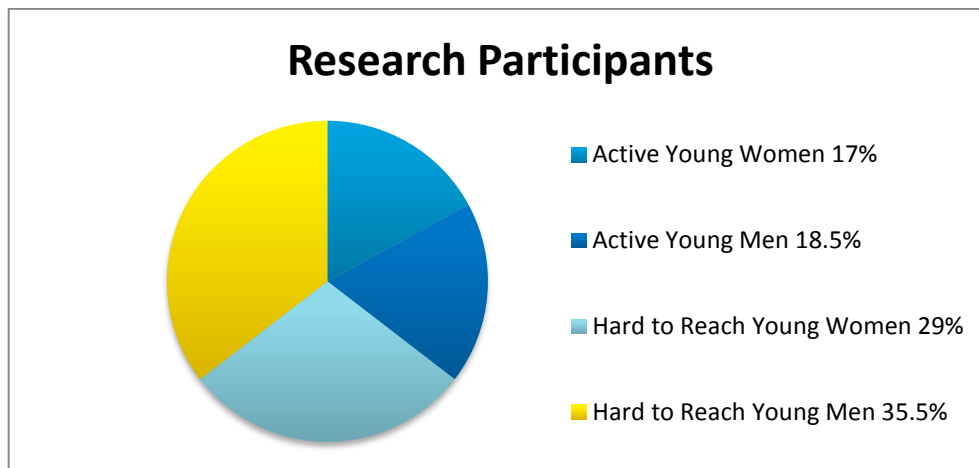
**Map of Tunisia Showing Areas of Research
(Bizerte, Ben Gardane/Medenine, Greater-Tunis, Kasserine, Jendouba, and Siliana)**

⁶ The Soufan Group. (2015, December 4). Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. Retrieved from http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf

2. Methodology and Description of Research Activities

The research was based on a qualitative approach that used focus groups discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) to collect data in six regions among 158 hard to reach and active youth. In order to take into account the gender differences, FGDs were conducted with mixed groups, as well as same sex groups, while taking into account the cultural conditions of the study areas.

A total of 14 FGDs and 8 KIIs were conducted among 158 young people aged 15-35 years old. Of these 158 youth, 46% were young women and 54% were young men; 64.5% were hard to reach and 35.5% were active in civil society. Four FGDs were conducted in rural areas and 10 in urban areas. Two complementary FGDs were conducted after the report was written to validate the results of the research.



2.1 Objectives and Key Research Questions

The objectives of this research were to collect the perception and viewpoints of youth on violence itself as a key component for the elaboration of relevant strategies in violence prevention, peacebuilding and youth involvement in such efforts. In order to achieve this, the research put forth the following research questions:

- 1- What *narratives* are used by youth to describe, explain and justify the involvement of youth in violence and conflict in their communities?
- 2- Do youth see other *alternatives to violence* itself? If so, what are they and what is missing or prevents them from exploring those non-violent alternatives?
- 3- *How can youth be involved* in strengthening current efforts that are focused on violence prevention? What would it take to engage them and what suggestions are they developing in order to promote effective and locally-based peacebuilding, social cohesion and violence prevention activities, initiatives and policy?

2.2 Data Collection Tools

Search for Common Ground Tunisia (SFCG-T) initially conducted a pilot study to develop and refine the research tools and identify issues and problems that need to be discussed in the FGDs. SFCG-T then developed two semi-structured discussion guides for data collection. One was dedicated to young people and another dedicated to experts working on youth issues. The guides aimed to address the four main questions of the Progress Study as follows:

- 1- What are the main peace and security challenges that youth face and how do these impact their life (locally, nationally, regionally or globally)?
- 2- What are the peacebuilding and violence prevention activities, initiatives and projects being undertaken? What is the impact of this work?
- 3- What factors prevent or inhibit youth involvement in building peace and contributing to security? And what factors could promote and support their active involvement in building peace, preventing violence and contributing to positive social cohesion in their communities, society and institutions?
- 4- What would help enhance youth contribution and leadership in building sustainable peace and preventing violence? Do they have particular views on how their government, state institutions, civil society organizations, media or the international community, could help to support them?

2.3 Data Collection Activities and Population of the Study

To represent a diversity of voices, and more specifically the voices of marginalized young people, the research targeted different profiles of Tunisian youth: rural and urban youth, youth active in civil society, as well as hard to reach youth, which made up a majority of the participants.

For the purposes of this research, “hard to reach youth” are understood as young people who are less involved in mainstream life and activities – either out of their own will and/or as a result of exclusion by mainstream society. They often face stigmatization and additional hardship. Out of the main networks, they are harder to reach by services, development programming and international organizations that work with youth, which contributes to making them invisible, unheard and further marginalized. The hard to reach population concerned by this research included young people who were unemployed or working in the informal sector, living in rural areas or in marginalized/insecure regions, engaging in drug and alcohol abuse, victims of gender based violence, without parental care, in conflict with the law, and/or with experience of participation in violence, demonstrations and social movements.

A total of 14 FGDs and 8 KIIs were conducted among 158 young people aged 15-35 years old. Of these 158 youth, 46% were young women and 54% were young men; 65.5% were hard to reach and 35.5% were active in civil society. Four FGDs were conducted in rural areas and 10 in urban areas. Two complementary FGDs were conducted after the report was written to validate the results of the research.

The following table shows the number of participants in the focus groups and interviews disaggregated by profile, gender, age and location.

Region							
Location	Greater Tunis	Siliana	Kasserine	Jendouba	Ben Gardane / Medenine	Bizerte	Total
Number of FGDs	3	2	3	2	2	2	14
Total FGD participants	30	28	26	24	22	20	150
Female (hard to reach)							
15-19 years	15	12	2				29
20-24 years	1	4	5				10
25-29 years		1	4				5
30-34 years							
Male (hard to reach)							
15-19 years	3	2	10		3	4	22
20-24 years	2	4	5		6	4	21
25-29 years	2	3			2	2	9
30-34 years		2					2
Female (Active)							
15-19 years	1						1
20-24 years	1			3	3		7
25-29 years	1			6	4		11
30-34 years				1	4		5
Male (Active)							
15-19 years						2	2
20-24 years	2			3		4	9
25-29 years	1			5		3	9
30-34 years	1			6		1	8
Number of KIIs	3		2		4	3	13
Female (hard to reach)							
15-19 years							
20-24 years	1					1	2
25-29 years							
30-34 years							
Male (hard to reach)							
15-19 years						1	1
20-24 years	1						1
25-29 years							
30-34 years							
Female (Active)							
15-19 years							
20-24 years					1		1
25-29 years					1		1
30-34 years			1				1
Male (Active)							
15-19 years						1	1
20-24 years							
25-29 years							
30-34 years							
Adult Females	1		1				2
Adult Males					2	1	3

Table 1: Research Participants

2.4 Approach

The mobilization of young people who are “difficult to reach” requires specific strategies and techniques. Through previous projects and activities, SFCG-T developed a strong network of local partners who are experienced in this area. Based on previous experiences and recognition that the FGDs could raise potentially controversial issues that young people might be reluctant to talk about, SFCG-T called on young people with experience working with marginalized youth to co-facilitate interviews with the SFCG-T team.

SFCG-T led the study and provided training to these youth and SFCG staff on how to conduct focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and data collection. During the FGDs and interviews, SFCG staff facilitated the discussions while youth researchers took notes. After each focus group, the youth researchers filled out a template outlining what they considered to have emerged from the focus group.

The FGDs were conducted in local organizations’ offices, which offered a neutral, safe, as well as socially and culturally appropriate space for both male and female participants. SFCG-T’s local partners have a good reputation and trusted relationships with local youth thanks to their experience and fieldwork with marginalized populations. This made their offices convenient, accessible and comfortable locations for research participants.

2.5 Data Analysis

Given the qualitative nature of the data, content analysis was the primary technique for analyzing the information collected. After reading the participants’ interventions, the data were divided into themes and concepts, and classified and compared between the different age and gender groups. The verbatim quotes were grouped according to identified ideas and themes.

2.6 Limitations

This research has some limitations, as follows:

- 1- The study’s qualitative approach and research sample was not intended to be representative of all Tunisian youth, so findings cannot be generalized beyond the populations interviewed.
- 2- Statistics on previous peacebuilding initiatives in the country are not available. Mapping initiatives is a difficult task that could not have been completed within the study’s given timeframe.
- 3- Due to the sensitive nature of certain forms of violence that young people identified and emphasized in interviews, in particular sexual violence, the research was not able to explore these topics in depth.

3. Findings

3.1 Main Peace and Security Challenges Affecting Young People Consulted

3.1.1 Youth's Experience of Violence: Differences According to Age and Gender

Hearing or seeing violence is a daily occurrence for the young people who participated in the research: *"Since I've been in my mother's womb, I hear about violence,"* said a 16-year-old boy in Bizerte, illustrating the omnipresence of violence in these young people's lives. While violence is prevalent for all youth we consulted, it is not perceived or experienced in the same way by women and men, younger and older. Our conversations uncovered variations, for different genders and age groups, in the forms of violence, its dynamics, and the spaces where it most occurs.

Adolescents and minors (15-18 years) describe violence as any act of physical and psychological aggression in the school, neighborhood, and family. Young men (early youth, 20-24 years) describe violence as all the "delinquency problems" that young people face on a daily basis. *"In our city, you can see everything: fights between two that sometimes turn into a war between groups, theft, harassment... a foreigner from outside the region can never walk alone here,"* said a 21-year-old man from Bizerte. According to their narratives, family conflicts, and especially with the father, were widely cited by this age group. *"My father never ceases to tell me that I must be ashamed of myself when watching those of the same age as me, that I am not a man,"* explained a 23-year-old man from Medenine, recalling the difficulties that many young people experience to be recognized and respected as adults, or able to lead an "adult" life (having a job, completing studies, etc.).

Young men and women in later stages of their youth (25 years and over) make more frequent reference to institutional violence. *"The fact of not having decent and respectful work is the worst form of violence,"* said a 29-year-old man in Tunis. He adds: *"When you apply for vacancies or opportunities, they require experience, sometimes to pass a competition, they ask for stamps and fees, and after there is no answer, it's ridiculous."*

The discourse of young women of all ages refers to the violence of the patriarchal system, gender stereotypes and social codes impeding their freedom and well-being. *"We are never safe, in the street, you hear all forms of sexual harassment, in the house, men are very creative to make us suffer,"* says a 23-year-old female student from Tunis, victim of domestic violence.

The participants perceive the gendered dimensions of violence: Women are still in a victim's position, seen as an easy target, and acts of violence are always assigned in particular to men. Moving beyond these expected roles is difficult. When a girl engages in violence, she is limited to verbal aggression. *"If someone hurts me, I insult him but I send him a friend to beat him,"* says a 17-year-old girl in Douar Hicher. Violence committed by women is considered rare and is generally invisible and underrepresented by society, as well as unacceptable. In cases of female violence, girls are generally described as abnormal, rebellious, disobedient and vicious. Narratives of victimization and guilt overlap: a faulty victim and an innocent culprit, especially when a woman speaks out against a man or in the case of violence against women.

For young men, especially between 15 to 25 years old, a main source of violence and symbol of repression is the police. In the inner city and suburban areas, police are recognized as the common

enemy of youth and extremist groups. Torture and abusive police practices continue to be applied on youth especially in poor neighborhoods. *“They come to us with force, we live hours of verbal and physical violence, we are incarcerated for hours, without reason and the next day they let you go,”* shared a 21-year-old man from Tunis.

Young women, on the other hand, have different perceptions of the police, which can vary based on their experience and interaction with the institution and its members. Adolescent females (15-19 years) mostly perceive the police as a key player in ensuring security in the country and safety of citizens. Enforcement of laws and regulations is very important to them: *“If we do not apply the law, we will live in a jungle,”* explains a 19-year-old girl in Ben Gardane. Police are the only actors who will ensure this mission, according to the girls. *“Since I was a little girl, I learned that the police and the army are watching for our security, if there is no police, to whom can we file a complaint, who is going to arrest the criminals?”* explained a 17-year-old girl in Kasserine. Other women who have had some experiences of violence show a lack of trust of this sector. *“When a woman who is the victim of her husband’s wild assaults turns to the police to lodge a complaint, she is twice assaulted; the police also assault her, refusing to register the complaint and sending her home,”* said a 27-year-old girl active in civil society in Bizerte.

Young women and young men both cite the stigmatization of their regions as symbolic violence. This violence has an impact on their relational network, the search for jobs and their daily lives. *“When I look for a job, the fact that he learns that I am from Douar Hicher, he refuses to recruit me,”* said a 23-year-old man from Tunis. *“My sister met a man from a coastal area, but when her family learned that she lives in a rural area, they refused their relationship,”* a 21-year-old female from Kasserine shared.

3.1.2 Why Do Youth Use Violence?

Violence is seen as a form of expression and communication with a wide and fluctuating spectrum of motives. According to information provided by young Tunisians interviewed on this subject, six general factors influence the use of violence.

Social, cultural and an identity vacuum push young people aged between 19 and 25 years to feel marginalized, both in their community and society at large: they feel invisible in their environment, ignored and misunderstood by those around them. *“To tell society that we are here, we exist [...] They hit, they break, they attack just to be noticed by others,”* says a 26-year-old girl from Ben Gardane. For some youth, violence gives them the social and community visibility that good behavior does not give them.

Peer pressure is also a decisive factor for some young people, with those aged 15-18 being the most sensitive to this dynamic. Having grown up in neighborhoods where violence is public and daily, some have integrated it as a means of connection and communication. For others, it is a source of integration into a group, which provides protection, a sense of belonging, and a sense of power. *“I have to do like them, if not I feel like an alien, I will be alone without friends,”* says a 15-year-old boy from Bizerte. His 16-year-old friend adds: *“When you live in a dangerous neighborhood, you have to go to the strongest so no one will dare to hurt you.”*

Violence may also be the only form of intense personal expression that some young people have or see as available and accessible. They explain this phenomenon in relation to the absence of

activities, a lack of listening, and the general feeling of a great solitude without visible doors of exit. Violence then appears to them as the only way out of their emotions.

Boredom is another cause of violence, especially among middle and older youth (25 years and older). *“Boredom is a disease that kills me slowly,”* says a 25-year-old man from Medenine. The absence of alternatives, opportunities, and activities for young people can lead them to commit various acts of violence against others, themselves, or material objects, simply to keep themselves busy. *“If I do not break something, I will explode,”* explains a 26-year-old male from Tunis. Violence emerges as the ultimate opportunity that youth create for themselves out of a lack of other opportunities.

“Why do you consider people who manifest as aggressive and disruptive? And when they deprive us of our rights, it is not violence?” (31-year-old man, Tunis)

Young women and men aged 25 and over also use violence to claim their rights. This is especially the case for older youth (30 years and older) mostly belonging to local associations or civically active, reflecting the various social movements that have mobilized Tunisia and Tunisian youth in recent years. They justified this violence as a constant struggle to be heard by institutions that do not respect their most fundamental rights (to health, employment, etc.) *“They listen to you only by violence. When I request an appointment to discuss an issue, they close their doors and refuse to accept any initiative of dialogue, they only understand violence,”* explains a 26-year-old woman from Tunis. According to them, peaceful demands have failed, and they are obliged to act violently to ensure their subsistence and to not be forgotten by the nation. *“Why do you consider people who manifest as aggressive and disruptive? And when they deprive us of our rights, it is not violence?”* claims a 31-year-old man from Tunis. It seems that young people develop over time and with repeated experiences of marginalization a more acute understanding of systemic violence and a pressing need to react to it.

Finally, some young people mentioned a predisposition to violence among some youth, and particularly in areas of exacerbated urban violence. Indeed, some youth consider that using violence is a behavioral problem that develops at a very young age, the result of family and community influence. This intergenerational character of violence thus made it seem almost impossible to avoid: *“Some people are violent by nature, violence is a behavior, it is in their genes,”* explains a 22-year-old girl in Tunis.

In conclusion, the roots of violence among youth are various. They can be linked to the personal level, relational level as well as societal and environmental level. The reasons for the violence diverge according to the age and sex of the young people. The table below summarizes these variations.

Why do young people use violence?	Filling a social, cultural and identity void	Ceding to peer pressure	Emotional expression	Fighting boredom	Claiming rights
15-18		✓	✓		
19-25	✓		✓		
26-29			✓	✓	✓
30-35					✓

Table 2: Experiences and perceptions of consulted youth: why do youth use violence?

3.1.3 How Do Young People Resist Violence?

The modalities of youth resistance and resilience to violence are manifold and arise from individual, psychological and cultural resources. Some young people between the ages of 15 and 25 tend to build a psychological defense mechanism to weaken the repercussions. Their resistance aims to trivialize the fact and build an internal compromise in order to be able to move on and continue living. *“Homicide is an ordinary fact, when we hear that our neighbor has burned his wife to death, or a young man stabbed his friend in a fight, no reaction, we do not even talk about it, we react as ‘got it’, and a smile, in other words we acknowledge the act, we smile and then we go on with life,”* explains a 19-year-old man from Bizerte. Humor is also deployed as a type of resistance: *“On Saturday night, starting at 10 pm, the show begins. When we have nothing to do, we regroup in the garden of the neighborhood and we watch [it’s like] a live action movie. We laugh, we have fun,”* says a 22-year-old man from Douar Hicher.

Young people under the age of 18 are deeply involved in social, cultural and artistic practices such as graffiti, music and sport. Other groups of young people, especially girls (25-29 years) prefer to engage in the civic and political sphere of associations. Imagination is also an alternative for others to flee from reality: *“To be able to survive, I imagine living in Europe. In fact, it is true that my body is in this country, but my soul, my spirit is elsewhere in Europe,”* says a 21-year-old man from Kasserine.

3.1.4 Escaping Violence with Other Forms of Violence

However, many escape violence with other forms of violence. Suicide and self-harm have become ordinary acts for young unemployed graduates with unrealized ambitions. *“We look at daily Facebook images of unemployed young people who commit suicide and put an end to their suffering in public in front of everyone,”* shares a 27-year-old man from Medenine.

Others become sensitive to the heroic charms of jihadists on the battlefield. *“Extremist groups have understood the game, they are so organized and intelligent, they aim at where it hurts, if young people join Da’esh, it is all just to feel important and powerful,”* shares a 26-year-old man from Tunis. The use of these groups is seen as a response to the marginalization and exclusion of young people.

“Instead of opening a factory in our regions, they opened a liquor store.” (19-year-old man, Douar Hicher)

Drinking alcohol or using drugs allows mostly young men, but also young women (15-25 years) to find escape amidst so much loss. *“I’m exhausted from living the same scenario of suffering, boredom... it’s horrible. All my days are black. I only see the colors of life when I smoke a joint or I take subitex,”* says a 22-year-old man from Kasserine. They take refuge in the narcotics to appease their suffering and avoid confronting the situation. *“When you smoke a joint, it makes you totally smashed, gives you wings, you are free, you cannot think, you calm down,”* adds an 18-year-old woman in Bizerte.

Substance abuse is also a way for young people to feel alive. *“It is to feel alive that one takes the risk of death.”* They also mention the ease of accessing these substances: *“Instead of opening a factory in our regions, they opened a liquor store,”* says a 19-year-old man from Douar Hicher. For them, the irony is that finding drugs and alcohol is easier than finding a job, and no effort is made to reverse this situation. As a result, young people let go. *“Drugs are everywhere, you just have to ask for them, you find them everywhere even in high schools,”* adds a 17-year-old boy from Bizerte. *“We ask nothing of the state, we just need the ‘chikha’ and all will be well”.*

3.1.5 A Cultural Desert and a Feeling of Emptiness

Young people, both male and female, experience a persistent feeling of monotony and emptiness in their daily lives. *“Every day, it’s the same scenario, a long empty day to pass, I have nothing to do, I have no goal to achieve,”* says a 23-year-old man from Medenine. Cultural spaces are virtually non-existent, especially in the interior regions. Young men, especially those who have dropped out of school or who are unemployed, have no alternative but to spend most of their day in cafés that are generally reserved for men. *“Spend time in cafés, and you understand everything. We have no choice. Young people spend all day sharing a coffee, playing cards, counting passersby...”* describes a 26-year-old man from Tunis.

The Tunisian education system was also mentioned as an engine amplifying the cultural vacuum. Young women and men aged 30 and over describe education as a mass system that is not concerned with quality but rather with the quantities of graduates queuing up in the desperate expectation of a job. Education programs are perceived as superficial and destroying, from early childhood, creativity and critical skills, rather than as a tool for living life fully. *“Literary subjects whose role is to entrench the critical spirit of young people are impoverished,”* shared a 30-year-old woman in Ben Gardane.

3.1.6 Being at the Margin: A Feeling of “Hugra” and “Tahmich”

Young people suffer from depression, one that is deeply linked to their position in society. Beyond the feeling of emptiness, there is a deep sense of not being listened to and being the object of disdain by elites – political elites as well as their peers who have succeeded in life.

“When some elites speak in our name, it is to serve their own interests” (27-year-old woman, Tunis)

It is indeed important to recognize that many young active people are part of the elite and do not see, do not want to (or know how to) engage marginalized young people. The young women and men (aged 20 years and over) we consulted claim they live a class conflict. For them, the elite is totally absent from the scene. Opportunism is the only engine that makes them come out of their shell. *“When some elites speak in our name, it is to serve their own interests,”* a 27-year-old woman in Tunis said. Active youth are also absent in actions targeting marginalized youth. They are incapable of representing Tunisian youth as they lack all knowledge of the reality of other young people’s experiences. *“His pride does not allow him to lean toward us, the delinquents, the dirty, the criminals. They are afraid of their reputation,”* expresses a 24-year-old man from Medenine. Consulted youth explain that these active young people are not representative of all Tunisian youth, nor are they the definitive voice for marginalized and excluded youth. A 21-year-old man from Douar Hicher adds: *“Our problems are not the same, our goals are not the same, our sufferings are not the same ... they can never understand us or represent us.”*

Such divisions among young people are a major challenge to social cohesion and peace, and have many implications: The first one reminds organizations and institutions working with youth to not approach them as a monolith, but rather to carefully refine and adapt their methods of engagement taking into consideration and learning about realities of youth from different contexts. Another implication is the need to ask the difficult question: What can be done to bring Tunisian young people of different classes together around shared or compatible objectives?

The testimonies of the young people consulted indicate that Tunisian youth are doubly victim of a “hugra” – societal humiliation – and an institutional humiliation, “tahnich”. Young men (19-25 years) feel most excluded from society, citing the scornful “mentality” of others and the “parallel view” of society. *“The problems of conflict, insecurity or violence, as you say, is not our concern, the true conflict of the young is the mentality of the surroundings. People are tough and ruthless,”* says a 21-year-old man from Kasserine.

Young men between the ages of 20 and 29 feel that they are a burden and a “problem” for society, not the hope and the generation of the future. *“Even if you make the effort to change, society gives you an eternal tattoo, a label of an offender, a failure or a source of problem,”* says a 23-year-old man from Tunis. They support the idea that today’s young people will be the main actors, decision-makers and economic engines of tomorrow’s Tunisia: *“But it is we who will be the adults of tomorrow, it is our future,”* said a 24-year-old man in Bizerte. However, according to the study population, the term “youth” is always associated with notions of problems and burdens: problems of which youth are often victims. *“In all speeches, whether political, media, or even in society, when they speak the word young, the term problem is always associated: the problem of unemployment, the problem of poverty, the problem of delinquency... we are considered as disabled people for whom they have to find solutions,”* confirms a 23-year-old man in Kasserine.

Such testimonials highlight how painfully aware young people are of the gap in politicians’ and policy-makers’ discourse: on the one hand, youth are seen as hope for the future, on the other hand,

they are an immediate problem for which to find a solution. Youth grow tired of these generic statements that amount to empty promises, if nothing is done today to support them. They also know very well that other youth – peaceful youth, easy to engage, successful youth – may well be the promise, while they – problem youth, violent youth, hard to engage youth – are seen as the problem.

“The problems of conflict, insecurity or violence, as you say, is not our concern, the true conflict of the young is the mentality of the surroundings. People are tough and ruthless.” (21-year-old man, Kasserine)

“Even if you make the effort to change, society gives you an eternal tattoo, a label of an offender, a failure or a source of problem.” (23-year-old-man, Tunis)

In terms of institutional marginalization “tahnich”, no gender difference was noted. On the other hand, this feeling becomes more profound as time passes and participants get older. These young people have the feeling of living in an absolute paradox. *“Everything is upside down in this country, it is we, the young people of the deprived and poor regions, who have been the flame of the revolution. We are the ones who revolted for employment, development, dignity and freedom, but we have become poorer, without development projects, our infrastructure has deteriorated, unemployment is higher, and coastal regions and the rich are the beneficiaries [of the Revolution], they gave us a bonus, [namely] terrorism,”* said a 19-year-old man in Kasserine.

Anger against the persistence and violence of social exclusion and regional cleavages, coupled with exposure to radical preachers, are important factors in understanding the radicalization of young people. For some youngsters, there are only three options: to take the boat of death in the open sea (“harqua”, informal immigration), to join Da’esh or to dive into drug abuse. “Harqua” was frequently mentioned as the ultimate solution to escape and get rid of all problems they face in their country.

Joining extremist groups in response to this frustration is not perceived or experienced by youth as violence, but rather as a way to restore injustice and take revenge on the profoundly corrupt and rentier society who excluded and marginalized them. Violent extremists provide these young people with a new vocation by which, after being the victim of their society, they become the perpetrator.

3.1.7 Youth and Media: At Odds

Young people consulted identified different ways in which the media plays a role they evaluated as counter-productive and even harmful.

According to marginalized youth, the media are also perpetrators in their marginalization and exclusion. They propagate an incomplete and biased image of certain neighborhoods and interior regions. *“Our region has a beautiful natural landscape, why doesn’t the media broadcast it, and encourage people to visit our regions, instead of making a selection and only goes to Mount Chaambi or dirty streets.”* These representations reinforce the forms of injustice or discrimination

that youth experience, and drive deeper the despair associated with economic and human development challenges in the country's interior and southern regions.

Young men (25 years and under) in particular claim that they are subject to information distortions. *"Often they invent stories to create a buzz. Once they filmed me in a cafe and made me pass for a dangerous criminal."* They are caricatured with casualness and often contempt. Young people from highly populated, poor neighborhoods are barely ever invited on the media to testify about their social misery or to share success stories from their neighborhoods.

"When there are festivals, actions of citizenship, we invite the media but they never come to cover the actions. On the other hand, when it comes to a fight between two persons, they are the first to be on the scene. It does not suit them to promote good initiatives in the region." (19-year-old man, Bizerte)

For civil society activists, the media are still absent and lack collaboration. *"When there are festivals, actions of citizenship, we invite the media but they never come to cover the actions. On the other hand, when it comes to a fight between two persons, they are the first to be on the scene. It does not suit them to promote good initiatives in the region,"* said a 19-year-old man in Bizerte.

Other young people mentioned the harmful role played by media in disseminating scenes of violence, including gender-based violence. According to young men and women of 20 years and over, violence is strongly present in children's and adult programs. *"Some cartoons are very violent and violent acts are presented in a humorous way,"* said a 22-year-old woman of Ben Gardane. A 22-year-old man from Douar Hicher adds: *"violent characters in movies are very attractive, young people easily imitate them."* A 19-year-old boy in Bizerte confirmed: *"My friends tried to do the same scenario of robberies as in a movie, now they are in prison."* A 23-year-old female in Tunis said: *What make me nervous are programs that tolerate violence especially against women. They blame the female victims and ridicule their suffering."* The media was therefore seen as infusing and normalizing different types of violence into the already violent realities of the young people consulted.

3.1.8 Lack of Trust in State Institutions

"There is no political will to put Douar Hicher on the right track. No economic, social or even cultural initiatives. There are only announcements and false promises," claims a 21-year-old man of Douar Hicher.

Marginalized young men and women as well as those active in civil society emphasized the profound disconnect between the expectations of young people and the services provided by the State. The gulf between them widens as the State is perceived as incapable of guaranteeing anything else but superficial solutions while young people from marginalized regions refuse to abandon the slogans of the revolution and perceive social mobilization as legitimate to claim their most basic rights. Young women and men aged 30 and over deplore the lack of youth policy and programs to combat marginalization and unemployment. *"Nothing has changed. Old people, businessmen and politicians robbed us of our revolution. To get a job, you have to pay the corrupt."*

In Europe, an animal is better treated than we, it has a value and rights better than us. Politicians choke us with their speeches about freedom. But what freedom? Does this freedom nourish us, lodge us and provide us with a dignified life?” says an unemployed 30-year-old man from Kasserine.

3.1.9 What about the Situation of Young Women in Tunisia?

The young women consulted remind us that, despite the advances they have made in terms of their rights, women are still suffering from gender discrimination. The situation is still dominated by stereotypes and prejudices. Girls feel their every action is under a microscope and they feel imprisoned by societal norms. *“I cannot stay alone with my colleague [man] in the office, otherwise people will accuse us of indecent behavior,”* says a 26-year-old woman from Ben Gardane. Another 24-year-old girl adds: *“You can only breathe during periods of study, you choose universities that are far away [from home] to be able to feel free.”* The public sphere is defined by gender norms that reinforce male domination. *“When someone teases or harasses you in the street, you have no right to defend yourself, otherwise I become the culprit,”* says a 19-year-old girl in Kasserine. Many girls see domestic life as their only refuge, although they do not find safety there either, with domestic violence taking a heavy toll.

3.2 Factors Preventing and Encouraging Youth Involvement in Building Peace

Factors that prevent youth involvement in building peace are firstly a profound skepticism of the notion of peacebuilding. Other factors are linked to different spaces of engagement: local civil society organizations and initiatives, and programs implemented by international organizations. They include challenges in access (lack of information, poor outreach, lack of funds, restricted mobility and access to the public sphere, especially for young women), lack of trust for international organizations, and a general belief that their programs are ineffective and irrelevant.

3.2.1 Skepticism for the Notion of Peacebuilding

“But what are you talking about, Madame, have you not understood what we have just told you about our misery?”

“Peace is impossible, no one will let you live in peace, even the state, it does not suit them that we live in peace.”

The marginalized youth and those who joined the social movements showed no interest or value for the notion of peacebuilding. In response to this term, most laughed: *“But what are you talking about, Madame, have you not understood what we have just told you about our misery?”* They respond with irony that peace is impossible in Tunisia. *“Peace is impossible, no one will let you live in peace, even the state, it does not suit them that we live in peace.”* The first factor preventing youth participation in peacebuilding is therefore skepticism in this type of endeavor, as well as the awareness of a profound disconnect between this topic and the realities of young people. Activities that promote peace without addressing the real issues mentioned earlier (unemployment,

underdevelopment, poverty, cultural void, societal humiliation and exclusion, need for dignity and a sense of purpose) are therefore seen in vain, especially if performed without a profound change of the system. More work therefore needs to be done to align messages, initiatives and programs to resonate with young people's needs.

3.2.2 Difficulty in Accessing Peacebuilding Initiatives: Information and Outreach Issues

Young women and young men we consulted face multiple difficulties in accessing local peacebuilding and violence prevention programs and initiatives, with many having never participated in such initiatives. They first lack information and are unaware that these opportunities exist: *"How many associations are there in the Medenine region? Why do we never hear about their activities?"* As seen previously, media do not collaborate in disseminating the information on youth initiatives and opportunities for engagement, but civil society organizations and associations also face challenges in performing effective outreach. Some work within closed circles, while others may not know how to connect with those harder to reach. The majority of respondents are not aware of any work carried out by women's associations to combat violence in their society, and the work that is done receives limited visibility. *"The percentage of women's associations is 0.48%. What can we do?"* wonders a 19-year-old girl active in civil society in Kasserine.

3.2.3 Difficulty in Accessing Peacebuilding Initiatives: Mobility, Social and Gender Issues

When young people become aware of initiatives, other practical challenges such as transportation costs and living in remote areas limit their ability to access and participate in activities. In addition, young women, regardless of their age, face the problems of access to the public sphere. *"I want to participate in cultural activities, but my parents do not allow me, they are afraid that I will be raped,"* shares an 18-year-old woman from Douar Hicher. It is often socially unacceptable for young women to engage in voluntary organizations or service. *"When I joined the association, a lot of people tried to persuade my father to stop me,"* she adds. *"During the meetings, it's total oppression, you're young and moreover a girl, what can you possibly understand?"* says a 23-year-old girl from Tunis. Finally, peer pressure was also a challenge in engaging young people, especially those aged 15-19. *"When we wear our uniform, our friends laugh at us,"* admits a 19-year-old boy scout in Bizerte.

3.2.4 Lack of Confidence in International Institutions and Organizations

Lack of confidence in international institutions, associations and organizations, is another obstacle to youth participation and engagement in peacebuilding. According to them, these organizations are not interested in youth and have a double standard. They work according to their specific agendas and objectives. *"Why these organizations are not able to solve violence in their countries? Why are they interested to work with us?"* asks a 25-year-old male in Tunis. *"If they are effective, why they can not establish peace in their countries, why do they care about us?"* This lack of trust and confidence was more marked among young men than young women. Among young men, it is mostly those who are 25 years and older who have adopted this opinion.

According to the youngest at risk, actions by associations and international organizations are ineffective because they lack objectivity and do not target the right population. *"Associations have*

only one concern, how to spend their budget, they are not experts, they distribute flyers, take some pictures to publish on their Facebook page, and everything is finished,” claims a 21-year-old young man in Douar Hicher. Others see international NGOs only as a source of funding. As for young people from civil society, they argue that these structures do have an advantage given their in-depth experience and innovative ideas.

Despite the efforts of various NGO and international actors, their impact remains very limited. Several factors, whether at the individual, structural or even environmental level, influence the effectiveness of these interventions. Consolidating peace requires an ecological analysis of the context in which young people live. Programs must adopt more personalized approaches aligned with the real needs of young people, as different and diverse as these needs may be. The reality is harsh, but cannot be ignored: There is a tremendous gap between the good intentions of peacebuilding and development programs, and how these programs are perceived and received. What young people are telling international organizations, is that their approach is deficient, poorly framed and does not listen to real needs. These shortcomings, so thoroughly mastered by extremist groups, make them more advanced than any other actor in the mobilization of young people. A 24-year-old young man in Tunis puts it bluntly: *“Extremists work on a case by case logic.”*

3.3 Enhancing Young People’s Contribution and Leadership in Building Sustainable Peace

To enhance their participation, young people consulted must first and foremost want to be involved. For many, this highly depends on the effectiveness of the interventions proposed, how relevant and adapted they are to their needs and contexts, and whether they seek to address the main determinants that give rise to situations of conflict and violence in their lives. It also depends on how other actors engage in the issues that matter to them. In this regard, state involvement, political will and establishing a culture of dialogue with different groups and institutions (other youth, the media, the State, international organizations, psychosocial programs) was especially important. Involvement of young people in decision-making as well. Finally, young people cannot work to consolidate peace without first addressing critical issues raised throughout this research through development programs, the prevention and treatment of drug addiction, and prison reform.

3.3.1 The Need for Real Transformation

“The country needs a tsunami to clean it.” (19-year-old woman, Kasserine)

As seen in the previous section, some young people, especially those 25 years and older, were very pessimistic and did not see any solution to consolidate peace. For some, a new revolution, but this time a real one, is a necessity for young people to find their place, and start over. *“You have to destroy everything, pull out the roots and build new ones,”* says a 26-year-old man from Douar Hicher. *“The country needs a tsunami to clean it,”* adds a 19-year-old woman in Kasserine. Consolidating peace in the current system is perceived as extremely challenging. While young people suffer from exclusion, inclusion in an unjust and corrupt system is not the answer to their suffering. It seems that a critical first step to involve them in peacebuilding, means putting a genuine focus on what peace means to them: Some refer to social peace in terms of equality,

harmony, collaboration and acceptance of differences. Other young people, especially those who have a strong sense of suffering, have defined a lack of inner peace *“I live in conflict with myself.”* Minors have defined peace as an antonym to war and synonymous with fraternity and friendship.

The ideas and solutions put forward by young people as an alternative to preventing violence and consolidating peace were diverse. Marginalized young people want to be more involved in initiatives whose results are tangible and achieved in short terms, such as employment opportunities and engagement in meaningful activities where they feel valued. This is to address the causes of their marginalization and violence. Young civil society activists converge towards interventions whose impacts are observed in the medium and long term, such as behavioral change programs using dialogue and awareness-raising. They focus more on changes in mentality, culture and behavior.

3.3.2 Development Programs

According to consulted youth, actions such as improving infrastructure, combating poverty and corruption, combating unemployment and promoting the equitable sharing of resources are much needed. While these are not traditional peacebuilding interventions, youth consider they can have more positive repercussions on the dynamics of conflict and be more effective in preventing violence and building peace. Achieving sustainable peace is deeply connected to transforming the life of marginalization and poverty these young people have described. If those basic needs are not addressed, they feel participation in peacebuilding is less possible.

3.3.3 Prevention and Treatment of Drug Addiction

Programs focused on the health of young people and in particular the fight against drug addiction among young people proved to be a necessity for the consulted youth. One-off awareness-raising actions to prevent this phenomenon are deemed ineffective. There is an urgent need to create detoxification centers accessible in all regions and especially in interior regions.

3.3.4 Prison Reform

Imprisonment of young people is perceived as primarily detrimental rather than effective, leading young people to live in a spiral of recidivism. *“Prison is the school of violence and criminality, you are made to learn everything,”* says a 21-year-old man from Douar Hicher with several visits to prisons. *“After the end of summer, it’s the season to go back to prison. In winter, the number of offenders decreases. They plan their return to prison to spend the winter.”* Indeed, when young people have nothing to do and no financial resources, they purposefully commit criminal activity that results in a short prison sentence in order to pass the boredom of the winter. *“In prison, everything is free, you are nourished, you are lodged, you also consume, you do not have to worry about money,”* adds a 27-year-old man from Bizerte.

Young people offer as an effective alternative the obligation for prisoners to participate in professional training during their stay in prison. For those active in the voluntary sector, they consider that the imprisonment of young people could, for example, take the form of compulsory participation in voluntary work. This would therefore work towards limiting the spiral of violence and instead engage more young people in activities promoting civic participation, social welfare, inclusion, and violence prevention.

3.3.5 State Involvement and Political Will

Despite the division between Tunisian youth and the State, and regardless of the profile of the young people, their proposals converge on the fact that the establishment of a lasting peace depends largely on the will of political decision-makers. *“Peace depends solely on the absolute will of the State and its political leaders, ... to establish peace is simple, it is enough that the government presses the button ‘off’.”* In their own words, the State can either keep the system engaged as is (“pushing on”), letting violence spread, or “press off” and work to stop all forms of violence. The youth consulted expect a lot from the State; and for this reason they are often disillusioned. They come from marginalized regions and lack voice. They know that any action they and/or civil society organizations take are limited if the State does not show the political will to effect positive change, develop trust and involve them more meaningfully in decision-making. For them, it is difficult to engage in peacebuilding and violence prevention if they do not see positive engagement from the State.

3.3.6 Involvement of Young People in Decision-Making

“We have to find solutions to convince young people to take part in municipal elections, and our voices are the only whip that can change everything.” (22-year-old girl, Ben Gardane)

Civil society actors believe that it is the young people themselves who have missed their opportunity to change their situation. They mentioned that the resignation of young people in the elections was a fatal fault, for which they are paying the consequences. *“We have to find solutions to convince young people to take part in municipal elections, and our voices are the only whip that can change everything,”* said a 22-year-old girl in Ben Gardane.

To increase their ability to contribute to peacebuilding and violence prevention, the young activists recommend that young people be widely represented in municipal councils, in parliament and in political parties. They support the idea that administrative structures must be rejuvenated. *“Establishing a national youth council and regional councils which are chaired by young people of all categories to ensure decision-making prerogatives is an urgent necessity,”* said a 21-year-old woman from Ben Gardane.

3.3.7 Establish a Culture of Dialogue and Listening with Different Groups and Institutions

Initiatives centered on the notion of dialogue and communication to build relationships of trust are essential for the young people consulted. It appears in fact that without such meaningful dialogue, engaging them in peacebuilding may not be possible. While dialogue is an often-used term by different actors seeking to engage youth, knowing how to dialogue is not as frequent. Young people’s testimonials repeatedly reference the feeling of isolation and not being listened to, which drives them into further isolation, and annihilates any desire they may have of participating in projects associated with a national or international system that has excluded them.

Dialogue must happen with different institutions and different groups. Suggestions vary according to age, gender or experiences of the different young people.

According to those between the ages of 20-25 years, experts such as psychologists and social workers are the only ones able to dialogue with them. Psychosocial support is seen as a key way to fight the intergenerational transmission of violence and to encourage young people to get involved in violence prevention rather than adopting violent behaviors.

Breaking the barriers of exclusion was strongly indicated. *“You have to do as you are now doing with us, come to our quarters, where we live, and talk with us,”* says a 21-year-old man from Tunis. Young people also need to feel valued.

Young people active in civil society adhere to the idea that the culture of dialogue is the effective weapon to change the mentality of young people.

Finally, dialogue and collaboration with the media, the State, and international organizations is needed to address the multiple issues young people identified: share balanced and accurate content about young people, their realities and their initiatives; understand the real needs and real effects of development programs; restore trust in institutions.

Story of a young man of 21 years in Tunis:

I was a brilliant student, but I left school at the age of 17 because of the financial conditions of my family. I committed all kinds of violence: robbery, hold-ups, and brawls. I know by heart all the fissures of the prisons.

A friend invited me to attend an event in the neighborhood. At first I did not take it seriously. I went with my friends to make fun of the young people and disrupt the atmosphere as we do with "échella" [a group of friends]. We even took with us "zatla" [cannabis].

Since that day all my life has been transformed. The team of psychologists worked miracles with young people like us. They do not look disdainful. They spend all day with us, try to understand us, to talk with us, to engage us in activities.

With them, this is the first time I leave my neighborhood for a 7 day camp. Despite my background, they taught me to be a leader. Who can imagine, that I, I would one day be responsible for a group of small children during this stay.

I think my life has changed. I do not want to disappoint them.

3.3.8 Suggested Areas for Age-specific Programmatic Interventions Based on Priorities and Interests by Age group

The following table suggests possible areas of programmatic interventions that could be undertaken by different organizations based on the priorities and preferences expressed by

different age groups in the findings. While this table is not exhaustive and calls for further research and consultation with young people in designing and implementing these programs, it highlights different entry points for successfully engaging young people in programs and topics that are meaningful to them and address real needs.

Priorities and Interests, by Age Group	15-18	19-25	26-29	30-35
Address social exclusion and perception that youth are a problem (especially for young men)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Address institutional violence and exclusion, need for access to decision-making, dignity and employment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trust building with international institutions (especially for young men)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engage on the possibilities of peacebuilding	✓	✓	✓	✓
Address violence in the media			✓	✓
Improve media coverage of marginalized regions and marginalized youth (especially young men); address information distortion	✓	✓		
Need for psychosocial support, opportunities for positive identity development and expression, resisting peer pressure	✓			
Cultural, expressive and artistic practices, sports	✓			
Civic participation in cultural and political associations (especially for young women)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prevention and treatment of substance abuse (especially young men, but also young women)	✓	✓		
Bridge the gap between elite and non-elite youth		✓	✓	✓

Table 3: Suggested areas of age-specific programmatic interventions based on age group priorities and interests

4. Recommendations

4.1 Key Messages

Consolidating peace requires an ecological analysis of the context in which young people live. What strongly emerges from the data is that programs must adopt more personalized approaches aligned with the real needs of young people, as different and diverse as these needs may be. This

shift is needed to successfully mobilize young people and fill the gap that exists between the good intentions of peacebuilding and development programs, and how these programs are perceived, received and implemented.

The young people consulted had several recommendations on different topics. For each topic, we highlight recommendations by active youth and hard to reach youth. Those are often complementary and help to highlight what counts most in their perspective. The full list is available in the following section.

Some key messages that emerge from the data and the specific recommendations are:

State level:

- Address the disconnect between services provided by the State and the real needs of young people, including ensuring their right to employment, quality education, and safety. Increasing programs and policy that combat marginalization and aim to improve the standard of living of young people can improve young people's perception of State institutions and reduce the need to revolt to claim their rights. Examples include job creation, support in finding employment opportunities, improving socio-economic conditions and access to spaces for positive personal development.

Institutional level – multi-stakeholder approaches

Peacebuilding requires the establishment of a strong network and reform in the education, health, security, social and penitentiary sectors. While these recommendations concern national institutions, consultation, partnership and collaboration with different stakeholders (youth, media, non-governmental organizations, civil society) is key for successful reform.

- Education: Focusing on the intergenerational effect of violence and launching preventive programs on violence from early childhood on the basis of citizenship curricula.
- Health: Launch programs for the care of young victims of drug addiction.
- Penitentiary system: Initiate initiatives that aim to limit recidivism. Finding alternatives to prison sanction.
- Social: Implementing psychosocial care for marginalized young people.
- Security: Encourage community policing to improve the relationship between youth and police officers.

Non-governmental organizations (national and international):

- Increase capacity to mobilize and engage young people through relevant programming, including programming of cultural activities to address the cultural void of young people, their need for dignity and engaging in activities where they can express themselves and feel valued. This programming can be designed based on the age group tendencies and preferences observed in this report (why young people use violence; how they resist to violence; specific challenges they face and understand at different moments of their youth).
- Build trust with youth to ensure effective engagement of youth in peacebuilding activities and programs.

Gender-specific:

- Increase the access of young women to peacebuilding and community life by working to ensure the safety of young women in voluntary organizations, to share information and to organize dialogues with families to obtain their approval and trust.

4.2 Specific Recommendations by Hard to Reach and Active Youth

Topic / Level	Hard to reach youth	Active youth in CSO
Communication and dialogue	Respond to young people’s need to be listened to by experts (social workers, psychologists, educators, career specialists). Improve access to these services.	Strengthen the concept of dialogue as a tool of change of behavior and attitudes.
Type of change needed	The establishment of peace and the behavior change of young people is conditioned by the improvement of their socio-economic situation: create jobs, improve infrastructure, reduce poverty.	Work on personal change (at the internal level).
Programmatic:		
Relevance and availability of initiatives	Develop strategies to target and reach marginalized young people. Peacebuilding activities should be carried out in areas where young people live, to increase their access to and participation in such activities.	Conduct action research with young people to understand the root causes of youth’s use of violence and develop relevant solutions. Involve young people in identifying all stages of planning, in order to better understand the dynamics of their context and to plan well-targeted actions. It can also increase the chances that young people will want to be involved in the implementation of initiatives.
Scope of interventions	Conduct actions whose changes in the lives of young people are concrete and tangible in the short term.	Carry out actions whose impact is measurable in the medium term and longer term.

Youth engagement	Increase activities to promote the sense of youth and identity development, connection with community, and break cycles of violence and isolation.	Promote the participation of young people in elections. Promote participation of youth in youth councils.
Institutions		
Security sector	Prison reform: modify the terms of imprisonment to reduce recidivism.	Reform the security sector and promote the approach of community police and improved relationships between youth and security sector.
Media	<p>Work with media to improve coverage of marginalized regions. Address information distortion and provide more balanced media coverage (do not only focus on negative information, promote a positive image of youth even from marginalized and highly-populated neighborhoods/communities). Respect dignity of young people and their regions, seek to understand their perspectives and provide nuanced and sensitive coverage of the real issues that affect them.</p> <p>Reduce the amount of violent content in media (television programming, news coverage, etc.)</p>	<p>Implement capacity-building for media professionals in techniques for promoting programs to prevent violence and promote social cohesion.</p> <p>Increase collaboration between media and youth to raise awareness of youth-led initiatives and expand their reach.</p>
Legislation	Ensure the enforcement of laws, in particular the national law on terrorism and the law on violence against women. According to youth, the state is not harsh or	Revise new draft legislation that violate human rights and dignity - the draft law on economic and financial reconciliation ⁷

⁷ The draft law provides amnesty for public officials who are prosecuted for acts of financial misappropriation and damage to public finances or reconciliation for anyone who has benefited from acts of financial misappropriation and public finance. A group of youth launched the “Manich Msamah movement” (don’t forgive) aimed at the total withdrawal of the law. In addition to street demonstrations, the collective also launches petitions and campaigns to raise awareness and rally the population and political actors to its cause.

	decisive enough. Perpetrators must be convicted and punished.	- the repression of attacks against armed forces.
Education system	Develop and apply more personalized or customized approaches to education instead of providing students with a 'one-size-fits all' education (include socio-emotional learning, creativity, learner-centered approaches and develop critical thinking).	Reform of the education system: introduce and standardize citizenship education in curriculum and educational programs.

5. Summary and Conclusions

This research presents the experiences and insights of young hard to reach and active Tunisian women and men on issues of violence, peace and security. The young people consulted live in some of the most violence-affected regions of Tunisia, characterized by high rates of poverty and unemployment. Consultations sought to better understand how to develop policies, programs and solutions that are better suited to the real needs of young people most affected by violence – especially those whom national governments, the international community and other key actors have so far been unable to reach and engage successfully. While the findings and recommendations are closely linked to the Tunisian context, key lessons can be drawn for application and further reflection in the field of youth engagement, peace and security, in the Middle-East and globally.

What narratives are used by youth to describe, explain and justify the involvement of youth in violence and conflict in their communities?

Violence was found to be prevalent and omnipresent for all youth we consulted, described as an almost inescapable reality affecting them. For young people, it is difficult to see the way out. Their experience of violence also differed according to age and gender. Adolescents (15-19) and early youth (20-24) refer mostly to violence experienced in school, the family and the community. The older youth get, the deeper their experience and understanding of institutional and structural violence gets. Women live the added violence of the patriarchal system.

The use of violence was explained and justified as a form of expression and communication, as well as a way for action, or to find something to do. Different justifications were used, and varied according to age. Younger ones explain ceding to peer pressure and reacting to a social, cultural and identity vacuum. Older youth use violence to fight the boredom of an inactive life and to claim their rights and their need for dignity and feeling valued. While women used violence as well, society expects them not to, and they are more easily cast in the role of victims.

Do youth see other alternatives to violence itself? If so, what are they and what is missing or prevents them from exploring those non-violent alternatives?

Youth were found to respond and resist to violence through different means, using individual, psychological and socio-cultural resources. Psychological defense mechanisms, such as trivialization and humor, are mostly used by youth aged 25 and under. Young people under the age of 18 are deeply involved in social, cultural and artistic practices such as graffiti, music and sport. Other groups of young people, especially girls (25-29 years) prefer to engage in the civic and political sphere of associations. Imagination is also an alternative for others to flee from reality.

However, the general sense was that it is very challenging to explore non-violent alternatives. Non-violent options are limited, and many young people actually escape violence through other forms of violence: especially alcohol and drug abuse, but also self-harm, joining violent activities or violent extremist groups. Many elements that could support young people in successfully exploring non-violent alternatives alternatives, and to thus participate in violence prevention and the consolidation of peace, were found to be missing.

The Tunisian youth consulted have a deep sense that violence is done upon them: In their own words, no one listens to them, they are the object of the disdain of the elites, and have been abandoned to a life of poverty, unemployment, and isolation. They live in a cultural desert, with nothing to do, no goals to accomplish, and face loneliness and disconnection from their community. They are not the hope for the future, but a problem for which to find solutions. They describe being the victim of a “hugra” – societal humiliation – and an institutional humiliation, “tahnich”. Several actors and institutions exclude and marginalize them: the State, the media, the security sector, even the education system was seen as a space failing its mission. Other young people – who have succeeded or who belong to the elites – were not seen as allies. The young women and men claim they live a class conflict, indicative that Tunisian youth must be reunited around shared goals.

In this context, young people consulted showed a marked disinterest for peacebuilding activities, emphasizing that their problems are such that involvement is difficult, almost pointless. Multiple factors prevent their involvement in peacebuilding: First, skepticism of the notion of peacebuilding itself, and the sense that peace is not achievable in the current system. There is a profound disconnect between this topic and the realities of young people. Activities that promote peace without addressing the real issues (unemployment, underdevelopment, poverty, cultural void, societal humiliation and exclusion, need for dignity and a sense of purpose) are therefore seen in vain, especially if performed without the transformation of the system. More work therefore needs to be done to align messages, initiatives and programs to resonate with young people’s needs.

Other factors preventing their engagement include challenges in accessing the peacebuilding activities (lack of information, poor outreach, lack of funds, restricted mobility and access to the public sphere, especially for young women). Finally, young people showed a lack of trust for international organizations, and a general belief that their approach and programs are deficient, poorly framed and do not listen to their needs, highlighting the gap that exists between the good intentions of peacebuilding and development programs, and how these programs are perceived and received.

What would it take to engage youth and what suggestions are they developing in order to promote and strengthen effective and locally-based peacebuilding, social cohesion and violence prevention activities, initiatives and policy?

To enhance their participation, young people consulted must first and foremost want to be involved. For many, this highly depends on the effectiveness of the interventions proposed, how relevant and adapted they are to their needs and contexts, and whether they seek to address the main determinants that give rise to situations of conflict and violence in their lives. It also depends on how other actors engage in the issues that matter to them. In this regard, state involvement, political will and establishing a culture of dialogue with different groups and institutions (other youth, the media, the State, international organizations, psychosocial programs) was especially important. Involvement of young people in decision-making as well. Finally, young people cannot work to consolidate peace if critical issues raised throughout this research are not addressed: employment programs, the prevention and treatment of drug addiction, and prison reform. The State, as well as other development actors must address the disconnect that exists between their proposed interventions and the needs expressed by the young people consulted. For this, the recommendations put forward in this report are a useful guide. Suggested areas of age-specific programmatic interventions based on consulted youth's preferences and priorities are also presented in Table 3 of this report (section 3.3.8).

The way forward would be to develop more effective and relevant programs based on research and consultations with young people. There is also a need to address young people's isolation and loneliness. For this, bridging the relationship between vulnerable youth and their community, youth and other young people (especially elite youth), government and international organizations, is critical. Earning the confidence of young people to ensure their adherence is a fundamental basis for the success of peacebuilding initiatives. Indeed, all actors, state, civil society and international organizations must work to win the trust of young people to ensure their effective and efficient involvement.

6. Annexes

6.1 Locations Selected for the Study

The six localities (Bizerte, Ben Gardane/Medenine, Greater-Tunis (including Douar Hicher), Kasserine, Jendouba, and Siliana) selected for this research have experienced different forms of violence since the Revolution. Recent research⁸ also indicates that these areas are the most targeted by terrorists in view of their geographical and socio-economic character. More than a third of Tunisian foreign fighters originate from three of the selected areas: Ben Gardane (15.2%), Bizerte (10.7%), and Tunis (10.7%).⁹ Finally, they also face high rates of poverty, unemployment and marginalization.

Situated in northern Tunisia, **Bizerte** has been the site of several clashes between armed forces and extremist groups. Furthermore, in July 2015, the national guard discovered a terror cell in the city of Mateur-Bizerte which was engaged in recruiting violent extremists to travel to Libya, Syria and Iraq. Bizerte is one of the top three source cities of Tunisian foreign fighters.¹⁰

Ben Gardane/Medenine, situated in the south of Tunisia on the Libyan border, is known for its large informal economy, contraband and smuggling (i.e. petroleum, weapons). Ben Gardane is also the location of Ras Jedir, one of the two Tunisian gates to Libya. Ben Gardane is the top source of Tunisian foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq. It has been the site of continuous confrontations between authorities and citizens due to little government investments as well as clashes over the opening/closure of Ras Jedir, whose crossing into Libya provides a source of income for many local residents.

Douar Hicher, a suburb of Tunis, is a town located in the governorate of Mannouba/Greater Tunis. Since 2011 it has been characterized by social tensions, clashes between violent extremist groups and the armed forces. Indeed, the capital outskirts have exported 10.7% of the Tunisian fighters who joined the Islamic State (IS) in Syria. As a destination for migrants from the interior regions, it reflects the country's socio-economic dynamics.

Kasserine is situated in central-western Tunisia at the border with Algeria. Kasserine was the second city after Sidi Bouzid to back the revolution in December 2010 calling for jobs, freedom, and social justice. The city is known for the large informal economy, smuggling goods from nearby Algeria. Nearby Mount Chaambi has become a hideout for members of violent extremist groups since the revolution.

The region of Jendouba, located in the northwest of the country, is characterized by its forest density and its borders with Algeria. The security sector considers this area to be more dangerous than Mount Chaambi, given the density of forests that allows violent extremists to move into

⁸ Search for Common Ground Tunisia. (2016). Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities.

⁹ The Soufan Group. (2015, December 4). Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. Retrieved from:

http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf

¹⁰http://www.shemsfm.net/fr/actualites_tunisie-news_news-nationales/115818/coups-de-feu-a-bizerte-le-terroriste-khaled-saidani-abattu-115818

inaccessible places and makes their movement difficult to locate. Since the Revolution, several cells have been discovered in its forests. They are dormant cells whose mission is to supply arms and ammunition and ensure logistics.

The region of **Siliana** is situated in the northwestern region of Tunisia. The unemployment rate (19%) surpasses the national average (15%).¹¹ This is also the case for the rate of poverty (27,8%, compared to the national average of 15,2%).¹² The governorate of Siliana has been the site of several clashes between armed forces and extremist groups linked to AQIM, including an armed confrontation between the police and an armed group that caused the death of 6 police officers in Rouhia in 2011.¹³ The city of El Krib hosted local jihadist cells in October 2014, which led the Tunisian Army to launch a counter-terrorism round up that resulted in the arrest of eight suspects found in possession of explosive devices with electronic detonators.¹⁴

¹¹ Statistiques Tunisie. Census of Population and Housing 2014. Retrieved from: <http://regions.ins.tn/>

¹² Statistiques Tunisie. Flash consommation et niveau de vie 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.ins.nat.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/Bulletin%20-cons-2016-fr2-2.pdf>

¹³<http://www.kapitalis.com/62-fokus/national/3977-tunisie-affrontements-a-rouhia-avec-un-groupe-de-terroristes-.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.kapitalis.com/societe/25453-demantelement-d-une-cellule-terroriste-a-el-krib.html>

6.2 Data Collection Tools: FGD and KII questionnaires

Guiding questions for the FGD among hard to reach youth

Part 1: general understanding of key terms of violence, conflict, peace,...

What does it mean to be a youth? Do other people you know see you as a youth?

What is your understanding of conflict, peace, and violence?

Part 2: What are the main peace and security challenges that you face and how do these impact your life (locally, nationally, regionally or globally)?

- Can you share examples of violence in your community?

- In your understanding how does violence/ insecurity impact the youth in your community, including yourself? What forms of violence has the most impact? Are different youth impacted differently? If yes, why?

- Is violence ever acceptable? If so, how and why? (Encourage participants to keep the local and Tunisian context in mind.)

- Why do you think some young people use violence?
- In what situation would you/have you considered to use violence?

- Given the context you described, are there alternatives to violence? If so, what are they and do you feel you and/or other youth have all you need to be able to explore these alternatives? What is missing or preventing you to do so?

- When you encounter a conflict situation, are you able to resolve the problem? How?

- What do you need to feel safe in your community? Who can you rely on in dealing with violence and insecurity problems? Is there any persons or institutions you can trust? Who do you believe “has your back”?

- How can young people be prevented from engaging in violence? What actions do they need to be prevented from engaging in violence? What works and what doesn't work?

Part 3: What factors prevent or inhibit your involvement in building peace and contributing to security? And what factors could promote and support your active involvement in building peace, preventing violence and contributing to positive social cohesion in your community, society and institutions?

- Do you think youth are able to participate in peacebuilding and prevention of violence in your community? Explain.

What could prevent them to not doing so?

What do they need to be able to do so?

What are untapped opportunities for youth to contribute to peace?

- What would it take for you to engage in violence prevention and peacebuilding activities?—(What would you consider as an effective way/mechanism to encourage and more implicate youth in prevention of violence and peacebuilding activities? What is needed to bridge difference and division?)

- What kind of support youth need to be involved in peacebuilding activities?

From which part/institution/groups should this support come?

Do you think that support should be different according to youth profile (gender, residence, culture...)?

- Do you feel that you are trusted and respected enough to have your voice heard in building peace and preventing violence in your community and in your country? if not, why?

- Are there any policies, rules, conditions or other behaviors that encourage or discourage the youth in the process of peacebuilding and conflict management?

- How do the youth currently engage with stakeholders towards fostering peacebuilding? Are different groups working together and can you provide examples of stakeholders?

Part 4: What are the peacebuilding and violence prevention activities, initiatives and projects being undertaken by you and/or your organization (or other organizations you know)? What is the impact of this work?

- What do you think constitutes peacebuilding?

- What peacebuilding initiatives are you aware of? What can you tell me of the efforts and initiatives put in place by individuals, government and/or organizations around issues of peace, security and violence prevention in Tunisia?

- Have you ever participated in or been exposed to one? (Why/Why not)
- How do youth contribute to a peaceful environment? Are there some initiatives that are led or implemented by young people? (Probe for what they have seen or heard of, and whether they consider this is working or not)
- In your community is there any work done by young women in peacebuilding process or preventing violence?

- Can you tell us about any initiatives that are interesting to you in the way they address violence and promote peace?

- Explain why you think they are successful, helpful or innovative, and if how you think they can make a difference.
- Are they led by young men/young women?

Part 5: What would help enhance your contribution and leadership in building sustainable peace and preventing violence? Do you have particular views on how your government, State Institution, civil society organizations, media or the international community, could help to support you?

- What kind of activities can you suggest that would help you to prevent violence and promote social cohesion and safety? Can you tell us the three most important thing that need to be done in your context in order to help youth prevent violence and contribute to peacebuilding?
- What do you expect your local authority to do to help you promote peacebuilding and prevent violence?
- What do you expect civil society to do to help you promote peacebuilding and prevent violence?
- What do you expect the international community to do to support youth's peacebuilding work?

Guiding questions for the KII

- How does your organization contribute to peacebuilding and preventing violence? can you describe your way of work to deal with? What are the interesting and innovative ways you are working? What is considered as successful work in peacebuilding and preventing violence?
 - How does your approach to peacebuilding differ from adults?¹⁵
 - What does preventing violence look like in your community? It differ based on the type of violence ?. How do your activities contribute to prevent violence? Please give concrete examples
 - How do you mobilize other young people to become involved in peacebuilding? How do you bridge difference and division? How do you prevent your friends or community members from engaging in violence? What strategies are used to promote diversity and the inclusiveness of other groups in your community?
 - Did you consider that your contribution to peacebuilding are recognized by adults in your community? by other youth? by local or national government? can explain?
 - What are the measures undertaken by your organization to monitor and evaluate the impact of your activities in peacebuilding?
 - Is there any rules and conditions to enforce the youth in the process of peacebuilding and conflict management
 - What kind of support youth need to be involved in peacebuilding activities? From which part/institution/groups should this support come? Did you think that support can be different according to youth profile (gender, residence, culture,...)
 - Do you think youth are able to participate in peacebuilding and prevention of violence in your community? explain. What could prevent them to not doing so? What do they need to be able to do so?
 - What actions did you undertake to prevent your friends or fellow community members from engaging in violence?
- What would help enhance your contribution and leadership in building sustainable peace and preventing violence?
- What do you expect from your local authority to do to promote peacebuilding and prevent violence?
 - What do you expect from the international community to support your peacebuilding work?

¹⁵ Only when interviewing non-youth stakeholders.