

Disclaimer:

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Search for Common Ground and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union'.



Search for Common Ground, Policy Brief

Youth Participation in Peace and Security Processes in Kenya's Coast Region

Contents

1. Introduction and Summary.....	2
2. Youth, Peace and Security.....	4
i. Global Trends	
ii. Youth, Peace and Security in Africa	
iii. Youth, Peace and Security in Kenya	
iv. Shifting Paradigms: The role of youth in achieving peace and security	
v. Why explore youth participation in peace and security processes	
3. How Search for Common Ground have engaged youth in peace and security processes through Inuka Project.....	9
4. Discussion on the case for youth participation.....	14
5. Key challenges for youth participation.....	16
6. How to achieve meaningful youth participation in peace and security processes	19
7. Three-lens approach to youth participation.....	19
8. Bottom-up approach to peace and security.....	20
9. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations.....	21

Annex 1: Roles of stakeholders in promoting national cohesion and integration

Annex 2: County Policy Briefs

1. Introduction and Summary



This policy brief highlights youth efforts and the importance of their participation in peace and security processes in the coast region of Kenya. In doing so, it discusses some of the challenges facing youth in peace and security efforts, and raises policy recommendations to facilitate understanding of how youth could be better engaged in these processes in Kenya's coast region and beyond. Most importantly, the policy brief proposes infrastructure for enhancing youth participation in peace and security, while taking into account the unique contexts and institutional mechanisms present in the coast region.

The policy brief is based on Search for Common Ground's *Inuka* project, interactions with diverse civil society organisations (CSOs), youth-led organizations, youth peace and security activists, youth leaders and influencers, elected political leaders and policy analysts among others. The brief is aimed at broadening the discussion on 'inclusivity' and increasing understanding on the importance of youth participation in peace and security in Kenya's coast region.

Over the years, youth in the coast region have played key roles in peace and security processes as well as in fostering inter-communal harmony and development. Meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security processes in the coast region is currently insufficient and unstructured, while opportunities for participation remain inadequate. Many young people report that the public or those in positions of power often ignore their participation in peace and security processes.

Steps can be taken to ensure that the design and implementation of local, county and national level peace and security processes facilitate youth participation and provide a space for youth to voice their hopes and concerns. How the youth are socialized and engaged in peace and security processes will shape their perceptions, support, participation and ownership. It is therefore important to recognize the needs of young people, and the influence they have on the trajectory of the region, as a critical component for sustainable peace and security.

Article 260 of Kenya's Constitution defines a youth as a person aged between eighteen (18) years and thirty-four (34) years. The United Nations defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Under the African Youth Charter, a youth is a person between 15 and 35 years. The definition of youth is gendered and emphasizes a dichotomized classification of youth as either male or female. While age is important, it is important to recognize that young people are not a homogenous group with regard to transitory opportunities and socio-economic and cultural dynamics in society.

Assessments indicate that youth are frequently excluded, marginalized and 'othered' in peace and security discussions. This is risky because youth have a significant role in advancing peace and security goals. The positioning of youth in society has a bearing on their leadership potential and their role in promoting peace and security. Young people are often energetic, active and involved in many activities at different levels, making them potentially helpful partners in promoting stability. However, some of them are used as



tools in perpetuating conflict. Involving young people in peace and security processes may turn this group from having a negative impact on the situation to a positive.

Notably, many young people have been working on peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives at a small level and they have proven themselves. If they are given a chance to engage with peace building on a larger scale, there's no telling of the magnitude of the impact. In addition to coming up with policies and laws, there is a need to effectively involve youth in finding solutions to peace and security challenges. This would mean involving youth in peace and security processes and creating conflict monitoring mechanisms where youth have a role.

Opening decision-making to youth is not doing them a favor, but is instead doing the society a favor. Young people are central to the nexus of peace, security, development and human rights. Their participation is critical for the achievement of sustainable peace, security and development. It is also vital for the promotion of human rights, and wider peace and security agendas. Adequate measures should be taken to enable young people to play their essential role in this effort.

Indeed, participation and effective involvement of youth in peace building and security processes can bolster the efforts. While involvement of security agencies is vital to end some conflict, prevention of conflict cannot be left to security forces alone. To achieve sustainable peace and security, there is a need for effective engagement of the public and especially the youth. In this regard, it is critical that efforts for peace and security must reflect a fundamental understanding that young people are powerful agents of change.

2. Youth, Peace and Security

i. Global Trends

46% of the world's population is under twenty-five. There are about 1.8 billion youth in the world, the highest proportion of young people being in Africa and the Middle East. The active engagement of youth in peace, security and development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies. This will also be crucial to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration. These issues are inextricably linked, and young people are essential to the establishment of any sustainable solution to them.

In 2015, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2250¹ that discusses and recognizes the critical positive role of youth in peace and security. The resolution

¹ UN Security Council, Security Council **resolution 2250** (2015) [on youth, peace and security], 18 March 2016, S/RES/2250 (2015)



reinforces the need for active participation and engagement of youth in peace initiatives and formulation of inclusive policies towards achieving sustainable peace. Resolution 2250 is the first resolution fully dedicated to the important role youth play in the promotion of peace and security. The resolution recognizes the role of young people in security processes integrated into five pillars namely; Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership, Disengagement and Reintegration.

The five pillars of United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2250				
Participation	Protection	Prevention	Partnership	Disengagement and Reintegration
Role of young people in peace and security processes				

Additionally, in 2016, in order to recommend effective responses at the local, national, regional and international levels, then UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon commissioned an independent study on Youth, Peace and Security - the potential of young people to advance peace. "The Missing Peace"² is considered a blueprint for implementing Resolution 2250 and proposed ways of supporting youth-led peace-building processes. The report offers insights on inclusive approaches that can be used to engage youth in peace and security. Most importantly, it calls for recognizing youth as an indispensable asset and a partner in building lasting peace in societies, and not a challenge or a problem.

In 2018, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2419³ on Youth, Peace and Security, which recognizes young people and youth organisations as important actors in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and building sustainable peace. The resolution calls on countries to respect, promote and protect human rights of young people and in particular, the right to education and the right to participation in decision making for all young people.

² United Nations, **The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security** (A/72/761-S/2018/86)

³ United Nations Security Council **resolution 2419** (Maintenance of international peace and security), June 2018, S/RES/2419 (2018)

In 2020, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2535⁴ that urges relevant actors to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements. The resolution calls for young people's meaningful participation in peace and security efforts, including in mediation, monitoring and implementation of ceasefires, and peace agreement negotiations.

The UNSC resolution encourages Member States to support and integrate youth into decision-making processes, recognize their unique role in strengthening the national, local and community-based capacities in conflict and post-conflict situations to prepare for and respond to increasingly frequent, severe weather events and natural hazards, as well as public health challenges that affect young people's life and their future, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the resolution encourages the Peacebuilding Commission to continue to support the important role that young people play and the participation and views of youth-led organizations in planning and stabilization efforts in peacebuilding.

The UNSC has continued to call on Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations system, including peacekeeping and special political missions, to coordinate and increase their engagement in the implementation of Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). It is also important that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on women peace and security that was passed in 2000, and specifically addresses how women (including young women and girls) are differently impacted by conflict. UNSCR 1325 recognizes the critical role that women and girls can and already play in peace-building efforts. Resolution 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

These important steps place youth and women firmly on the peace and security agenda, recognizing the role of youth in peace building and advocates for direct youth involvement in peace processes. Member states, including Kenya, are obligated to implement decisions of the Security Council, hence they have a direct obligation to implement these resolutions. The fact that governments are stepping up projects involving young peacebuilders acknowledges the role that youth needs to play in building and sustaining peace.

There are countless numbers of youth and youth organizations that want to promote peace and security. Yet in many countries, these young people lack the influence, capacity and funds they need to operate effectively. With the right support, youth can build peace, foster reconciliation, enhance security and achieve democratic governance and

⁴ United Nations Security Council **resolution 2535** (Maintenance of international peace and security) July 2020, S/RES/2535(2020)



development. There is a need to listen to youth, engage and empower them and unleash their potential for peace and progress.

ii. **Youth, Peace and Security in Africa**

Sub-Saharan Africa's population is becoming more youthful. Almost 420 million people aged between 15 and 35 years and 60% of Africa's population, 750 million people, are under the age of 25. This makes Africa's population the youngest in the world and it continues to grow rapidly. By 2030, young Africans are expected to make up 42% of the world's youth and account for 75% of those under age 35 in Africa.⁵

With 60% of Africa's population under 25 years of age and recruitment efforts by extremist groups focused mainly on youth, it is critical to address the reasons that drive young people toward violent extremism. It is also important to ensure that youth themselves are at the forefront of some of the initiatives to promote peace and security.

The African Union (AU) recognizes the important roles and contributions of the continent's youth in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the continent within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020, and Aspirations number 4 of Agenda 2063⁶ – a peaceful and secure Africa, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020).

In 2020, the AU adopted the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and underscored the necessity of implementation across five overarching priority areas. These areas were: (1) participation; (2) protection; (3) partnership; (4) coordination; and (5) disengagement and reintegration that aligns with Articles 11 and 17 of the Africa Youth Charter.⁷ The Framework recognizes the important role of youth in promoting peace and security in Africa, as well as UNSC Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535. The AU Commission is in the process of implementing the 10 years Implementation Plan for the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) 2020-2029, and a study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa.

Additionally, the AU has underlined the importance of Member States mainstreaming and enhancing youth participation in all stages of peace processes and in national

⁵ African Union (AU), AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth, December 2018, accessed at <https://wcaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/AU%202017%20DD%20ROADMAP%20Final%20-%20EN.pdf>.

⁶ African Union Commission (AUC), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, 01 Background Note (Addis Ababa: AUC, 2015), accessed at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf.

⁷ AU, "African Youth Charter: Status List," accessed at <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>.

development at all levels. It has also encouraged Member States to domesticate and implement the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security including the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) in line with national youth policies and national development plans with a view to address all challenges and to ensure effective youth participation in the promotion of peace and security on the continent. In the same context, the AU emphasizes the need for Member States, working in close collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs) and relevant youth organizations, to redouble their efforts in mobilizing the financial resources required for the effective implementation of youth-led projects in peace, security and stability in Africa.

The continental body also emphasizes the need for making concerted efforts to involve the youth in peace and security, and to recognise the youth as an instrument for Silencing the Guns agenda, and view them as key agents for socio-economic change and sustainable development in Africa. It underlines the necessity of financial and technical support to youth-led interventions including dialogues and developmental projects aimed at addressing the structural and proximate causes of violence in Africa.

Most importantly, the AU has emphasized the significance for the Member States to create a favorable environment through youth-aligned policies in order to promote empowerment of the youth in the fields of employment, entrepreneurship, education and engagement of the youth, including vocational training. The continental body encourages Member States to review their respective academic curriculum to mainstream peace education.

iii. **Youth Peace and Security in Kenya**

Kenya is a youthful nation with early 80% of the country's population aged 35 years or below and a median age of 19 years. Two-thirds of Kenya's population being under the age of 30 can be a challenge or a great opportunity depending on the actions governments and the youths take. It should go without saying that the youth are Kenya and cannot be left behind. Moreover, it depends on how we look at the large youth population; is it a glass half full or half empty. We should not look at the number of young people as a challenge or a problem to be managed. The fact is that a large number of young people makeup the country means that Kenya has immense potential and a diverse population that have unique ideas as they come from different backgrounds and cultures.

Since promulgation of the Constitution in August 2010, Kenya introduced initiatives and reforms that were aimed at consolidating democratic processes and obtaining an accountable, inclusive and participatory democracy. Promotion of sustainable peace and security is enshrined in the constitution and Kenya's economic blueprint, Vision 2030. Youth development is anchored in the constitution, for example, the 2010 Constitution under Article 55 provides that the state shall take measures, including affirmative action, to ensure that the youth have access to relevant education and training; are accorded an



opportunity to be represented and participate in political, social and other spheres of life; have access to employment and are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation. In order to realize the aspirations envisioned under the Constitution, the state is supposed to create an enabling environment and formulate effective policies that will support the implementation and sustainability of youth initiatives.

In 2016, the Government initiated the review process of the Kenya National Youth Policy to align it to the 2010 constitution and factor in new and emerging youth challenges and opportunities. The country would eventually create the Kenya Youth Development Policy, setting off the journey of its implementation to transform the lives of our young people for generations to come. The policy forms a credible guide and reference tool for effective development and implementation of youth empowerment in Kenya, in line with the Constitution and development goals at the county, national and international levels.

The policy is an expression of the collective commitment of concerned stakeholders to harness and optimise the immense strength and potential that the youth in Kenya possess. The framework offers clear mechanisms for implementation and coordination at the national, county and sub-county levels, as well as connecting to youth at the grassroots level which has been missing in previous initiatives.

The Kenya Youth Development Policy has key provisions on youth peace and security. The policy recognizes that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people. It also seeks to treat the youth as stakeholders and decision makers in these processes.

Supporting the inclusion of youth as specific stakeholders in community driven security and peace building initiatives is vital as they are both largely affected by conflict and instrumental to peace building. As such a large proportion of the community, the youth are often the main causes and victims of crime and conflict. So, their involvement in this initiative reduces their susceptibility and exposure to such occurrences. The youth form an integral part of society and are well suited in taking up the lead role in matters that affect them the most. This is especially true since it gives them a greater sense of responsibility and inclusion. It is important to recognize and include the role of youth-led organizations in promoting a culture of peace. This notion is also tied to UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, stability and human rights.

Countries like Kenya face complex and long standing conflicts, and many of the solutions that have been tried have not worked as expected. There is everything to gain by including young people who bring new ideas to peace building processes. The country should continue looking to youth for creative ways to solve conflicts and promote lasting peace. Participation of the youth in governmental affairs has been abysmal in many African countries, including Kenya. However, through numerous self-initiated programmes, young people have played a critical role in promoting peace and security. As a member of the



UN, Kenya should carry out and implement Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), 2535 (2020) and 1325 (2000). Kenya should use its recently acquired non-permanent UNSC membership to prioritise implementation of the three resolutions on youth.

iv. Shifting Paradigms: The role of youth in achieving peace and security

Today's generation of young people is a major force for social, economic and demographic change, so their meaningful participation is fundamental to achieving a just and peaceful world. Youth involvement in peace and security efforts leads to effective policy responses to the threats. Across the world young people are rolling up their sleeves, introducing innovation, serving the needs of affected populations, and building hope, resilience and social cohesion in their communities and nations. Young people across all regions are substantially contributing to the discussions on key peace and security issues, as well as achieving real progress for the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

For example, through the *Inuka* Project in Kenya, young people have been involved in peace and security initiatives. The project has provided leadership training and put young people front and centre on the peace and security agenda. The project is a turning point in the way youth are engaged in peace and security issues in the coastal region, Kenya's other counties and beyond. The project seeks to ensure that county governments in the coast region create a productive environment for young people to be actively engaged, to influence important decisions, and to meaningfully participate in peace and security processes in the region.

This project gives a platform and a voice to the youth. Furthermore, the project provides the evidence needed to foster strategies and policies that would increase youth participation in peace and security interventions. Ultimately, sustainable peace, security and development can only be achieved through prioritization of youth voices, agency, participation and leadership. A focus on youth as change agents and not risks must also be promoted. Until the problem of young people's exclusion is addressed, it will be hard to achieve peace and security. So, the priority has to be understanding what young people mean by meaningful participation and inclusion.

It is important to encourage, promote and institutionalize the meaningful participation of young people in matters of peace and security. The role of young people as meaningful stakeholders in building peace must be recognized and promoted. Equally important, youth participation should be diverse, inclusive, democratic, meaningful, timely and trusted. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding must include diverse perspectives and involve youth from all backgrounds, including young women and young persons with disabilities.

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



8	Citizen control	Degrees of citizen power
7	Delegated power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degrees of tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Non-participation
1	Manipulation	

v. **Why explore youth participation in peace and security processes**

- ❖ Youth represent fresh ideas, energy, creativity and innovation and should be beacons of hope that can support the community at all times.
- ❖ The younger generation's fresh ideas, vibrant participation and new leadership can help to bring new awakening in peace and security processes.
- ❖ Youth have a sound understanding of problems in their communities and have the capacity and expertise to contribute to their community's wellbeing.
- ❖ Youth are committed to peace and are champions for development and change in communities and societies.
- ❖ Across the world there are great examples of achievements of exemplary youth that represents the very best of what happens when young people are engaged.
- ❖ Youth use informal channels and platforms, such as social media, to organize and share information about development activities they are involved in.
- ❖ Youth face many issues, but these issues go unheard. Youth would better understand other young people. To understand youth, one needs to involve the youth.
- ❖ You are not *future* leaders but capable of being leaders today. Leadership should not be considered as a factor of age and providing appropriate contexts would enable young people to flourish as leaders today.
- ❖ Young people have extremely strong values of tolerance and social cohesion and aspire to a life of dignity for all.
- ❖ Demographic realities especially in Africa indicate that youth hold an enormous potential for change and positive action.

3. **How Search for Common Ground has engaged in security and peace processes during the *Inuka* Project**

Through the Search for Common Ground's *Inuka* project in Kenya, many young people have come up with innovative ways to resolve unique problems in their communities. They have prevented conflict, reconstructed and restored social fabric and pursued socio-economic transformation. Youth have drawn from their fresh ideas and talent, as well as the experience of adults for innovative and new approaches in dealing with numerous

peace and security related problems, including exclusion, marginalization, inequality, injustices and poverty, among others. They have reached out to different partners to help them achieve peace and security in their areas - they have made great efforts to prevent conflict, with interventions focusing on resolving social, political and economic grievances.

The *Inuka* project aims to empower youth and counter violent extremism. The project seeks to build trust and collaboration between key community, government, and security leaders while developing a community-led approach to security issues in coastal Kenya. In particular, the project supports vulnerable youth to participate in community peace and security efforts in coastal Kenya.

Objectives of the project include:

- Increase effectiveness and inclusiveness of community peace and security efforts involving vulnerable and marginalized youth in coastal Kenya.
- Strengthen capacity of and coordination among community-based youth groups to be more effective in peace and security efforts in their communities.
- Increase target communities' awareness of the potential of at risk youth to positively contribute to peace and security.
- Create opportunities for at risk youth to engage with peers and with local leadership in support of community peace and security efforts.

Search for Common Ground works to transform the way the world deals with conflict, turning away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. The organisation works with local partners to find culturally appropriate means to strengthen societies' capacity to constructively deal with conflict and to understand differences while acting on the commonalities. Search for Common Ground seeks to change the everyday interactions between groups of people in conflict, so they can work together to build up their community, choosing joint problem solving over violence.

In the *Inuka* Project, Search for Common Ground is working in partnership with Kenya co-applicants Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Humanity Action Knowledge Integrity in Africa (HAKI Africa) and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) to implement a comprehensive youth focused community peacebuilding action across the Coastal region of Kenya. The organization is convinced that if at risk youth have skills to engage with one another and with community leaders, then the youth relationships with security actors will be stronger. This will allow security actors to better identify and address the root causes of violent extremism.

In this project, Search for Common Ground has worked with young people in four counties of coastal Kenya, Kilifi, Mombasa, Kwale and Lamu, with an aim of enhancing their understanding and building their capacities to champion for peace and security. The project has brought out and emphasized the crucial role of young people in preventing



violence, responding to violence, rebuilding peace, and informed contributions to the security and stability of counties and Kenya at large.

Search for Common Ground has continued to champion full and meaningful participation and inclusion of young people by supporting youth networks and organizations with their work on peace and security, strengthening capacities of youth organizations, advocating for young people to be fully engaged, facilitating young people's participation in peace and security processes, strengthening youth voices and action in peace and security initiatives, and opposing the false narrative that youth are the problem. Search for Common Ground believes that youth are leaders of today, and that young people need and deserve a seat at the table. The organization understands that youth hold enormous potential for change and positive action, and that they are a unique resource that can develop innovative solutions for peace and development. This notion, that youth are key in peace and security processes, applies not only to the coast region but to the country and the entire world. Youth don't only play an important role as peace-builders, but they can also be key actors in preventing and countering radicalization of their peers.

As a result of the project, young people are leading important changes in the peace and security context of Kenya's coastal region. The energetic participation of young people in the project has made clear that young people do not simply represent the future, they represent the present. They are showing leadership today. They are not a problem to be solved, but are instead actively a part of the solution. There are many lessons learned from the project, an initiative that has enabled the formation of a unique and vibrant Caucus for Youth, Peace and Security issues in the coast region of Kenya.

4. Discussion on the case for youth participation

Youth are an integral part of the society and it is important to give them a sense of responsibility and belonging by ensuring that they take a lead role in matters that most affect them. Youth-led and youth-based peace-building organisations should therefore be included in promoting a culture of peace and security, by contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, on peace, stability and human rights.

Kenya faces complex and long standing conflicts. However, many proposed solutions to these have been tried and they have not worked in the way they were intended. Through the *Inuka* project, however, young Kenyans in the coastal region have come up with innovative ways to prevent conflict in their communities, reconstruct and restore social fabric, and to heal and pursue socioeconomic transformation. The project has enabled young people, drawing on both their fresh ideas as well as the experience of adults, to propose innovative and unique approaches to dealing with numerous peace and security related problems, including exclusion, marginalisation, inequality and poverty, among others.



Through this and other innovations, young people are helping to accelerate peace and security in the coastal region, and hopefully they might soon be replicated elsewhere in the country and beyond. An important factor is that these initiatives are youth-led and they have created mutually beneficial partnerships. Efforts at achieving sustainable peace, security and development must have youth at the centre of all the plans and processes. Initiatives must be smarter, more innovative and youth-driven to achieve peace and security objectives.

The large youth population means that young people are Kenya and cannot be left behind. Equally important, youth represent energy and creativity that any society requires to move forward. Youth should be seen as an opportunity and not a challenge. Even the drafters of Kenya's Constitution were cognizant of this fact and realized the urgent need to bring youth on board by creating room to enact laws that create opportunities for them. Article 55 of the Constitution obliges the State to take appropriate measures to ensure socio-economic development and participation of youth. The article gives Kenyan youth a new claim since, for example, youth participation, programs and projects are now inalienable rights.

Across Kenya, there are young people who are stepping forward to provide solutions to some of the daunting challenges some of which seem to be unsolvable. The question then becomes: what are the ways in which one can create pathways for youth to effectively participate and even take up more leadership roles. Are there ways to knock down some of the barriers that discourage young people about engagement in public processes including peacebuilding and security? If there are, how can the barriers be knocked down and spaces for participation expanded and maximized. There are three spaces for participation: (a) invited spaces; (b) closed spaces; and (c) claimed space.

- a. **Invited space** comprises situations in which people are welcomed to contribute or participate in decision-making.
- b. **Closed spaces** include those to which they are not invited to participate. They are locked out.
- c. **Claimed spaces** include those that they have acquired as a right through their own struggles. These are the spaces they have created by demanding the right to participate in them.

Spaces for Participation



Invited space	Who decides on which projects to be carried out ▪ National government ▪ County government ▪ Politicians ▪ NGOs ▪ Influential personalities Why are stakeholders invited? ▪ Constitutional requirement ▪ The feel nice effect of politicians when leading people ▪ Rubber stamping How decision making has changed in the last three years ▪ More forums for participation ▪ People are aware of their rights ▪ More development projects ▪ Accountability has improved
Closed space	Participants invited to such forums ▪ Those in good books ▪ Committee members ▪ Initiators come with readymade programs hence blocking participation ▪ Trouble makers are not invited Why are they invited? ▪ To rubber stamp ▪ To make a quorum
Claimed space	Are there spaces that citizens have acquired on their own for making decisions? ▪ Community meetings where they build consensus on issues affecting them ▪ Advocacy spaces which act as mourning spaces ▪ Go to invited spaces with a decided mind

5. Key Challenges for Youth Participation

- i. **Non-inclusive nature of peace negotiations and security matters:** Peace negotiation practitioners generally argue that broadening participation in negotiations unnecessarily complicates the process of reaching an agreement. However, there is proof that by changing the mind-set of exclusivity, and partitioning some decision-making to youth, key issues related to youth, the reality and complexity of the needs of the youth can be addressed.
- ii. **Hierarchy and gap between younger and older people:** Youth are culturally perceived as not being capable of holding decision-making responsibilities and are ignored because adults and elders dominate with the idea that they know

everything. Often, there is misunderstanding between the youth and adults, with conditions made unfavorable for youth to have a voice and make positive contributions in their communities. Some community leaders exhibit low tolerance for dissent and actively marginalized youth, who may respond by forming their own communities.

- iii. **Divisions and politics between youth organisations:** Youth groups across the coast region are generally well connected, however, they are not necessarily coordinated. There are several dividing lines that exist between youth networks, meaning there is not necessarily one unified youth voice. Furthermore, many youth-led organizations have ethnic, religious and political foundations. This can be a strength in that it ensures a large potential for mobilization but it can be a weakness since it can reinforce existing divides.
- iv. **Marginalized youth:** Youth who are closer to authorities are more likely to receive greater access and support, while many who are involved in initiatives at the very local level away from the centres of power are less known or recognized. Also, marginalized young men and young women may not have access to resources to have their voices heard and make contributions in their communities. Social marginalization “feeds a cycle of fear and resentment and a sense of injustice upon which extremists prey.
- v. **Financial and technical support:** Much of the youth effort remains unrecognized and unsupported and represents a huge missed opportunity of support. Youth are eager and interested in engaging and implementing peace and security initiatives, but they lack adequate finances and technical support. Donors place stringent procedures that hinder youth from getting funding to implement peace and security programmes. On the other hand, both national and county governments fail to provide sufficient resources for youth to engage in peace and security interventions.
- vi. **Political disengagement:** If youth are not politically engaged, they are more likely to feel disenfranchised and frustrated. Long-term disengagement of youth can negatively impact the social cohesion of communities as well as their peace and security. Current efforts to engage youth fail to acknowledge that youth are not homogenous and that individuals experience different obstacles and opportunities that uniquely affect their civil, political, and socioeconomic rights.
- vii. **Multiple roles of youth in intercommunal violence:** Youth occupy multiple roles in intercommunal violence, as belligerents, victims and targets of violence and actors of peace. While young people are particularly susceptible to violence and crime, they are also disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities and are often victims of violence, political unrest and terrorism

themselves. However, the burden on youths is often underemphasized, as focus is shifted on the threat youth are seen as posing to society.

- viii. **Drug abuse:** Despite the intense interventions by the Government, religious organisations, non-state actors and many other stakeholders to curb the problem of drug abuse in Kenya, especially in the coast region, the menace seems to be escalating by the day. Most drug abuse among the youth start in school. Lack of awareness amongst the youth regarding the harmful effects of drug abuse is cited as one of the main reasons for the youth getting involved. Also, extreme poverty in conjunction with childhood behavioural problems create an increased risk of substance problems. There is a close relationship between drug abuse and crime. Addicts commit crimes to pay for their drugs and this inflicts damage on the society. Moreover, many criminals are under the influence of drugs while committing crimes.
- ix. **Lack of capacity:** In some cases youth lack capacity and expertise to effectively participate in peace and security processes. Those in authority intentionally fail to provide capacity building opportunities to young people because they are afraid that youth equipped with the necessary skills may surpass and eventually dethrone them. Information and knowledge are critical for effective youth participation. When people are informed they get involved.
- x. **Criminal gangs, radicalization and terrorist recruitment among youth:** There has been an increasing number of criminal gangs, recruitment into criminal gangs and violent activities with a special focus on the youth in coastal Kenya. There is high youth vulnerability to recruitment into criminal gangs and violent extremist organizations in the coast region. Although it was previously more pronounced in Muslim youth, especially of Somali descent, the region is now witnessing enhanced recruitment of individuals from all religious and ethnic groups. Unemployment, discrimination in issuing identity cards and alienation are among the reasons youth become radical. Violent extremism breeds by exploiting a range of economic, social, and political grievances.
- xi. **Counterproductive authority behavior and Police brutality:** Counterproductive government behavior has been found to regularly sideline youth and unintentionally boost the recruitment of Violent Extremism Organisations. Governments create grievances by tolerating incompetence, corruption, or the abuse of human rights. The issue of police violating human rights has largely dominated complaints from youth on the coast. There are concerns and allegations that a number of young people have been arrested and incarcerated without charges being presented for months. There has also been reckless shooting and killing of suspects in the coast region. These incidents have all happened under the guise of fighting crime but are disputed by local youth.



- xii. **Gender Inequality:** While gender is a dynamic central force in youth's lives, conflict and violence, gender issues often are not central to the initiatives that are geared towards promotion of peace and security. More often the female gender is emasculated, shamed, humiliated and marginalized. Further, gender based violence is on the rise in the coast region.
- xiii. **Reintegration and rehabilitation gaps:** In many cases, there is lack of support for young people leaving gangs and militia groups, so they are unable to find employment and be integrated into the community. Offender rehabilitation and reintegration is provided little support from the community. The coast region does not have effective deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for youth.

6. **How to ensure meaningful participation of youth in peace and security processes**

- ❖ Information should be shared and people consulted at all levels.
- ❖ People should be involved in setting priorities and determining how resources will be used in projects in the planning stage.
- ❖ People should participate in implementing projects and be encouraged to take initiative independently.
- ❖ Responsibilities and power should be shared among the people including young people involved in the interventions.
- ❖ Respect and recognition of individual and group differences based on racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual orientations and religious background.
- ❖ Appreciate and integrate local knowledge in the design and planning process in development, peace and security initiatives.
- ❖ Ensure that the youth involved are representative of the target group and are willing to make their voices heard.
- ❖ Encourage leaders to adopt strategies that promote more inclusive decision-making processes.
- ❖ Build the capacity of youth involved through supporting them to engage in constructive dialogue with other partners.
- ❖ Create an enabling environment that includes inclusive planning meetings with young people, avoiding unnecessary hierarchies or jargon or using a means of communication that is suited to the young people involved.
- ❖ Ensure that young people are supported to make decisions and implement them, and given leadership roles in order to avoid tokenism

7. **Three-lens Approach to Youth Participation**

Given the centrality of youth expectations to participate in peace and security projects, people working with youth can adopt the Three-lens Approach to Youth Participation. This participatory model involves working with youth as beneficiaries, partners and leaders.

The highest level of participation occurs when youth take leadership roles in projects or when they start their own initiatives. This model of youth participation shows how the development community can work with youth to foster more participation.

The very basic form of participation is when youth are engaged as mere beneficiaries or clients in a project. On the other hand, the most effective mode of participation includes youth as leaders in projects. Though situations differ with contexts and countries, development actors can mold their youth participation strategies on this model.

8. Bottom-up Approach

Decision-making and processes implementation should originate from lower levels and proceed upwards. In this case, those who are more involved with the specifics of the issue are included throughout the process with the result being more harmonized and inclusive decision-making and implementation processes.

The complex nature of conflict with multiple layers of impact emphasizes the need to consider efforts that involve more of the general population. This requires broadening the notion of peace building and security to include mechanisms and initiatives that come from local contexts. Efforts must involve consulting local organizations and direct outreach to the communities, especially because it is at this level that conflicts develop.

Setting up and utilizing localized structures and mechanisms contribute to durable peace and security because it incorporates knowledge from local communities. The strategy helps the community to engage and see the direct impact of their efforts. Building local capacity and raising public awareness is critical for success of bottom up approach.

Bottom Up Approach	Top Down Approach
Task completed and sent to high ups	Tasks and decisions are altered and completed based on higher authority
Wide collaboration	Community/Youth receive specific tasks
Community/Youth input	Tasks delegated by higher authorities

9. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- i. **Develop framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes:**
The need for county frameworks to guide efforts to enhance youth participation in building peace and promoting security in the coastal region counties cannot be overstated. The policies should put in place infrastructure for effective youth participation in peace and security processes, while taking into account unique county contexts. The infrastructure should propose systems for youth representation and engagement in peace and security platforms. Equally important, county youth policies should align to the Kenya National Youth Development Policy and include provisions on youth peace and security. The county policies should recognize that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people. The policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers.
- ii. **Enable youth participation and ensure inclusivity:** Stakeholders should bear youth in mind when designing negotiation and dialogue structures, at all levels of the peace and security processes. Youth need to be encouraged as they work for peace and security, while a space for youth to input their opinions and perspectives meaningfully into the peace process should be facilitated. Making meetings and events appealing to young people, scaling up the use of digital tools and using new technologies and communication platforms are critical to boosting youth participation.
- iii. **Listen to and harness youth innovation:** Recognise youth as a legitimate stakeholder in the peace and security processes and as the generation who will be implementing the agreements made, particularly at the community-level. By shifting attitudes towards youth from pacification to empowerment, youth can be viewed as credible voices in decision-making, which would promote a sense of ownership of the peace process among the youth. Youth are not just a problem or people with a problem, youth should not be seen as a challenge or problem to be solved. Youth are instead solution providers. Young people must be at the centre of development, peace and security processes. There is a need for initiatives that bridge the gap between the youth and adults.

- iv. **Provide capacity development and Technical support:** It is important to provide youths with training opportunities to take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, youths could act as mediators, community mobilisers, humanitarian workers and peace brokers. Like any particular conflict affected population group, the mobilisation of youths' capacities requires a targeted and long-term approach. However, greater support could be provided in supporting implementation of strategies, coordination, and programming. Providing support structures for actors in peace and security processes can substantially enhance their influence and quality contributions to negotiations. It is imperative to strengthen capacities of county governments and civil society, including youth and youth-led organizations, for evidence-based policy formulation and evaluation of policies and programmes to ensure that they address the concerns of the youth as stipulated in UN Security Council's resolution 2250, 2419 and 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security.
- v. **Change perceptions:** Trust and loyalty are important for the youth. Experience has shown that when donors or organizations work with a self-interested agenda in engaging youth groups, it impedes an effective working relationship, decreases trust, and can lead to a lack of desire from youth to work with donors. Youth organizations should be supported, listened to, and facilitated as leaders. Also, support should be given to youth-led organisations to address the root causes of conflict and radicalization of youth in the coast region.
- vi. **Provide funding for youth peace and security initiatives:** If youth voices are to be included in the peace and security processes, secure ear-marked and special funding for youth organisations and youth related initiatives will be necessary. There is a need to support innovative projects, focused on youth empowerment and participation with the potential for catalytic effects and peace building outcomes. It is crucial to invest in young people's participation, organization and initiatives. Setting a Youth Peace and Security Fund in the county would be an invaluable tool. Most importantly, policies on peace and security should provide a legal framework for allocation of resources to youth peace and security interventions and initiatives in the respective counties. This will go a long way in ensuring that youth are effectively involved in addressing matters related to peace and security. A Youth Peacebuilding Fund can play a key role in encouraging youth leadership and participation in peacebuilding.
- vii. **Conduct marginality mapping and apply leave no one behind the approach:** Taking into consideration that youth networks are diverse and spread across the coastal region, it is important to recognize that there are youth groups that are more visible than others. A mapping and solid understanding of the different youth groups and their dynamics is needed to ensure funding allocation is not biased and supports the variety of youth networks more equally. Seeking out and including marginalized youth that are most affected by the issue at hand are

essential for devising and implementing effective, sustainable solutions. Applying the leaving no one behind will help to amplify the voices and stories of most marginalized groups with unique vulnerabilities -young women and young women from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities.

- viii. **Implement UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth:** National and county authorities should implement UNSC Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 on youth, peace and security, securing the necessary financial and other resources, and developing long-term national and county action plans, with the involvement of young people and youth organisations in their design, implementation and evaluation. Also, implementation of Resolution 1325 on women peace and security is crucial. Voices of young men and young women should be included in the work related to the implementation of the UNSCR 2250, 2419 and 2535 specifically and the youth peace and security agendas more broadly. Lastly, intersectionality is key to inclusivity in the implementation of the youth peace and security agendas, peace and security policies and programmes more broadly.
- ix. **Involve youth in county peace and security processes:** County governments should take concrete steps to increase representation of youth decision-making at all levels providing ways to give youth a greater voice. Importantly, County governments in the coast region should involve young people in the peace, security and conflict prevention processes in addition to supporting local initiatives such as awareness-raising campaigns and capacity building to curb forced migration, including internal displacement. Also, there is a need to create more spaces for diverse youth to engage in processes to influence the county and region's state of peace and security.
- x. **Develop county road maps for youth peace and security together with young people - adopt participatory approaches:** County governments in the coast region should enable participatory development and implementation of development, peace and security strategies. County governments should ensure inclusion and youth participation in responses to conflict. There is also a need for the establishment of a participatory mechanism to monitor and evaluate the progress of youth engagement in peace and security processes.
- xi. **Cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships:** Establish and promote partnerships which ensure cross-sectoral collaboration between authorities, CSOs, and youth organisations. Dedication of funding from national and county governments and development partners within the framework of youth peace and security engagement as well as innovative mobilization of additional resources to advance youth participation in peace and security processes is fundamental. The framework put in place for peace and security in the region should encourage stakeholders across the counties who are working on peace building and security initiatives to adopt a collaborative approach.

- xii. **Conduct studies on youth, peace and security:** This includes exploring how youth contribute to peace, security and the resolution of violent conflicts. There is a need to assess contemporary peace and security challenges in the coast region and responses of young people in the form of their roles and contributions to peacebuilding efforts. Also, the progress study on youth peace and security should assess the drivers of youth participation in peace building activities and provide concrete examples of youth-led peacebuilding interventions.
- xiii. **Carry out advocacy and awareness raising:** Meaningful inclusion of young men and young women in peace and security processes requires generation and strategic dissemination of research and resources highlighting their instrumental role in building sustainable peace and security. Advocacy and awareness raising on the positive impact that young men and women have in peace and security efforts need to be considerably enhanced and widely disseminated to mitigate the pervasive stereotypes that lock out youth. Efforts should be made to sensitize all and sundry to ensure understanding and buy into the importance of inclusion of youth from diverse backgrounds in advocacy and decision making spaces. Enhancing knowledge and awareness is therefore one of the protective factors against drug abuse for young people. It is essential to create awareness through mainstreaming capacity building on drug abuse related issues
- xiv. **Support diverse youth initiatives:** The engagement of youth in peacebuilding in a wider perspective can be ensured through the arts, culture, tourism, sports and education. The innovativeness and creativeness of young people in those areas could be mobilised effectively by connecting them with wider peacebuilding objectives such as building bridges between divided communities and ensuring a viable process of reconciliation.
- xv. **Provide better opportunities to the youth:** governments and partners should address the social and economic grievances that violent extremists exploit by working with at-risk communities to better understand those grievances and design effective responses, whether they are in the areas of social services, education, employment opportunities, or security and justice. Much more attention has to be paid to the youth by increasing opportunities for education, employment and political participation. The youth need to be able to engage productively in a politics that builds unity, is based on common values and holds out the real prospect of change by democratic means if the extremist ideologies are to be starved of new recruits. Also, youth leadership exchange programmes should be promoted. Self-evidently more support is needed for the organisations working in the coast region on education, youth activities, vocational training as well employment.

- xvi. **Peace clubs in schools:** Schools on the coast should establish peace clubs as a way of fighting negative ethnic and religious extremism among the youth. The clubs can be used as avenues of promoting good relations, harmony and peaceful co-existence amongst students and teachers, while informing the youth at school that they will only make situations worse by creating instability through engaging in violent activities.
- xvii. **Carry out youth to youth to youth peace and security dialogues and training youth getting out of crime:** Train youthful gang members and help them to reintegrate into the community. Dialogue should take place periodically to bring the youth in the community to meet and have dialogues on peace and security matters among themselves. This will increase awareness and knowledge on the role of the youth in promoting security in the county.
- xviii. **Carry out youth-police dialogues:** It is important to carry out dialogue between the youth and the police on peace and security issues, crime reporting and processing procedures, and the need to strengthen youth-police relations in the area through trust building activities. The relationship between the youth and the police can be strengthened by civic engagement that can foster joint activities such as sports, culture, art and music for trust building and demystifying the police force to the youth. Youth Awareness, Communication and Education (CACE) on insecurity and CVE among the youth and the police and the need for a stronger relation to prevent youth recruitment into criminal gangs and VEOs through police participating in beach activities, sensitization of the community on the importance of being close to the police through seminars, barazas by village elders, get together and open forums to discuss such issues freely without fear of victimization. The public should be socialized into embracing peace and security as the most basic of the basic human needs and wants in the family, school, by peers, in religious institutions and the mass media. They should also be socialized on the importance of youth-police relations in preventing recruitment into violent groups.
- xix. **Ensure human rights compliance:** The journey towards human rights compliance should be embraced by all security agencies. Youth should work with Independent Police Oversight Authority to ensure police reduce the level of professional misconduct in order to enhance practices that conform with international human rights standards and also to operate within the country's legal framework. Also, civic education to youth on laws and human rights can help put an end to police brutality and harassment and promote peace and justice.
- xx. **Support deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration:** In order for the individual to go through and sustain behavioural change, support from the community is needed. Therefore, when it comes to offender rehabilitation and reintegration, communities have a crucial role to play as they can serve as the

foundation to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders in numerous ways. There is a need for counseling services and support for essential services to vulnerable youth returning to the communities.

The meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security processes in the coast region is critical, but is currently insufficient and unstructured. Youth and youth organisations making efforts to engage in peace building and security initiatives face monumental challenges. However, youth have found ways to have their voices heard, whether they are provided with that space or not. Overall, youth find space to engage in peacebuilding and security initiatives and there is evidence of agency and creativity on how young people have leveraged their talents to advocate for good governance, and build social cohesion in communities. Recognising the needs of the younger generation and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coast region is important for sustainable peace and security. Youth can bring unique perspectives, skills and impetus to problem-solving and help to creatively deal with peace and security issues in the coast region.

Annex 1: Roles of stakeholders in promoting national cohesion and integration

Stakeholder/Current responsibilities	Roles in Youth Interventions
State Actors	
Executive – Public Service	
At the national level , this includes the entire public sector	(i) Ensure the full implementation of the Constitution (2010), with emphasis on continuing civic education for optimal people participation and mainstreaming of youth issues in development agenda. (ii) Provide visionary leadership for all development interventions, e.g. <i>Kenya Vision 2030</i> and its successive Medium Term Plans while prioritising youth issues. (iii) Ensure implementation of the Policy, starting with its entrenchment and mainstreaming into all national policies, strategies and interventions. (iv) Ensure equitable employment and deployment in public service while giving special attention to the youth, women, marginalised communities and minorities, including people with special needs. (v) Uphold the rule of law, and support effective public resource utilisation while creating a conducive environment for private sector development and job creation.

	(vi) Develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the Policy possibly linked to the Planning ministry's National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation framework. (vii) Implement the findings of the monitoring and evaluation work through a cross-sectoral and multi-agency approach.
At the County level	(i) Develop strategies and enact county assembly legislation that reflects the needs of the county and its entire population, including the youth, marginalised groups and minorities. (ii) Develop an integrated county development plan reflecting the priority needs of the diverse categories of the youth, including the marginalised and minority groups. (iii) Integrate Youth initiatives in all county departments, their plans and strategies. (iv) Ensure that public hiring/recruitment reflects the socio-ethnic face of the County. (v) Design and conduct effective civic education on issues affecting the youth.
Executive – Statutory Bodies, Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs), Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices	
Statutory bodies, SAGAs, constitutional commissions, and independent offices	Statutory bodies, SAGAs, constitutional commissions, and independent offices shall: (i) Ensure equitable employment across all diversities such as gender, age, ethnicity and persons with special needs; (ii) Promote mainstreaming of youth interventions in the institutional strategies. (iii) Promote research in youth issues to support implementation of the Policy with evidence.
Judiciary	
At the national level, the Judiciary is responsible for the dispensation of justice through the:	(i) The Judiciary shall ensure respect for the rule of law across the country. (ii) Improving the accessibility of judicial services by the youth; (iii) Conducting civic education to make judicial processes more user-friendly for the youth; (iv) Promoting effective and widespread frameworks for alternative dispute resolution.
Legislature	

Parliament – the National Assembly and the Senate	(i) Oversee the full and timely implementation of the Constitution and ultimately provisions targeting youth; (ii) Ensuring the Executive at National and County levels espouses equity as a basis for national development; (iii) Ensure the timely passage of any bills arising from the adoption of the Policy; (iv) Exploit any opportunities available for the effective implementation of the Policy; and
County Assemblies	Promote full implementation of the Constitution (2010) at the County level; (i) Domesticating the Policy; (ii) Domesticating national legislation that affect the youth; (iii) Ensure the County Assembly reflects the diversity of the county and that they address youth issues; (iv) Ensure that laws and other county level frameworks, including employment, promote inclusion; and (v) Monitor and evaluate the performance of the County Executive to ensure it promotes equitable development while mainstreaming the youth issues.
Private Sector	
The formal private sector generates the majority of the opportunities for youth engagement. The operations cover productive and services sectors such as manufacturing, industry and services. Through its umbrella bodies, such as the FKE, KAM and Kenya Private, KEPSA, and COTU it works closely with the government in policy-development; and is a major employer.	(i) Create opportunities for youth engagement; (ii) Develop specific mechanisms for mainstreaming youth issues and for monitoring adherence to agreed goals; (iii) Espouse recruitment practices that enable the entire youth in Kenyan labour market to feel represented; and wherever feasible, target youth, women, persons with disabilities, marginalised groups and minorities; (iv) Mainstream youth issues spelt out in the Policy in the design and implementation of targeted corporate social responsibility for youth; and (v) Offer skills and partnerships to excluded groups as a means of enabling them to enter into mainstream economic activity.
Development partners – bilateral and multilateral	
Development partners support public investment spending across all sectors through financing	(i) Support the country to implement the Policy; (ii) Assist in monitoring and evaluation of performance regarding policy interventions;

projects, and or technical assistance.	(iii) Diversify focus to non-traditional areas that can open up hitherto marginalised parts of the country while opening opportunities for youth.
Civil Society	
General Civil society will continue to be involved in a wide range of activities targeting the youth	(i) Continue its work of mobilisation and sensitisation on the Policy. (ii) Continue to support community- and faith-based organisations working on youth issues. (iii) Continue to monitor all arms of the government on matters affecting the youth. (iv) Rationalise interventions to focus on the needy areas and special interest groups including the youth. (v) Establish and strengthen referral mechanisms for youth with drug and substance abuse problems.
Faith-Based Organisations	Faith-based organisations shall contribute to the implementation of the Policy by: (i) Espousing the provisions of the Constitution in their activities; (ii) Applying the religious approach to uphold morals and values among the youth; (iii) Providing youth with role models; (iv) Establish partnerships with Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to institute programs targeting physical, mental and spiritual wellness of youth; and (v) Championing the rights of the voiceless youth and participating in capacity building initiatives that promote youth development, empowerment and socio-economic engagement.
Community-Based Organisations	(i) Espouse the national values and principles of transformative leadership contained in the Constitution; (ii) Assist in mobilising citizens to support youth initiatives; and (iii) Champion a revamped system of community leaders that also promotes representation across various age groups, dialogue and peace building.
Print and Electronic Media	(i) Espouse the contents of the Constitution, specifically the national values and principles of governance and the Policy in their programmes; (ii) Ensure objective, balanced reporting on youth issues; (iii) Correct undesirable misconceptions and misrepresentations;

	(iv) Use respective platforms to educate citizens on contents of the Policy and its strategies across counties up to grassroots levels; and (v) Assist in identifying minorities and marginalised individuals and communities for interventions through Policy.
Individual Citizens including youth	
Youth	(i) Read and understand the Constitution, and the various legislation relating to youth issues; (ii) Respect the Constitution and the laws emanating from it; (iii) Participate in design, implementation and monitoring of youth initiatives; (iv) Acquire and promote national values and patriotism; (v) Espouse respect for, and positively and vocally appreciate diversity and harmony; (vi) Espouse respect for human rights and basic needs including supporting implementation of the Policy (vii) Be fully accountable for own conduct; (viii) Participate fully in the governance of their locality, such as through civic education and citizen forums targeting youth; (ix) Respect and nurture the environment; and (x) Uphold value systems in society including trust, patriotism, hard work, among others.

Source: Kenya Youth Development Policy

Annex 2: County specific Policy Briefs

Search for Common Ground, Policy Brief

Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in

KILIFI County

1. Introduction

Youth participation in peace and security efforts is critical for progress. It is important to recognize the needs of young people, and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coast region, as a critical component for sustainable peace and security. Young people are

a major force for social, economic and demographic change – and their wellbeing and meaningful participation is fundamental to achieving a peaceful and secure society. Steps should be taken to facilitate meaningful youth participation in peace and security interventions.

In Kilifi County, many young people have been working on peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives on a small scale. They have proven themselves at this level and, if they are given a chance to do peace building at a larger scope, there's no telling what sort of impact it would have. In addition to coming up with policies and laws, there is a need to effectively involve the youth in finding solutions to peace and security dilemmas. They need to be involved in peace and security processes and create monitoring mechanisms where youth have a role.

Opening decision-making to youth is not doing them a favor, it is doing the society a favor. Young people are central to the nexus of peace and security, development, and human rights. Youth participation is critical for the achievement of sustainable peace, security and development. It is also vital for the promotion of human rights, and wider peace and security agendas. Adequate measures should be taken to enable young people to play their essential role in building peaceful, secure and just societies.

2. Overview of Youth Peace and Security

The active engagement of youth in peace, security and development efforts is key to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has continued to call on member states, regional organizations and the UN institutions, including peacekeeping and special political missions, to coordinate and increase their engagement in the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth peace and security. The resolutions recognize the role of young people in security processes integrated into five pillars namely; Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership, Disengagement and Reintegration. Also important is the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women peace and security that was passed in 2000, and specifically addresses how women (including young women and girls) are differently impacted by conflict. UNSCR 1325 recognizes the critical role that women and girls can and already play in peacebuilding efforts. Resolution 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

Similarly, the African Union (AU) recognizes the important roles and contributions of the continent's youth in the promotion of peace, security and stability within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020,



and Aspirations number 4 of Agenda 2063⁸ – a peaceful and secure Africa, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). In 2020, the AU adopted the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and it is in the process of implementing the 10 years Implementation Plan for that framework, as well as a study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa.

In Kenya, the promotion of sustainable peace and security is enshrined in the constitution and Kenya’s economic blue print – Vision 2030. Equally important, youth development is anchored in the constitution. In 2016, the Government of Kenya initiated the review process of the Kenya National Youth Policy to align it to the 2010 constitution and factor in new and emerging youth challenges and opportunities. The new national youth policy has key provisions on youth peace and security. The policy recognizes that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people - the policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers. The Kenya Youth Development Policy provides a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes at the national and county levels. Kenya is a young nation. Nearly 80% of the country’s population is aged 35 years and below with the median age being 19 years old. Supporting the inclusion of youth as specific stakeholders in community driven security and peace building initiatives is vital as they are both largely affected by conflict and instrumental to peace building.

Countries including Kenya face complex and long standing conflicts, and many of the solutions that have been tried have not worked as they were intended. There is everything to gain by including young people who bring new ideas to peacebuilding processes. The country should continue looking to youth for creative ways to solve conflict, and promote lasting peace. Participation of the youth in all the governance affairs has remained abysmal in African countries such as Kenya. However, through numerous self-initiated programmes, young people have played a critical role in promoting peace and security. As a member state of the UN, Kenya should carry out and accept decisions of the UNSC, and promote youth engagement in peace and security processes.

Youth participation in peace and security efforts lead to effective policy responses to the threats. Across the world, young people are rolling up their sleeves, introducing innovation, serving the needs of affected populations, and building hope, resilience and social cohesion in their communities and nations. Young people are substantively contributing to the discussions on key peace and security issues. And they are identifying solutions for – and indicators of – progress for the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

Through the Search for Common Ground’s *Inuka* Project, in the coastal region of Kenya, young people have been involved in peace and security processes. The project has provided

⁸ African Union Commission (AUC), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, 01 Background Note (Addis Ababa: AUC, 2015), accessed at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf.

leadership and put young people front and centre on the peace and security agenda. The project is a turning point in the way youth are engaged in peace and security issues in the coastal region, Kenya and beyond. The project seeks to ensure that county governments in the coast region create an enabling environment for young people to be actively engaged, to influence important decisions, and to meaningfully participate in peace and security processes in the region.

This project gives a platform and a voice to the youth. Further, the project provides the evidence needed to foster strategies and policies that would increase youth participation in peace and security interventions. Ultimately, sustainable peace, security and development can only be achieved through prioritization of youth voices, agency, participation and leadership – and focus on youth as change agents other than risks. Until the problem of young people’s exclusion is addressed, it will be hard to achieve peace and security – and so the priority has to be, understanding what young people mean by meaningful participation and inclusion.

In the *Inuka* Project, Search for Common Ground is working in partnership with Kenya co-applicants Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Humanity Action Knowledge Integrity in Africa (HAKI Africa) and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) to implement a comprehensive, youth-focused community peacebuilding action across the coast region of Kenya. The organization is convinced that, if at risk youth have skills to engage with one another and with community leaders, then the youth relationships with security actors will be stronger. This will allow security actors to better attack the root causes of violent extremism.

In this project, Search for Common Ground has worked with young people in all four counties of Kenya’s coast region, namely Kilifi, Mombasa, Kwale and Lamu, with an aim of enhancing their understanding and building their capacities to champion for peace and security. The project has brought out and emphasized the crucial role and contribution of young people to preventing violence, responding to violence and rebuilding peace, and informed contributions to the security and stability of counties and Kenya at large.

3. Key Challenges for Youth Participation

- i. **Hierarchy and gap between younger and older people:** Youth are culturally perceived as not being capable of holding decision-making responsibilities and are ignored because adults and elders dominate with the idea that they know best. There are often misunderstandings between the youth and adults, with conditions made unfavorable for youth to have a voice and make positive contributions in their communities. Some community leaders exhibit low tolerance for dissent and actively marginalized youth, who may respond by forming their own organizations or communities.
- ii. **Financial and technical support:** Much of the youth effort remains unrecognized and unsupported and represents a huge missed opportunity of support. Youth are

- eager and interested in engaging and implementing peace and security initiatives, but they lack adequate finances and technical support. Donors place stringent procedures that hinder youth from getting funding to implement peace and security programmes. On the other hand, both national and county governments fail to provide sufficient resources for youth to engage in peace and security interventions.
- iii. **Marginalized youth:** Youth who are closer to authorities and at the centre are more likely to receive greater access and support, while many who are involved in initiatives at the very local level away from the centre and authorities are less known or recognized. Also, marginalized young men and young women may not have access to resources to have their voices heard and make contributions in their communities—further marginalized. Social marginalization “feeds a cycle of fear and resentment and a sense of injustice upon which extremists prey.”
 - iv. **Political disengagement:** If youth are not politically engaged, they are more likely to feel disenfranchised and frustrated. Long-term disengagement of youth can negatively impact the social cohesion of communities as well as their peace and security. Also, efforts to engage youth fail to acknowledge that the youth is not a homogenous group and that individuals experience different obstacles and opportunities that uniquely affect their civil, political, and socioeconomic rights.
 - v. **Youth are not involved in peace and security processes:** Young people are often discriminated against, socially marginalized and excluded from decision-making. More often than not, youth are excluded by mainstream society from fully participating in economic, social, cultural and political life. Some of the reasons for which youth are excluded from equal participation include, the assumption that they are inexperienced and that they are leaders of tomorrow, not today. In some cases, they are viewed as mere beneficiaries, victims or perpetrators.
 - vi. **Drug abuse:** Despite the intense interventions by the Government, religious organisations, non-state actors and many other stakeholders to curb the problem of drug abuse in Kenya especially in the coast region, the menace seems to be escalating by the day. Most drug abuse among the youth starts in school. Lack of awareness amongst the youth regarding the harmful effects of drug abuse is cited as one of the main reasons for the youth getting involved in this harmful behavior. Also, extreme poverty in conjunction with childhood behavioural problems are factored for increased risk for drug abuse. There is a close relationship between drug abuse and crime. Drug abusers commit crimes to pay for their drugs and this inflicts damages to the society. Moreover, many criminals are often under the influence of drugs while committing crimes.
 - vii. **Lack of capacity:** In some cases youth lack capacity and expertise to effectively participate in peace and security processes. Those in authority intentionally fail to provide capacity building opportunities to young people because they are afraid that youth with high skills may surpass and eventually dethrone them. Information

and knowledge are critical for effective youth participation. When people are informed they get involved.

- viii. **Reintegration and rehabilitation gaps:** In many cases, there is lack of support for young people, making gangs and militia groups more attractive if they're unable to find employment and be integrated into the community. Offender rehabilitation and reintegration is weak – there is no support from the community to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. The coast region does not have effective deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for youth.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- i. **Develop a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes:** The need for county frameworks to guide efforts to enhance youth participation in building peace and promoting security in the coastal counties cannot be overstated. The policies should put in place infrastructure for effective youth participation in peace and security processes, taking into account unique county contexts. The infrastructure should propose systems for youth representation and engagement in peace and security platforms. Equally important, county youth policies should align to the Kenya National Youth Development Policy and include provisions on youth peace and security. The county policies should recognize that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people. The policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers.
- ii. **Provide funding for youth peace and security initiatives:** If youth voices are to be included in the peace and security processes, secure ear-marked and special funding for youth organisations and youth related initiatives will support this. There is a need to support innovative projects, focused on youth empowerment and participation with the potential for catalytic effects and peace building outcomes. It is crucial to invest in young people's participation, organization and initiatives. Setting up a Youth Peace and Security Fund in the county would be an invaluable tool. Most important, policies on peace and security should provide a legal framework for allocation of resources to youth peace and security interventions and initiatives in the respective counties. This will go a long way in ensuring that youth are effectively involved in addressing matters related to peace and security. The Youth Peacebuilding Fund can play a key role in encouraging youth leadership and participation in peacebuilding.
- iii. **Provide capacity development and Technical support:** It is important to provide youths with training opportunities to take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, and ability of adaptation to new technological trends, for example, youths could act as mediators, community mobilisers, humanitarian workers and peace brokers. Like any particular conflict affected population group, the mobilisation of youths' capacities requires a targeted and

long-term approach. However, greater support could be provided in supporting implementation of strategies, coordination, and programming. Providing support structures for actors in peace and security processes can substantially enhance their influence and quality contributions to negotiations. It is imperative to strengthen capacities of county governments and civil society, including youth and youth-led organizations, for evidence-based policy formulation and evaluation to ensure that they address the concerns of the youth as stipulated in UN Security Council's resolution 2250, 2419 and 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security.

- iv. **Conduct marginality mapping and apply a leaving no one behind approach:** Taking into consideration that youth networks are diverse and spread across the coast region, it is important to recognize that there are youth groups that are more visible than others. A mapping and solid understanding of the different youth groups and their dynamics is needed to ensure funding allocation is not biased and supports the variety of youth networks more equally. Seeking out and including marginalized youth that are most affected by the issue at hand are essential for devising and implementing effective, sustainable solutions. Applying the leaving no one behind will help to amplify the voices and stories of the most marginalized groups with unique vulnerabilities.
- v. **Enable youth participation and ensure inclusivity:** Stakeholders should bear youth in mind when designing negotiation and dialogue structures, at all levels of the peace and security processes. Youth need to be encouraged as they work for peace and security, while a space for youth to input their opinions and perspectives meaningfully into the peace process should be facilitated. Making meetings and events appealing to young people, and scaling up the use of digital tools and using new technologies and communication platforms are critical to youth participation.
- vi. **Implement UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth:** National and county governments should implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, 2419 and 2535 on youth, peace and security, securing the necessary financial and other resources, and developing long-term national and county action plans, with the involvement of young people and youth organisations in their design, implementation and evaluation. Also, implementation of resolution 1325 on women peace and security is crucial. Voices of young men and young women should be included in the work related to the implementation of the UNSCR 2250, 2419 and 2535 specifically and the youth peace and security agendas more broadly. Most important, intersectionality is key to inclusivity in the implementation of the youth peace and security agendas, peace and security policies and programmes more broadly.
- vii. **Involve youth in county peace and security processes:** County governments should take concrete steps to increase representation of youth decision-making at all levels providing ways to give youth a greater voice. Importantly, County governments in the coast region should involve young people in the peace, security and conflict prevention processes in addition to supporting local initiatives such as

awareness-raising campaigns and capacity building to curb forced migration, including internal displacement. Also, there is a need to create more spaces for diverse youth to engage in processes to influence the county and region's state of peace and security.

- viii. **Carry out advocacy and awareness raising:** Meaningful inclusion of young men and young women in peace and security processes efforts requires generation and strategic dissemination of research and resources highlighting their instrumental role in building sustainable peace and security. Advocacy and awareness raising regarding the positive impact that young men and women have in peace and security efforts need to be considerably enhanced and widely disseminated, to mitigate the pervasive stereotypes that lock out youth. Efforts should be made to sensitize all and sundry to ensure understanding and buy into the importance of inclusion of youth from diverse backgrounds in advocacy and decision making spaces. Enhancing knowledge and awareness is therefore one of the protective factors against drug abuse for young people. It is essential to create awareness through mainstreaming capacity building on drug abuse related issues including the effects of drug abuse and addiction in learning institutions.
- ix. **Provide better opportunities to the youth:** Governments and partners should address the social and economic grievances that violent extremists exploit by working with at-risk communities to better understand those grievances and design effective responses, whether they are in the areas of social services, education, employment opportunities, or security and justice. Much more attention has to be paid to the youth by increasing opportunities for education, employment and political participation. The youth need to be able to engage productively in a politics that builds unity, is based on common values and holds out the real prospect of change by democratic means if the extremist ideologies are to be starved of new recruits. Also, youth leadership exchange programmes should be promoted. Self-evidently more support is needed for the organisations working in the coast region on education, youth activities, vocational training as well employment.
- x. **Support deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration:** In order for the individual to go through and sustain behavioural change, support from the community is needed. Therefore, when it comes to offender rehabilitation and reintegration, communities have a crucial role to play as they can serve as the foundation to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders in numerous ways. There is a need for counseling services and support for essential services to vulnerable youth returning to the communities.

The meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security processes in the coast region is critical, but is currently insufficient and unstructured. Youth and youth organisations making efforts to engage in peace building and security initiatives face monumental challenges. However, youth have found ways to have their voices heard, whether they are provided with that space or not. Overall, youth find space to engage in peacebuilding and there is evidence of agency and creativity in how young people have leveraged their talents

to advocate for good governance, and build social cohesion in communities. Recognising the needs of the younger generation and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coastal region is important for sustainable peace and security. Youth can bring unique perspectives, skills and impetus to problem-solving and help to creatively deal with peace and security issues in the coast region.

Search for Common Ground, Policy Brief

Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in

Kwale County

1. Introduction

Youth participation in peace and security efforts is critical for progress. It is important to recognize the needs of young people, and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coast region, as a critical component for sustainable peace and security. Young people are a major force for social, economic and demographic change, and their wellbeing and meaningful participation is fundamental to achieving a peaceful and secure society. Steps should be taken to facilitate meaningful youth participation in peace and security interventions.

In Kwale County, many young people have been working on peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives on a small scale. They have proven themselves at this level and, if they are given a chance to do peace building at a larger scope, there's no telling what sort of impact it would have. In addition to coming up with policies and laws, there is a need to effectively involve the youth in finding solutions to peace and security dilemmas. They need to be involved in peace and security processes and create monitoring mechanisms where youth have a role.

Opening decision-making to youth is not doing them a favor, but is instead doing the society a favor. Young people are central to the nexus of peace and security, development, and human rights. Youth participation is critical for the achievement of sustainable peace, security and development. It is also vital for the promotion of human rights, and wider peace and security agendas. Adequate measures should be taken to enable young people to play their essential role in building peaceful, secure and just societies.

2. Overview of Youth Peace and Security

The active engagement of youth in peace, security and development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development.



The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has continued to call on member states, regional organizations and the UN institutions, including peacekeeping and special political missions, to coordinate and increase their engagement in the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth peace and security. The resolutions recognize the role of young people in security processes integrated into five pillars namely; Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership, Disengagement and Reintegration. Also important is the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women peace and security that was passed in 2000, and specifically addresses how women (including young women and girls) are differently impacted by conflict. UNSCR 1325 recognizes the critical role that women and girls can and already play in peacebuilding efforts. Resolution 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

Similarly, the African Union (AU) recognizes the important roles and contributions of the continent's youth in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the continent within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020, and Aspirations number 4 of Agenda 2063⁹ – a peaceful and secure Africa, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). In 2020, the AU adopted the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and it is in the process of implementing the 10 years Implementation Plan for the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) 2020-2029, as well as a study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa.

In Kenya, the promotion of sustainable peace and security is enshrined in the constitution and Kenya's economic blue print – Vision 2030. Equally important, youth development is anchored in the constitution. In 2016, the Government of Kenya initiated the review process of the Kenya National Youth Policy to align it to the 2010 constitution and factor in new and emerging youth challenges and opportunities. The new national youth policy has key provisions on youth peace and security. The policy recognizes that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people - the policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers. The Kenya Youth Development Policy provides a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes at the national and county levels. Kenya is a young nation. Nearly 80% of the country's population is aged 35 years and below with the median age being 19 years old. Supporting the inclusion of youth as specific stakeholders in community driven security and peace building initiatives is vital as they are both largely affected by conflict and instrumental to peace building.

⁹ African Union Commission (AUC), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, 01 Background Note (Addis Ababa: AUC, 2015), accessed at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf.

Countries including Kenya face complex and long standing conflicts, and many of the solutions that have been tried have not worked as they were intended. There is everything to gain by including young people who bring new ideas to peacebuilding processes. The country should continue looking to youth for creative ways to solve conflict, and promote lasting peace. Participation of the youth in all the governance affairs has remained abysmal in African countries such as Kenya. However, through numerous self-initiated programmes, young people have played a critical role in promoting peace and security. As a member state of the UN, Kenya should carry out and accept decisions of the UNSC, and promote youth engagement in peace and security processes.

Youth participation in peace and security efforts lead to effective policy responses to the threats. Across the world, young people are rolling up their sleeves, introducing innovation, serving the needs of affected populations, and building hope, resilience and social cohesion in their communities and nations. Young people are substantively contributing to the discussions on key peace and security issues. And they are identifying solutions for – and indicators of – progress for the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

Through the Search for Common Ground's *Inuka* Project, in the coastal region of Kenya, young people have been involved in peace and security processes. The project has provided leadership and put young people front and centre on the peace and security agenda. The project is a turning point in the way youth are engaged in peace and security issues in the coastal region, Kenya and beyond. The project seeks to ensure that county governments in the coast region create an enabling environment for young people to be actively engaged, to influence important decisions, and to meaningfully participate in peace and security processes in the region.

This project gives a platform and a voice to the youth. Further, the project provides the evidence needed to foster strategies and policies that would increase youth participation in peace and security interventions. Ultimately, sustainable peace, security and development can only be achieved through prioritization of youth voices, agency, participation and leadership – and focus on youth as change agents other than risks. Until the problem of young people's exclusion is addressed, it will be hard to achieve peace and security. So, the priority has to be understanding what young people mean by meaningful participation and inclusion.

In the *Inuka* Project, Search for Common Ground is working in partnership with Kenya co-applicants Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Humanity Action Knowledge Integrity in Africa (HAKI Africa) and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) to implement a comprehensive, youth-focused community peacebuilding action across the coast region of Kenya. The organization is convinced that, if at risk youth have skills to engage with one another and with community leaders, then the youth relationships with security actors will be stronger. This will allow security actors to better attack the root causes of violent extremism.

In this project, Search for Common Ground has worked with young people in all four counties of Kenya's coast region, namely Kilifi, Mombasa, Kwale and Lamu, with an aim of enhancing their understanding and building their capacities to champion for peace and security. The project has brought out and emphasized the crucial role and contribution of young people to preventing violence, responding to violence and rebuilding peace, and informed contributions to the security and stability of counties and Kenya at large.

3. Key Challenges for Youth Participation

- i. **Non-inclusive nature of peace negotiations and security matters:** Peace negotiation practitioners generally argue that broadening participation in negotiations unnecessarily complicates the process of reaching an agreement. However, there is proof that by changing the mind-set of exclusivity, and partitioning some decision-making to youth, key issues related to youth, the reality and complexity of the needs of the youth can be addressed.
- ii. **Financial and technical support:** Much of the youth effort remains unrecognized and unsupported and represents a huge missed opportunity of support. Youth are eager and interested in engaging and implementing peace and security initiatives, but they lack adequate finances and technical support. Donors place stringent procedures that hinder youth from getting funding to implement peace and security programmes. On the other hand, both national and county governments fail to provide sufficient resources for youth to engage in peace and security interventions.
- iii. **Marginalized youth:** Youth who are closer to authorities and at the centre are more likely to receive greater access and support, while many who are involved in initiatives at the very local level away from the centre and authorities are less known or recognized. Also, marginalized young men and young women may not have access to resources to have their voices heard and make contributions in their communities—further marginalized. Social marginalization “feeds a cycle of fear and resentment and a sense of injustice upon which extremists prey.”
- iv. **Multiple roles of youth in intercommunal violence:** Youth occupy multiple roles in intercommunal violence, as belligerents, victims and targets of violence and actors of peace. While young people are particularly susceptible to violence and crime, they are also disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities and are often victims of violence, political unrest and terrorism themselves. However, the burden borne by youths is often underemphasized as focus is often placed on the risk youth are seen to pose in society.
- v. **Political disengagement:** If youth are not politically engaged, they are more likely to feel disenfranchised and frustrated. Long-term disengagement of youth can negatively impact the social cohesion of communities as well as their peace and security. Also, current efforts to engage youth fail to acknowledge that the youth is

not a homogenous group and that individuals experience different obstacles and opportunities that uniquely affect their civil, political, and socioeconomic rights.

- vi. **Gender Inequality:** While gender is a dynamic central force in youth's lives, conflict and violence, gender issues often are not central to the initiatives that are geared towards promotion of peace and security. More often the female gender is emasculated, shamed, humiliated and marginalized. Further, gender based violence is on the rise in the coast region. Parental responsibility and maintenance of children is the leading cause of violence in most homes.
- vii. **Reintegration and rehabilitation gaps:** In many cases, there is lack of support for young people leaving gangs and militia groups – they're unable to find employment and be integrated into the community. Offender rehabilitation and reintegration is weak – there is no support from the community to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. Coast region does not have effective deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for youth.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- i. **Enable youth participation and ensure inclusivity:** Stakeholders should bear youth in mind when designing negotiation and dialogue structures, at all levels of the peace and security processes. Youth need to be encouraged as they work for peace and security, while a space for youth to input their opinions and perspectives meaningfully into the peace process should be facilitated. Making meetings and events appealing to young people, and scaling up the use of digital tools and using new technologies and communication platforms are critical to youth participation.
- i. **Provide funding for youth peace and security initiatives:** If youth voices are to be included in the peace and security processes, secure ear-marked and special funding for youth organisations and youth related initiatives will support this. There is a need to support innovative projects, focused on youth empowerment and participation with the potential for catalytic effects and peace building outcomes. It is crucial to invest in young people's participation, organization and initiatives. Setting up a Youth Peace and Security Fund in the county would be an invaluable tool. Most important, policies on peace and security should provide a legal framework for allocation of resources to youth peace and security interventions and initiatives in the respective counties. This will go a long way in ensuring that youth are effectively involved in addressing matters related to peace and security. The Youth Peacebuilding Fund can play a key role in encouraging youth leadership and participation in peacebuilding.
- ii. **Ensure inclusion – no one is left behind:** The challenge confronting many counties, including Kwale, is inequality and exclusion. There is a need to promote inclusiveness at all levels, and to ensure that no one is left behind. To achieve this, strategy and policy changes are necessary to target the integration of all citizens especially the youth in peace and security interventions. National and county

governments should facilitate an enabling environment in which youth actors are recognized and provided with adequate support to participate in peace and security efforts. The space and processes for peace and security must be inclusive of youth from diverse backgrounds.

- iii. **Conduct marginality mapping and apply a leaving no one behind approach:** Taking into consideration that youth networks are diverse and spread across the coast region, it is important to recognize that there are youth groups that are more visible than others. A mapping and solid understanding of the different youth groups and their dynamics is needed to ensure funding allocation is not biased and supports the variety of youth networks more equally. Seeking out and including marginalized youth that are most affected by the issue at hand are essential for devising and implementing effective, sustainable solutions. Applying the leaving no one behind will help to amplify the voices and stories of the most marginalized groups with unique vulnerabilities.
- iv. **Involve youth in county peace and security processes:** County governments should take concrete steps to increase representation of youth decision-making at all levels providing ways to give youth a greater voice. Importantly, County governments in the coast region should involve young people in the peace, security and conflict prevention processes in addition to supporting local initiatives such as awareness-raising campaigns and capacity building to curb forced migration, including internal displacement. Also, there is a need to create more spaces for diverse youth to engage in processes to influence the county and region's state of peace and security.
- v. **Provide better opportunities to the youth:** Governments and partners should address the social and economic grievances that violent extremists exploit by working with at-risk communities to better understand those grievances and design effective responses, whether they are in the areas of social services, education, employment opportunities, or security and justice. Much more attention has to be paid to the youth by increasing opportunities for education, employment and political participation. The youth need to be able to engage productively in a politics that builds unity, is based on common values and holds out the real prospect of change by democratic means if the extremist ideologies are to be starved of new recruits. Also, youth leadership exchange programmes should be promoted. Self-evidently more support is needed for the organisations working in the coast region on education, youth activities, vocational training as well employment.
- vi. **Support deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration:** In order for the individual to go through and sustain behavioural change, support from the community is needed. Therefore, when it comes to offender rehabilitation and reintegration, communities have a crucial role to play as they can serve as the foundation to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders in numerous ways. There is a need for counseling services and support for essential services to vulnerable youth returning to the communities.

The meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security processes in the coast region is critical, but is currently insufficient and unstructured. Youth and youth organisations making efforts to engage in peace building and security initiatives face monumental challenges. However, youth have found ways to have their voices heard, whether they are provided with that space or not. Overall, youth find space to engage in peacebuilding and there is evidence of agency and creativity in how young people have leveraged their talents to advocate for good governance, and build social cohesion in communities. Recognising the needs of the younger generation and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coastal region is important for sustainable peace and security. Youth can bring unique perspectives, skills and impetus to problem-solving and help to creatively deal with peace and security issues in the coast region.

MOMBASA County

1. Introduction

Youth participation in peace and security efforts is critical for progress. It is important to recognize the needs of young people, and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coast region, as a critical component for sustainable peace and security. Young people are a major force for social, economic and demographic change – and their wellbeing and meaningful participation is fundamental to achieving a peaceful and secure society. Steps should be taken to facilitate meaningful youth participation in peace and security interventions.

In Mombasa County, many young people have been working on peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives on a small scale. They have proven themselves at this level and, if they are given a chance to do peace building at a larger scope, there's no telling what sort of impact it would have. In addition to coming up with policies and laws, there is a need to effectively involve the youth in finding solutions to peace and security dilemmas. They need to be involved in peace and security processes and create monitoring mechanisms where youth have a role.

Opening decision-making to youth is not doing them a favor, it is doing the society a favor. Young people are central to the nexus of peace and security, development, and human rights. Youth participation is critical for the achievement of sustainable peace, security and development. It is also vital for the promotion of human rights, and wider peace and security agendas. Adequate measures should be taken to enable young people to play their essential role in building peaceful, secure and just societies.

2. Overview of Youth Peace and Security

The active engagement of youth in peace, security and development efforts is key to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development.



The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has continued to call on member states, regional organizations and the UN institutions, including peacekeeping and special political missions, to coordinate and increase their engagement in the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth peace and security. The resolutions recognize the role of young people in security processes integrated into five pillars namely; Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership, Disengagement and Reintegration. Also important is the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women peace and security that was passed in 2000, and specifically addresses how women (including young women and girls) are differently impacted by conflict. UNSCR 1325 recognizes the critical role that women and girls can and already play in peacebuilding efforts. Resolution 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

Similarly, the African Union (AU) recognizes the important roles and contributions of the continent's youth in the promotion of peace, security and stability within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020, and Aspirations number 4 of Agenda 2063¹⁰ – a peaceful and secure Africa, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). In 2020, the AU adopted the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and it is in the process of implementing the 10 years Implementation Plan for that framework, as well as a study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa.

In Kenya, the promotion of sustainable peace and security is enshrined in the constitution and Kenya's economic blue print – Vision 2030. Equally important, youth development is anchored in the constitution. In 2016, the Government of Kenya initiated the review process of the Kenya National Youth Policy to align it to the 2010 constitution and factor in new and emerging youth challenges and opportunities. The new national youth policy has key provisions on youth peace and security. The policy recognizes that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people - the policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers. The Kenya Youth Development Policy provides a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes at the national and county levels. Kenya is a young nation. Nearly 80% of the country's population is aged 35 years and below with the median age being 19 years old. Supporting the inclusion of youth as specific stakeholders in community driven security and peace building initiatives is vital as they are both largely affected by conflict and instrumental to peace building.

¹⁰ African Union Commission (AUC), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, 01 Background Note (Addis Ababa: AUC, 2015), accessed at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf.

Countries including Kenya face complex and long standing conflicts, and many of the solutions that have been tried have not worked as they were intended. There is everything to gain by including young people who bring new ideas to peacebuilding processes. The country should continue looking to youth for creative ways to solve conflict, and promote lasting peace. Participation of the youth in all the governance affairs has remained abysmal in African countries such as Kenya. However, through numerous self-initiated programmes, young people have played a critical role in promoting peace and security. As a member state of the UN, Kenya should carry out and accept decisions of the UNSC, and promote youth engagement in peace and security processes.

Youth participation in peace and security efforts lead to effective policy responses to the threats. Across the world, young people are rolling up their sleeves, introducing innovation, serving the needs of affected populations, and building hope, resilience and social cohesion in their communities and nations. Young people are substantively contributing to the discussions on key peace and security issues. And they are identifying solutions for – and indicators of – progress for the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

Through the Search for Common Ground's *Inuka* Project, in the coastal region of Kenya, young people have been involved in peace and security processes. The project has provided leadership and put young people front and centre on the peace and security agenda. The project is a turning point in the way youth are engaged in peace and security issues in the coastal region, Kenya and beyond. The project seeks to ensure that county governments in the coast region create an enabling environment for young people to be actively engaged, to influence important decisions, and to meaningfully participate in peace and security processes in the region.

This project gives a platform and a voice to the youth. Further, the project provides the evidence needed to foster strategies and policies that would increase youth participation in peace and security interventions. Ultimately, sustainable peace, security and development can only be achieved through prioritization of youth voices, agency, participation and leadership – and focus on youth as change agents other than risks. Until the problem of young people's exclusion is addressed, it will be hard to achieve peace and security – and so the priority has to be, understanding what young people mean by meaningful participation and inclusion.

In the *Inuka* Project, Search for Common Ground is working in partnership with Kenya co-applicants Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Humanity Action Knowledge Integrity in Africa (HAKI Africa) and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) to implement a comprehensive, youth-focused community peacebuilding action across the coast region of Kenya. The organization is convinced that, if at risk youth have skills to engage with one another and with community leaders, then the youth relationships with security actors will be stronger. This will allow security actors to better attack the root causes of violent extremism.



In this project, Search for Common Ground has worked with young people in all four counties of Kenya's coast region, namely Kilifi, Mombasa, Kwale and Lamu, with an aim of enhancing their understanding and building their capacities to champion for peace and security. The project has brought out and emphasized the crucial role and contribution of young people to preventing violence, responding to violence and rebuilding peace, and informed contributions to the security and stability of counties and Kenya at large.

3. Key Challenges for Youth Participation

- i. **Criminal gangs, radicalization and terrorist recruitment among youth:** There has been an increase in the amount recruitment into criminal gangs and violent activities in coastal Kenya. Juvenile gangs have been on the rise in both Mombasa and Lamu counties. A majority of those engaging in crime are primary school dropouts who have become drug addicts. These juvenile gangs have been prevalent and the problem is especially significant in Kisauni sub-county, Likoni, Changamwe and Mombasa's old town. There is high youth vulnerability to recruitment into criminal gangs and violent extremist organizations in the coast region. Although it was previously more pronounced in Muslim youth, especially of Somali descent, the region is now witnessing enhanced recruitment of individuals from all religious and ethnic groups. Unemployment, discrimination in issuing identity cards and social alienation are among the reasons youth become radical. Violent extremism breeds by exploiting a range of economic, social, and political grievances.
- ii. **Hierarchy and gap between younger and older people:** Youth are culturally perceived as not being capable of holding decision-making responsibilities and are ignored because adults and elders dominate with the idea that they know best. There are often misunderstandings between the youth and adults, with conditions made unfavorable for youth to have a voice and make positive contributions in their communities. Some community leaders exhibit low tolerance for dissent and actively marginalized youth, who may respond by forming their own organizations or communities.
- iii. **Multiple roles of youth in intercommunal violence:** Youth occupy multiple roles in intercommunal violence, as belligerents, victims and targets of violence and actors of peace. While young people are particularly susceptible to violence and crime, they are also disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities and are often victims of violence, political unrest and terrorism themselves. However, the burden borne by youths is often underemphasized as focus is often placed on the risk youth are seen to pose in society.
- iv. **Drug abuse:** Despite the intense interventions by the Government, religious organisations, non-state actors and many other stakeholders to curb the problem of drug abuse in Kenya especially in the coast region, the menace seems to be escalating by the day. Most drug abuse among the youth starts in school. Lack of awareness amongst the youth regarding the harmful effects of drug abuse is cited

- as one of the main reasons for the youth getting involved in this harmful behavior. Also, extreme poverty in conjunction with childhood behavioural problems are factored for increased risk for drug abuse. There is a close relationship between drug abuse and crime. Drug abusers commit crimes to pay for their drugs and this inflicts damages to the society. Moreover, many criminals are often under the influence of drugs while committing crimes.
- v. **Negative political influence – using youth for political gains:** Young people drop out of school and start using drugs. Some of these young people end up in criminal organizations that are used by politicians to fight their opponents. Politicians manipulate the destitute position of some youth for selfish gains.
 - vi. **Lack of framework or policies:** Lack of relevant policies have had an adverse impact on the ability of the youth to engage in peace and security interventions. To achieve sustainable peace and security, there is a need for robust policies that provide a framework for youth participation.
 - vii. **Lack of capacity:** In some cases youth lack capacity and expertise to effectively participate in peace and security processes. Those in authority intentionally fail to provide capacity building opportunities to young people because they are afraid that youth with high skills may surpass and eventually dethrone them. Information and knowledge are critical for effective youth participation. When people are informed they get involved. Information and knowledge on existing policies would bolster participation and effective engagement of youth.
 - viii. **Counterproductive authority behavior and Police brutality:** Counterproductive government behavior has been found to regularly sideline youth and unintentionally boost efforts of violent extremist organizations. Governments create grievances by tolerating incompetence, corruption, or the abuse of human rights. Police brutality is one of the major issues and concerns among the youth in the coast. There are concerns and allegations that a number of young people have been arrested and incarcerated without charges being held for months. Also, there has been reckless shooting and killing of suspects in the coast region, which often happen under the guise of fighting crime.
 - ix. **Reintegration and rehabilitation gaps:** In many cases, there is lack of support for young people, making gangs and militia groups more attractive if they're unable to find employment and be integrated into the community. Offender rehabilitation and reintegration is weak – there is no support from the community to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. The coast region does not have effective deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for youth.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- i. **Youth engaged in education and skills development:** Education is an important tool to prevent crime and promote a culture of lawfulness. Education always has

been, and always will be, the most effective way to combat adversity. Rather than creating harsher laws to deter people from making mistakes, there is a need to encourage them to become productive members of society by providing them with education and training.

- ii. **Set up peace clubs in schools:** Schools should establish peace clubs as a way of fighting negative ethnicity and religious extremism among the youth. These clubs can be used as avenues of promoting good relations, harmony and peaceful co-existence amongst students and teachers. They can also inform the youth that they will only make situations worse by creating instability through engaging in violent activities.
- iii. **Politicians should be held accountable-leadership and integrity:** Politicians fuel political violence by promising money, jobs, food and other incentives to desperately poor young people who agree to terrorize their rivals and take on consequential societal blame. Youth political participation needs to be meaningful. Politicians who exploit young people in order to cause chaos should be held responsible.

Develop a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes:

The need for county frameworks to guide efforts to enhance youth participation in building peace and promoting security in the coastal counties cannot be overstated. The policies should put in place infrastructure for effective youth participation in peace and security processes, taking into account unique county contexts. The infrastructure should propose systems for youth representation and engagement in peace and security platforms. Equally important, county youth policies should align to the Kenya National Youth Development Policy and include provisions on youth peace and security. The county policies should recognize that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people. The policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers.

- iv. **Carry out advocacy and awareness raising:** Meaningful inclusion of young men and young women in peace and security processes efforts requires generation and strategic dissemination of research and resources highlighting their instrumental role in building sustainable peace and security. Advocacy and awareness raising regarding the positive impact that young men and women have in peace and security efforts need to be considerably enhanced and widely disseminated, to mitigate the pervasive stereotypes that lock out youth. Efforts should be made to sensitize all and sundry to ensure understanding and buy into the importance of inclusion of youth from diverse backgrounds in advocacy and decision making spaces. Enhancing knowledge and awareness is therefore one of the protective factors against drug abuse for young people. It is essential to create awareness through mainstreaming capacity building on drug abuse related issues including the effects of drug abuse and addiction in learning institutions.

- v. **Instill morals and strengthen correctional centres:** Parents or guardians should instill good morals and values, protect children from negative influences and bad company, and mould the attitude, behavior and approach of the children in their life. Positive education, correct information and good morals form a strong foundation for children. Also, there is a need for functioning, civilized, efficient, accountable and professional correctional services, with capable officers who possess specialized skill sets and operate on the basis of international standards.
- vi. **Support deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration:** In order for the individual to go through and sustain behavioural change, support from the community is needed. Therefore, when it comes to offender rehabilitation and reintegration, communities have a crucial role to play as they can serve as the foundation to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders in numerous ways. There is a need for counseling services and support for essential services to vulnerable youth returning to the communities.
- vii. **Develop a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes:** The need for county frameworks to guide efforts to enhance youth participation in building peace and promoting security in the coastal counties cannot be overstated. The policies should put in place infrastructure for effective youth participation in peace and security processes, taking into account unique county contexts. The infrastructure should propose systems for youth representation and engagement in peace and security platforms. Equally important, county youth policies should align to the Kenya National Youth Development Policy and include provisions on youth peace and security. The county policies should recognize that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people. The policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers.
- viii. **Provide capacity development and Technical support:** It is important to provide youths with training opportunities to take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, and ability of adaptation to new technological trends, for example, youths could act as mediators, community mobilisers, humanitarian workers and peace brokers. Like any particular conflict affected population group, the mobilisation of youths' capacities requires a targeted and long-term approach. However, greater support could be provided in supporting implementation of strategies, coordination, and programming. Providing support structures for actors in peace and security processes can substantially enhance their influence and quality contributions to negotiations. It is imperative to strengthen capacities of county governments and civil society, including youth and youth-led organizations, for evidence-based policy formulation and evaluation to ensure that they address the concerns of the youth as stipulated in UN Security Council's resolution 2250, 2419 and 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security.

- ix. **Involve youth in county peace and security processes:** County governments should take concrete steps to increase representation of youth decision-making at all levels providing ways to give youth a greater voice. Importantly, County governments in the coast region should involve young people in the peace, security and conflict prevention processes in addition to supporting local initiatives such as awareness-raising campaigns and capacity building to curb forced migration, including internal displacement. Also, there is a need to create more spaces for diverse youth to engage in processes to influence the county and region's state of peace and security.
- x. **Develop county road maps for youth peace and security together with young people - adopt participatory approaches:** County governments in the coast region should enable participatory development and implementation of development, peace and security strategies. County governments should ensure inclusion and youth participation in responses to conflict. Also, there is a need for establishment of a participatory mechanism to monitor and evaluate the progress of youth engagement in peace and security processes.
- xi. **Support diverse youth initiatives:** The engagement of youth in peacebuilding in a wider perspective can be ensured through the arts, culture, tourism, sports and education. The innovativeness and creativeness of young people in those areas could be mobilised effectively by connecting them with wider peacebuilding objectives such as building bridges between divided communities and ensuring a viable process of reconciliation.
- xii. **Provide better opportunities to the youth:** Governments and partners should address the social and economic grievances that violent extremists exploit by working with at-risk communities to better understand those grievances and design effective responses, whether they are in the areas of social services, education, employment opportunities, or security and justice. Much more attention has to be paid to the youth by increasing opportunities for education, employment and political participation. The youth need to be able to engage productively in a politics that builds unity, is based on common values and holds out the real prospect of change by democratic means if the extremist ideologies are to be starved of new recruits. Also, youth leadership exchange programmes should be promoted. Self-evidently more support is needed for the organisations working in the coast region on education, youth activities, vocational training as well employment.
- xiii. **Carry out youth to youth to youth peace and security dialogues and training for youth getting out of crime:** Train young gang members and help them to reintegrate into the community. Dialogue should take place periodically to bring the youth in the community to meet and have dialogues on peace and security matters among themselves. This will increase awareness and knowledge on the role of the youth in promoting security in the county.

- xiv. **Carry out youth-police dialogues:** It is important to carry out dialogue between the youth and the police on peace and security issues, crime reporting, processing procedures, and the need to strengthen youth-police relations in the area through trust building activities. The relationship between the youth and the police can be strengthened by civic engagement that can be fostered through joint activities such as sports, culture, art and music for trust building and demystifying the police force to the youth. Youth Awareness, Communication and Education (YACE) on insecurity and CVE among the youth and the police and the need for a stronger relation to prevent youth recruitment into criminal gangs and VEOs through police participating in beach activities, sensitization of the community on the importance of being close to the police through seminars, barazas by village elders, get together and open forums to discuss such issues freely without fear of victimization Socialization of the importance of peace and security. The public should be socialized into embracing peace and security as the most basic of the basic human needs and wants in the family, school, by peers, in religious institutions and the mass media. They should also be socialized on the importance of youth-police relations in preventing recruitment into violent groups.
- xv. **Ensure human rights compliance:** The journey towards human rights compliance should be embraced by all security agencies. Youth should work with the Independent Police Oversight Authority to ensure police reduce the level of professional misconduct in order to enhance practices that conform with international human rights standards and also to operate within the country's legal framework. Also, civic education to youth on laws and human rights can help put an end to police brutality and harassment, while promoting peace and justice.

The meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security processes in the coast region is critical, but is currently insufficient and unstructured. Youth and youth organisations making efforts to engage in peace building and security initiatives face monumental challenges. However, youth have found ways to have their voices heard, whether they are provided with that space or not. Overall, youth find space to engage in peacebuilding and there is evidence of agency and creativity in how young people have leveraged their talents to advocate for good governance, and build social cohesion in communities. Recognising the needs of the younger generation and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coastal region is important for sustainable peace and security. Youth can bring unique perspectives, skills and impetus to problem-solving and help to creatively deal with peace and security issues in the coast region.

Search for Common Ground, Policy Brief

Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in LAMU County

1. Introduction



Youth participation in peace and security efforts is critical for progress. It is important to recognize the needs of young people, and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coast region, as a critical component for sustainable peace and security. Young people are a major force for social, economic and demographic change – and their wellbeing and meaningful participation is fundamental to achieving a peaceful and secure society. Steps should be taken to facilitate meaningful youth participation in peace and security interventions.

In Lamu County, many young people have been working on peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives on a small scale. They have proven themselves at this level and, if they are given a chance to do peace building at a larger scope, there's no telling what sort of impact it would have. In addition to coming up with policies and laws, there is a need to effectively involve the youth in finding solutions to peace and security dilemmas. They need to be involved in peace and security processes and create monitoring mechanisms where youth have a role.

Opening decision-making to youth is not doing them a favor, it is doing the society a favor. Young people are central to the nexus of peace and security, development, and human rights. Youth participation is critical for the achievement of sustainable peace, security and development. It is also vital for the promotion of human rights, and wider peace and security agendas. Adequate measures should be taken to enable young people to play their essential role in building peaceful, secure and just societies.

2. Overview of Youth Peace and Security

The active engagement of youth in peace, security and development efforts is key to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has continued to call on member states, regional organizations and the UN institutions, including peacekeeping and special political missions, to coordinate and increase their engagement in the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth peace and security. The resolutions recognize the role of young people in security processes integrated into five pillars namely; Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership, Disengagement and Reintegration. Also important is the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women peace and security that was passed in 2000, and specifically addresses how women (including young women and girls) are differently impacted by conflict. UNSCR 1325 recognizes the critical role that women and girls can and already play in peacebuilding efforts. Resolution 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

Similarly, the African Union (AU) recognizes the important roles and contributions of the continent's youth in the promotion of peace, security and stability within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020,



and Aspirations number 4 of Agenda 2063¹¹ – a peaceful and secure Africa, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). In 2020, the AU adopted the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and it is in the process of implementing the 10 years Implementation Plan for that framework, as well as a study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa.

In Kenya, the promotion of sustainable peace and security is enshrined in the constitution and Kenya’s economic blue print – Vision 2030. Equally important, youth development is anchored in the constitution. In 2016, the Government of Kenya initiated the review process of the Kenya National Youth Policy to align it to the 2010 constitution and factor in new and emerging youth challenges and opportunities. The new national youth policy has key provisions on youth peace and security. The policy recognizes that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people - the policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers. The Kenya Youth Development Policy provides a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes at the national and county levels. Kenya is a young nation. Nearly 80% of the country’s population is aged 35 years and below with the median age being 19 years old. Supporting the inclusion of youth as specific stakeholders in community driven security and peace building initiatives is vital as they are both largely affected by conflict and instrumental to peace building.

Countries including Kenya face complex and long standing conflicts, and many of the solutions that have been tried have not worked as they were intended. There is everything to gain by including young people who bring new ideas to peacebuilding processes. The country should continue looking to youth for creative ways to solve conflict, and promote lasting peace. Participation of the youth in all the governance affairs has remained abysmal in African countries such as Kenya. However, through numerous self-initiated programmes, young people have played a critical role in promoting peace and security. As a member state of the UN, Kenya should carry out and accept decisions of the UNSC, and promote youth engagement in peace and security processes.

Youth participation in peace and security efforts lead to effective policy responses to the threats. Across the world, young people are rolling up their sleeves, introducing innovation, serving the needs of affected populations, and building hope, resilience and social cohesion in their communities and nations. Young people are substantively contributing to the discussions on key peace and security issues. And they are identifying solutions for – and indicators of – progress for the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

Through the Search for Common Ground’s *Inuka* Project, in the coastal region of Kenya, young people have been involved in peace and security processes. The project has provided

¹¹ African Union Commission (AUC), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, 01 Background Note (Addis Ababa: AUC, 2015), accessed at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf.

leadership and put young people front and centre on the peace and security agenda. The project is a turning point in the way youth are engaged in peace and security issues in the coastal region, Kenya and beyond. The project seeks to ensure that county governments in the coast region create an enabling environment for young people to be actively engaged, to influence important decisions, and to meaningfully participate in peace and security processes in the region.

This project gives a platform and a voice to the youth. Further, the project provides the evidence needed to foster strategies and policies that would increase youth participation in peace and security interventions. Ultimately, sustainable peace, security and development can only be achieved through prioritization of youth voices, agency, participation and leadership – and focus on youth as change agents other than risks. Until the problem of young people’s exclusion is addressed, it will be hard to achieve peace and security – and so the priority has to be, understanding what young people mean by meaningful participation and inclusion.

In the *Inuka* Project, Search for Common Ground is working in partnership with Kenya co-applicants Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Humanity Action Knowledge Integrity in Africa (HAKI Africa) and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) to implement a comprehensive, youth-focused community peacebuilding action across the coast region of Kenya. The organization is convinced that, if at risk youth have skills to engage with one another and with community leaders, then the youth relationships with security actors will be stronger. This will allow security actors to better attack the root causes of violent extremism.

In this project, Search for Common Ground has worked with young people in all four counties of Kenya’s coast region, namely Kilifi, Mombasa, Kwale and Lamu, with an aim of enhancing their understanding and building their capacities to champion for peace and security. The project has brought out and emphasized the crucial role and contribution of young people to preventing violence, responding to violence and rebuilding peace, and informed contributions to the security and stability of counties and Kenya at large.

3. Key Challenges for Youth Participation

- i. **Non-inclusive nature of peace negotiations and security matters:** Peace negotiation practitioners generally argue that broadening participation in negotiations unnecessarily complicates the process of reaching an agreement. However, there is proof that by changing the mind-set of exclusivity, and partitioning some decision-making to youth, key issues related to youth, the reality and complexity of the needs of the youth can be addressed.
- ii. **Hierarchy and gap between younger and older people:** Youth are culturally perceived as not being capable of holding decision-making responsibilities and are ignored because adults and elders dominate with the idea that they know best. There are often misunderstandings between the youth and adults, with conditions made unfavorable for youth to have a voice and make positive contributions in their

communities. Some community leaders exhibit low tolerance for dissent and actively marginalized youth, who may respond by forming their own organizations or communities.

- iii. **Divisions and politics between youth organisations:** Youth groups across the coast region are generally well connected, however, they are not necessarily coordinated. There are several dividing lines that exist between youth networks, meaning there is not necessarily one unified youth voice. Furthermore, many youth-led organizations have ethnic, religious and political foundations. This can be a strength in that it ensures a large potential for mobilization, but it can be a weakness because it can reinforce existing divides.
- iv. **Marginalized youth:** Youth who are closer to authorities and at the centre are more likely to receive greater access and support, while many who are involved in initiatives at the very local level away from the centre and authorities are less known or recognized. Also, marginalized young men and young women may not have access to resources to have their voices heard and make contributions in their communities—further marginalized. Social marginalization “feeds a cycle of fear and resentment and a sense of injustice upon which extremists prey.”
- v. **Lack of capacity:** In some cases youth lack capacity and expertise to effectively participate in peace and security processes. Those in authority intentionally fail to provide capacity building opportunities to young people because they are afraid that youth with high skills may surpass and eventually dethrone them. Information and knowledge are critical for effective youth participation. When people are informed they get involved.
- vi. **Reintegration and rehabilitation gaps:** In many cases, there is lack of support for young people, making gangs and militia groups more attractive if they’re unable to find employment and be integrated into the community. Offender rehabilitation and reintegration is weak – there is no support from the community to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. The coast region does not have effective deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for youth.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- i. **Develop a framework for youth engagement in peace and security processes:** The need for county frameworks to guide efforts to enhance youth participation in building peace and promoting security in the coastal counties cannot be overstated. The policies should put in place infrastructure for effective youth participation in peace and security processes, taking into account unique county contexts. The infrastructure should propose systems for youth representation and engagement in peace and security platforms. Equally important, county youth policies should align to the Kenya National Youth Development Policy and include provisions on youth peace and security. The county policies should recognize that peace, security and sustainable development can only be achieved through meaningful engagement of

- youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people. The policy seeks to involve the youth in security and peace building processes as stakeholders and decision makers.
- ii. **Enable youth participation and ensure inclusivity:** Stakeholders should bear youth in mind when designing negotiation and dialogue structures, at all levels of the peace and security processes. Youth need to be encouraged as they work for peace and security, while a space for youth to input their opinions and perspectives meaningfully into the peace process should be facilitated. Making meetings and events appealing to young people, and scaling up the use of digital tools and using new technologies and communication platforms are critical to youth participation.
 - iii. **Listen to and harness youth innovation:** Recognise the youth as a legitimate stakeholder in the peace and security processes and as the generation who will be implementing the agreements made, particularly at the community-level. By shifting attitudes towards youth from pacification to empowerment, youth can be viewed as credible voices in decision-making, which would promote a sense of ownership of the peace process. Youth are not just a problem or people with a problem, and so they should not be seen as a challenge or problem to be solved. Youth are solution providers. Young people must be at the centre of development, peace and security processes. There is a need for initiatives that bridge the gap between the youth and the adult generation.
 - iv. **Provide capacity development and Technical support:** It is important to provide youths with training opportunities to take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, and ability of adaptation to new technological trends, for example, youths could act as mediators, community mobilisers, humanitarian workers and peace brokers. Like any particular conflict affected population group, the mobilisation of youths' capacities requires a targeted and long-term approach. However, greater support could be provided in supporting implementation of strategies, coordination, and programming. Providing support structures for actors in peace and security processes can substantially enhance their influence and quality contributions to negotiations. It is imperative to strengthen capacities of county governments and civil society, including youth and youth-led organizations, for evidence-based policy formulation and evaluation to ensure that they address the concerns of the youth as stipulated in UN Security Council's resolution 2250, 2419 and 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security.
 - v. **Provide funding for youth peace and security initiatives:** If youth voices are to be included in the peace and security processes, secure ear-marked and special funding for youth organisations and youth related initiatives will support this. There is a need to support innovative projects, focused on youth empowerment and participation with the potential for catalytic effects and peace building outcomes. It is crucial to invest in young people's participation, organization and initiatives. Setting up a Youth Peace and Security Fund in the county would be an invaluable tool. Most important, policies on peace and security should provide a legal

- framework for allocation of resources to youth peace and security interventions and initiatives in the respective counties. This will go a long way in ensuring that youth are effectively involved in addressing matters related to peace and security. The Youth Peacebuilding Fund can play a key role in encouraging youth leadership and participation in peacebuilding.
- vi. **Conduct marginality mapping and apply a leaving no one behind approach:** Taking into consideration that youth networks are diverse and spread across the coast region, it is important to recognize that there are youth groups that are more visible than others. A mapping and solid understanding of the different youth groups and their dynamics is needed to ensure funding allocation is not biased and supports the variety of youth networks more equally. Seeking out and including marginalized youth that are most affected by the issue at hand are essential for devising and implementing effective, sustainable solutions. Applying the leaving no one behind will help to amplify the voices and stories of the most marginalized groups with unique vulnerabilities.
 - vii. **Carry out advocacy and awareness raising:** Meaningful inclusion of young men and young women in peace and security processes efforts requires generation and strategic dissemination of research and resources highlighting their instrumental role in building sustainable peace and security. Advocacy and awareness raising regarding the positive impact that young men and women have in peace and security efforts need to be considerably enhanced and widely disseminated, to mitigate the pervasive stereotypes that lock out youth. Efforts should be made to sensitize all and sundry to ensure understanding and buy into the importance of inclusion of youth from diverse backgrounds in advocacy and decision making spaces. Enhancing knowledge and awareness is therefore one of the protective factors against drug abuse for young people. It is essential to create awareness through mainstreaming capacity building on drug abuse related issues including the effects of drug abuse and addiction in learning institutions.
 - viii. **Provide better opportunities to the youth:** Governments and partners should address the social and economic grievances that violent extremists exploit by working with at-risk communities to better understand those grievances and design effective responses, whether they are in the areas of social services, education, employment opportunities, or security and justice. Much more attention has to be paid to the youth by increasing opportunities for education, employment and political participation. The youth need to be able to engage productively in a politics that builds unity, is based on common values and holds out the real prospect of change by democratic means if the extremist ideologies are to be starved of new recruits. Also, youth leadership exchange programmes should be promoted. Self-evidently more support is needed for the organisations working in the coast region on education, youth activities, vocational training as well employment.
 - ix. **Ensure human rights compliance:** The journey towards human rights compliance should be embraced by all security agencies. Youth should work with the

Independent Police Oversight Authority to ensure police reduce the level of professional misconduct in order to enhance practices that conform with international human rights standards and also to operate within the country's legal framework. Also, civic education to youth on laws and human rights can help put an end to police brutality and harassment, while promoting peace and justice.

- x. **Support deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration:** In order for the individual to go through and sustain behavioural change, support from the community is needed. Therefore, when it comes to offender rehabilitation and reintegration, communities have a crucial role to play as they can serve as the foundation to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders in numerous ways. There is a need for counseling services and support for essential services to vulnerable youth returning to the communities.

The meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security processes in the coast region is critical, but is currently insufficient and unstructured. Youth and youth organisations making efforts to engage in peace building and security initiatives face monumental challenges. However, youth have found ways to have their voices heard, whether they are provided with that space or not. Overall, youth find space to engage in peacebuilding and there is evidence of agency and creativity in how young people have leveraged their talents to advocate for good governance, and build social cohesion in communities. Recognising the needs of the younger generation and the influence they have on the trajectory of the coastal region is important for sustainable peace and security. Youth can bring unique perspectives, skills and impetus to problem-solving and help to creatively deal with peace and security issues in the coast region.

