



'The Third Annual Youth Academy'

Youth Political Contribution to Prevent/Mitigate Electoral and Political Violence in African Countries

CONCEPT NOTE

Kigali, Rwanda

22nd – 25th July 2019



I. BACKGROUND

As part of the bottom-up component of structural conflict prevention strategy in fragile and conflict-affected environments in Africa¹, and within the framework of implementation of article 3 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the Department of Political Affairs of African Union Commission (DPA/AUC) and the Africa and West Asia Programme of International IDEA (AWA/IDEA), in partnership with the African Governance Architecture Secretariat (AGA) and the National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations in Rwanda (NFPO), are organizing a Third Youth Academy under the theme **“Youth Contribution to Prevent/mitigate Electoral and Political Violence in African countries”**². This activity is scheduled to take place from 22nd to 25th July 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda. The choice of the theme of this 2019 Youth Academy is based on recommendations and lessons learned from the successful May 2017 and June 2018 editions. It is also informed by the growing role of inclusive and participatory democratic governance in preventing and mitigating electoral and political violence in African Countries. The organizing partners also see this youth platform as a contribution to the realization of SDG 16³; Aspirations 3⁴, 4⁵ and 6⁶ of AU Agenda 2063; as well as the AU 2019 theme of the Year which is “Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards durable Solutions to Forced

¹ Bottom-up structural conflict prevention strategy is complementary to the Top-down one and aims to target on ground potential actors of violence to transform them to or consolidate their role as peaceful agents and assets. See among others ,Alexander L. George, 'Strategies for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution: scholarship for Policymaking', Political Science and Politics, Vol. 33, n°1, March 2000, PP 15-19.

² The term 'youth' can be defined differently depending on the social and cultural context. For this project, youth were defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 35. Political violence is defined as armed violence or threats of armed violence employed to convey a political message and/or achieve a political goal.

³ 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

⁴ 'An Africa of Good Governance, democracy, respect for Human Rights, justice and rule of law'.

⁵ A Peaceful and secure Africa

⁶ An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African peoples, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.



Displacement in Africa’.

II. JUSTIFICATION

Africa is the leading youthful continent with a demographic index of a total population of close to 1.32 billion people as of 2019, 60% of the population are under the age of 25⁷. Young people between the ages of 15 and 35 constitute one-third of Africa’s population. Given its rapidly growing population, it is projected that by 2030 the number of youth in Africa will have increased by 42%. This projection presents both opportunities and challenges for the continent’s peace and development agenda, as well as the advancement of democratic governance on the continent⁸. Indeed, as the largest share of population of the Continent, the youth in Africa have rights, expectations, will and demands towards political participation that need to be taken into account to ensure real social contract between citizens and powers. These aspirations can be best achieved by enabling their equitable and meaningful participation and ownership of all sectors of society in the policy-making processes⁹. Unfortunately, there is a growing trend in several African countries whereby the role of youth in electoral processes is often that of political militia; used by political parties to brutalize opponents- – including in some ‘best performers’ in democratic governance.

Throughout the continent, more than 200 million young people live in

⁷ see worldpopulationreview.com/continents/africa-population/

⁸ See, ‘Africa at a Tipping Point. 2017 Forum Report’, Mo Ibrahim Foundation ; also ‘AGA Youth Engagement Strategy, 2016-2020’, DPA, AGA Secretariat.

⁹ see, <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2018/african-public-service-risk-failing/youth/>



fragile and conflict- affected contexts today¹⁰. They are among the most affected by the multiple and often interlinked forms of violence – from political violence and criminal gangs to organized crime and terrorist attacks that plague their countries and communities, bearing enormous and long-lasting human, social and economic costs¹¹. Over the past decade, the involvement of some young people – particularly young men, but also increasingly young women – in violence and extremist groups has led some to paint youth generally as a threat to regional security and stability. But research shows that youth who participate actively in violence are a minority, while the majority of youth – despite the injustices, deprivations and abuse they confront daily, particularly in conflict contexts – are not violent and do not participate in violence. In fact, a growing body of evidence suggests that young women and men can and do play active roles as agents of positive and constructive change. The recently adopted Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and the AGA Youth Engagement Strategy adopted in 2016 marks the formal recognition of the positive role young women and men for electoral and political conflicts prevention and mitigation as well as the maintenance of peace and security on the Continent.

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme, *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future* (New York, 2014). Available from http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Youth/UNDP_Youth-Strategy-2014-17_Web.pdf.

¹¹ World Bank, *World Development Report 2011* (Washington, D.C., 2011).



According to Burchard (2015) as well as Fielde and Höglund (2016)¹², more than 50 percent of the elections held over the past two decades in African Countries have experienced some form of electoral violence and Youth have been particularly affected. Young people are the most affected either as victims or perpetrators. The very rich literature on youth and political violence has identified several ultimate and proximal factors that facilitate youth engagement in electoral violence, including: material and non-material incentives (e.g. income, resources, protection or social status); inadequate and unequal education and skills; delayed transition to adulthood; injustice (e.g. socio-economic and political exclusion, and corruption); a legacy of violence; and trigger events (e.g. elections at the societal level and trauma at the individual level) (Hilker and Fraser 2009; OECD 2011; Korongo 2012; Mercy Corps 2011, 2015; Cramer 2015; IANYD – Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding 2016). Political elites, using promises of money, employment (e.g. government/government-affiliated jobs, and future development projects in their communities), and material goods (food, cars, and arms) manipulate youth for harassing, intimidating, and employing physical violence against opponents (AOAV 2015c).

Another illustration of African Youth involvement in political violence is the negative role of youth wings in political parties' power dynamics in several African Countries. As showed by a recent study of Angzooroku Paalo (2017), the aggressive role of political parties youth wings - which is not new¹³- is more and more visible all across the

¹² Electoral violence – a sub-category of political violence – is “a coercive and deliberate strategy used by political actors...to advance their interests or achieve specific political goals in relation to an electoral contest” (Adolfo et al. 2013, 1). Such violence, which includes physical violence and other coercive means, such as the threat of violence, intimidation and harassment, may occur in the lead up to, during, and after the elections (Adolfo et al. 2013).

¹³ See among others Danielle Resnick and Daniela Casale, 'The Political participation of Africa's Youth: turnout, partisanship, and protests', Afrobarometer Working Paper, n° 136



continent, and need a new policy attention for a bottom-up conflict prevention strategy. Due to the high stakes involved in winning or retaining state power in African countries, politicians value the organizational abilities of their respective youth groups. However, youth wings in most polities rather engage in aggressive political activities including vandalizing public property, rioting/violent protests, seizure and control over facilities of public good, militias/vigilantism and electoral violence. And these acts thwart democratic advancement. Youth wings are meant to contribute positively to democratic consolidation through peaceful and democratic activities with their mother parties, they mostly rather engage in aggressive, violent politics, annulling the expectation of constructive contribution from the demographic majority in the continent. And this violent politics is generally here again due to their systemic exclusion from core political and democratic processes by their respective parties. These incendiary acts are catalyzed by increasing youth unemployment; weak institutions or unprofessional state agents; illegitimate electoral systems; political manipulation of social cleavages, and history of violence in societies all mired in patronage political system.

Youth Political and Electoral violence is also one of the major sources of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced persons all across the continent. According to a study published by Pini (2017), more than 65% of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced persons in Central, West and Horn of African countries are young and their situation is directly linked with political, electoral and governance dynamics. It is therefore clear that they should be involved and considered in all initiatives designed to prevent and mitigate political and electoral violence.

These examples confirm that any efforts to prevent/mitigate youth engagement in electoral and political violence require first an in-depth



understanding of the context in which they are implemented and the factors that facilitate youth engagement in such acts. Additionally, as realities on the ground continuously change, including the drivers of conflict, and the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries and stakeholders, strengthening capacities of Youth's institutions is essential for bottom-up conflict prevention efforts to remain relevant and effective.

It is within this backdrop that the Department of Political Affairs of African Union Commission (DPA/AUC) and the Africa and West Asia Programme of International IDEA (AWA/IDEA) are organizing, in partnership with the African Governance Architecture Secretariat (AGA) and the National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations in Rwanda (NFPO), a Third Youth Academy under the theme ***“Youth Contribution to Prevent/mitigate Electoral and Political Violence in African countries”***.

III. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this Annual Youth Academy is to strengthen capacities and skills of participants to become more effective agents of positive and constructive change in electoral and political conflicts prevention/mitigation in their respective countries.

The specific objectives of the Youth Academy are to:

- ❖ Provide a platform for young politicians to reflect on and discuss the root causes of Electoral and Political Violence in their respective countries;
- ❖ Share experiences and knowledge of global and African frameworks and tools for developing Youth-led initiatives in Electoral and political conflict prevention/mitigation –



including the Inter Agency Network on Youth and Development Framework (IANYD) and the AGA Yes Initiative;

- ❖ Support drafting of National Strategies to prevent/mitigate Youth engagement in electoral and political violence in targeted countries;
- ❖ Strengthen capacities of National Youth Organizations in preventing/mitigating Youth Electoral and political violence;
- ❖ Reflect on possible follow-up support at national level.

IV. EXPECTED RESULTS

It is expected that at the end of the Youth Academy, participants of each country will have a draft National Strategy to prevent/mitigate Youth involvement in electoral and political violence. This strategy will be endorsed, approved disseminated and implemented by each country's National Youth Organization. An assessment of domestication, implementation and impact of each National Strategy will be done by each National Youth Organization concerned and organizing partners, six months after the closing of Youth Academy. Recommendations from this assessment will be used by each National Youth Organization concerned and organizing partners to fine tune their action in preventing/mitigating youth electoral and political violence in targeted countries.

V. METHODOLOGY

The four days Youth Academy will adopt an interactive and participatory approach, with plenary and close sessions. Each session will be focused on one module, and facilitated by Senior Experts. Among the main thematic areas to be covered are:



- Youth and Political/Electoral violence in African Countries: Drivers, Triggers and Actors;
- The costs of Youth Political and electoral violence in African Countries;
- Global and African tools and framework for development of youth-led initiatives in electoral and political conflict prevention and mitigation;
- Drafting Youth-led National Strategy to prevent/mitigate political/electoral violence in African Countries: Process, procedures and themes

Background documents will inform exchanges. Participants will be able to reuse them once back in their countries, as reference materials as they engage/mobilize their peers against engaging in Electoral and political violence.

VI. PARTICIPATION

The participants to the third Annual Youth Academy will be identified and invited by official National Youth Organizations (Youth Councils/Commissions) of each country.

Targeted countries for this year Youth Academy are **Guinea Conakry, Cameroon, Rwanda, Ghana and Zimbabwe**. Each country is selected with a criterion of having upcoming election in the current calendar year, 2019 and national political dynamics.

Each National Youth Organization will nominate Four local participants - including one leader of the organization and three actively engaged youth politicians in political parties (including opposition parties) represented at National Assembly of the Country. The gender parity will be given a higher emphasis for each country while nominating the leaders.

Organizations will follow three major criteria to select young



politicians to this years' Academy: (i) active engagement in the current political arena of the country and between the age of 18 – 35 years; (ii) equal gender representation (iii) access to official decision makers to take forward the outcomes of the Academy and strong networking ability to disseminate the outcome of the Annual Youth Academy.

IV. WORKING LANGUAGES

The workshop will be conducted in English and French, and translation services will be entrenched accordingly.