

## **“YOUTH INCLUSION IN ADVANCING THE AGENDA OF PEACE”.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

On the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, Member States pledged to strengthen global governance for the sake of the present and future generations. The UN 75 declaration noted the need to promote peace and prevent conflicts. The Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda noted the New Agenda of Peace to address a myriad of challenges the international community faces today. In this respect, six potential areas for the New Agenda of Peace were outlined. The agenda to invest in prevention and peacebuilding, correlates with youth inclusion in advancing the Agenda of Peace.

Young people have shown that they are able to play an active role, particularly at the grassroots and local levels as peacemakers, mediators and peacebuilders. Several research on peacebuilding has revealed that young people face significant barriers to inclusion, support, and acknowledgment in peace processes. Hence, their ability to contribute towards the Agenda of Peace is significantly reduced.

This article aims to highlight the importance of youth inclusion in advancing the agenda of peace and proffer solutions to the different challenges faced by youths in advancing peace.

*Key words: agenda, peace, peacebuilding, united nations, youth.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Taksas, peacebuilding is a long-term or continuous process which mitigates conflict by operating with various activities. It is the way of starting the gradual sustainable development of a country or society.

The sustainability and success of a peacebuilding process greatly depends on different peace building approaches, mechanisms and activities. There are many actors of peace building across the globe that has their own positions and assigned role in peace building. Youths are one of the actors of peacebuilding. (Deo, 2018).

The inclusion of youth in peacebuilding processes is bound to facilitate sustainable peace in a society, by redirecting the energies of young people to the implementation of constructive peace projects. Incorporation and utilization of youths in peace building processes would facilitate their transformation from agents of violent conflict, to agents of peace in their societies.

## THE YOUTH

Youth are underestimated as positive agents of change and key actors in peacebuilding, both by policy-makers and academics (Felice and Wisler, 2007).

The youths are products of their communities and they are key agents to peacebuilding. Having experienced conflicts, Youths have key roles to play in peace processes since they have a clear vision of what peace could look like in their communities and counties.

Indeed, if youth can be such a strong social unit that can impact an entire nation, why do people overlook these crucial resources? Youths voices should be included in current peace-related issues in general, implementing policies and activities.

## YOUTH CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE

**Youth Led Organisations:** Young people open channels and spaces for youth from across diverse backgrounds to work together and build a shared vision of a peaceful world. An example is a youth organisation in Kenya, called the Youth Café. This organisation is Africa's largest convening community of professionals harnessing youth advocacy, policy and research for social impact, with over 3,500 member organisations and over 947,000 individual members aged between 18 to 35 virtually from every country in Africa.

The youth are the leading providers of peace, resilience, stability, and security in Africa. They work hard to curb violent extremism, prevent man-made and natural conflicts and strengthen young people's proactive roles in regional peace and security.

**Co-operation:** Youths work together to achieve different goals. They collaborate with different organisations using development programmes to promote peacebuilding processes. The development programmes can include social media campaigns, outreach in areas affected by conflicts, educating other young individuals on the importance of peacebuilding, participating in conferences or high-level events on peacebuilding, etc.

**Youth Development Through Sports:** In Nigeria, different initiatives have been undertaken to promote youth development through sports, including the 2018 football tournament organized in Lagos by Hon. Adedamola Richard Kasunmu. Recalling the words of FIFA President Infantino, “the potential of sports to promote peace and the rule of law appears unlimited”. In Nigeria, Football is life to some young individuals. They engage themselves through sports and this help them build a resilience and team building spirit amongst themselves.

## **CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**Lack of experience and qualifications:** Young people are often excluded because of a perceived lack of experience and qualifications. Their practical and lived experience in conflict areas and within their communities is not sufficiently taken into account (Yulia and Asil, 2021). The United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) recently introduced a course for youths in disarmament. It is important to provide trainings and internship opportunities for youths to build their skills and to take an active part in peacebuilding.

**Lack of set up and support platforms for youth:** I recommend that platforms should be set up to represent their voices and experiences and to partner with each other to work towards peace together.

**Youth access to funds is limited:** They rarely have access to a sustainable flow of funds that would support their work on the ground without any interruptions. I recommend a sustained provision of funds, technical resources, and guidance to support youth-led peace initiatives of different types.

**Under-representation in political structures:** Young people are under-represented at all levels and in official peace processes where decisions that shape their world are made. I recommend the facilitation of youths capacity building relevant to their individual and contextual needs to ensure they can design, initiate, and complete successful peace initiatives and confidently participate in peace processes.

**Exclusion and Marginalisation:** Address the different forms of disadvantage, exclusion, and marginalisation young people face, including poverty, unsafe environments, poor healthcare and education, among others.

## **CONCLUSION**

The international and national youth, peace, and security agendas have supported progress in youth inclusion in peace processes, much work remains to be done to address the challenges I outlined above and to fully acknowledge youth as agents of change. The recommendations however, suggests that the world needs to invest sufficiently in young people's inclusion in peace processes and beyond.

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