BEYOND IDEOLOGY AND GREED
TRAJECTORIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TOWARDS NEW FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND MALI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2016

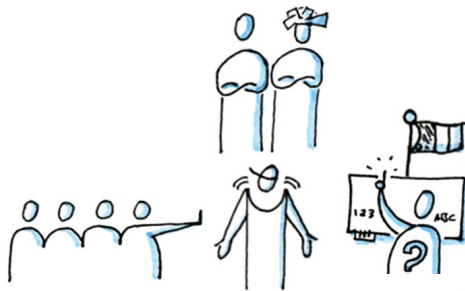# ILLUSTRATED SUMMARY

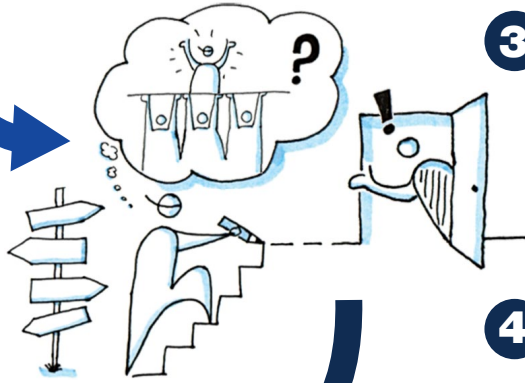## What we learn of the pathways of youths towards new forms of violence[1]

Crisis of socialization

1 Facing a crisis of authority and the absence of educational continuity between them, the family, the community and the school leave young people without guidance.

2 Koranic education may constitute a factor of resilience against the crisis of socialization, either positive (close supervision and relationship by the teacher) or sometimes negative (some masters exploit their authority relationship).

3 Youths are in search of social recognition and valuing success models within alternative groups.

Search for alternative socialization spaces

4 Ideology and greed are secondary motivations

Socialization towards and professionalization of violence

6 Professionalization of violence: young people trade and contractualize their potential of producing violence ...

5 Some groups that have broken their bonds with the society endorse violence, leading young people to internalize it as a legitimate means of success or defense of a collective identity.
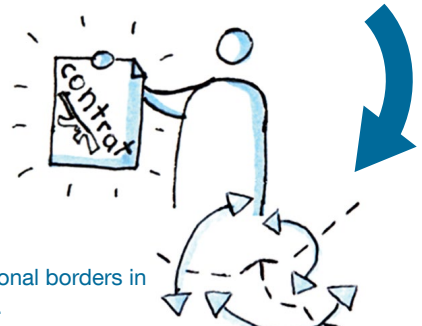
7 ... beyond national borders in the sub-region.

1 A simplified visual representation has been chosen to vehicle key messages emerging from the study. However, we recognize the complex nature of the phenomenon and by no means suggest that it could be explained precisely through a linear process.
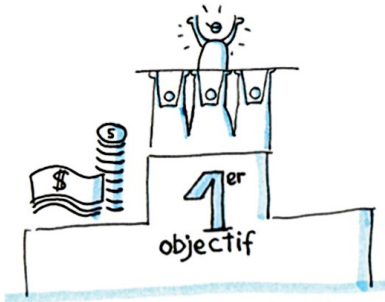
What this implies for our actions

1 Support initiatives in favor of the youth by involving all stakeholders.

2 Ensure community support to the reintegration of violent youths.

3 Place the strengthening of self-esteem and social recognition at the heart of initiatives targeting youth employment.
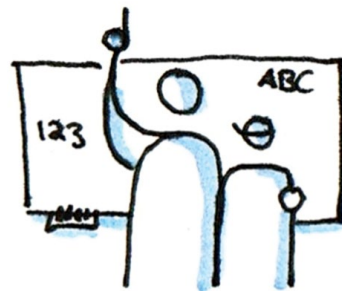

4 Value and integrate (instead of stigmatizing and excluding) groups that have broken their bonds with the society.

5 Take into consideration the existence of a professionalization of violence beyond national borders.

**6** Integrate the transmission of know-how and life skills in the education system and reassert the value of the teacher's role.

7 Ensure educational continuity between the family, the community and the school.

8 Engage all stakeholders towards a better understanding of Koranic education to valorize best practices and identify the best possible junctions with the formal education system.
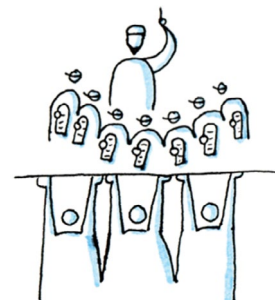
CONCLUSION

KEY RESULTS

In search of social recognition

Beyond ideology

1. Ideological motivation (religious, political or other) is not sufficient to determine and structure the trajectory through which young people engage in violence (or leads them to joining an «extreme» or violent group). Ideology intervenes much more systematically as a retrospective legitimization of violence and/or as a tool for strengthening cohesion within the group. Even within groups sharing an ideology regarded as "extreme", the actual risk of violence does not come from the ideology itself, but rather from the breach between the group and society. The latter can originate either from the construction of a victim discourse or from marginalization/stigmatization – which can both lead to a possible legitimization of violence.

Beyond greed

2. The promise of money alone is not enough to push young people to commit violent acts or to join an «extreme» group. The work meant to generate that money must more importantly provide recognition and social value. The economic aspect must therefore be understood as a simple component of a larger and complex reality: of the search for social success and recognition.

Socialization towards violence

3. Ideas of indoctrination or radicalization fail to take into account the processes of «socialization towards violence» at play. In other words, this means that through passages in various socialization spaces (family, school, community, peer groups, religious groups, etc.), some youths develop a perception that the use of violence can be legitimate and valued. Violent groups thus do not introduce youths to violence in a blank context. Rather, they build on and confer value to the capital of violence acquired by youths in these spaces.

Professionalization of violence

4. This study observes a phenomenon of «professionalization of violence». Some young people build up an experience of using violence as one would build up capital. They thrive thanks to the positive recognition of violence in their social environment. Finally, they trade their accumulated capital responding to demand within a "violence market".

A transnational dimension

5. This professionalization of violence occurs in a «violence market» that goes beyond national borders. Demand by armed groups is matched by the supply of a capital of violence offered by young people. This occurs according to socio-political developments and opportunities in the sub-region.

An educational crisis

6. From the point of view of the population who have participated in the present participatory research, a deep educational crisis affecting the family, the community and the school forms the basis of youths' paths toward violence. At the center of this dynamic is a «crisis of authority». This crisis concerns the authority of the teacher, as well as the lack of educational continuity between the family, the community and the school. Consequently, the school is no longer able to transmit basic skills. The entailed school's loss of credibility thus no longer allows education to structure the collective perception of "success embodiment" (the social construct of "what constitute success") in order to constructively guide young people in their active life.

Koranic school as a source of positive or negative resilience

7. Often accused of being a risk factor, Koranic schools may actually be a source of positive resilience thanks to their high degree of legitimacy among the populations due to their ability to ensure effective transmission of values and strong social control. They can nevertheless contribute to leading young people to new forms of violence: not because of their religious ideology, but because of the strong control/authority of the teacher over his students/*talibés*. If such a teacher is ill-intentioned, this allows him to direct the children toward the production of violence. This strong influence of the teacher can therefore constitute a factor of positive or negative resilience depending on how he makes use of it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Actions concerning youths and groups regarded as violent or «extreme»

1. **Support initiatives in favor of the youth by involving all stakeholders**. – Supporting the youths must be a priority. However, this must be done through cross-cutting actions that are not limited to the youths only. These must extend, at all stages of the process, to the other components of the community and society who constitute the social context that influences the paths of young people, which includes women/mothers, the elderly, the family, local success figures, teachers and religious leaders. The objective is to empower them with regard to their role and their expectations vis-à-vis the young people. Thus, positive dynamics (i.e. coaching/close supervision by the Koranic teacher) can be strengthened and negative dynamics (i.e. socialization towards violence) can be transformed. Finally, these young people need to fully take part in the life of their society. Valuing them as constructive actors must be an integral part of any action and strategy.

2. **Ensure community support to the reintegration of violent youths**. – Young people already involved in violence cannot be brought back on the right path in a sustainable manner by actions which do not take into account their immediate social environment. Reintegration initiatives must have the objective of reconnecting the individual to the society in the broadest sense. This requires close support and coaching by mentors/trusted persons (e.g. educators, social workers, teachers, etc.) who are capable of encouraging the creation of bonds of trust with the community and valuing the individual in order to allow him to socially exist.

3. **Place the strengthening of self-esteem and social recognition at the heart of initiatives targeting youth employment**. – Income generation, employment and entrepreneurship are part of the solution but are not sufficient. These initiatives must be complemented by an objective of social change. Concretely, this means placing the creation of income for youths in a logic of transformation of their roles in the community, their success models and resilience strategies. This logic of social change must orient the entire process, from the initial diagnoses, to the development of policies and projects, their theories of change, their change indicators, up to the evaluation of results.

4. **Value and integrate (instead of stigmatizing and excluding) groups that have broken their bonds with the society**. – The dangerousness of the groups does not come from their ideology but from their broken bonds with the society. So rather than designing actions aimed only to combat, isolate or delegitimize ideologies considered «radical», actions must aim to change the relationship with these groups. The objective should be to get them to recognize themselves as an integral part of the society whilst respecting their group identity. To achieve this, inclusive social dialogue must be facilitated at all levels to strengthen the federating element of these groups as an element of positive resilience, while minimizing risks related to their isolation/victimization.

5. **Take into consideration the existence of a professionalization of violence beyond national borders.** – Actions aimed to effectively address the professionalization of violence, both as regards the supply of violence services by young people and the demand by armed groups or other actors, must take into account the transnational dynamics in West Africa. In this sense, actions at local and national level must guide the regional discussions and mechanisms for decision-making and consultation including within the G5 Sahel, ECOWAS and the African Union.

Actions in the field of education

6. **Integrate the transmission of know-how and life skills in the education system and reassert the value of the teacher's role**. – The reinvention of a pedagogical approach and an educational model must be focused on the pedagogical relationship between the teacher and the student. The authority of the teacher must be understood beyond physical coercion and be built on relationship: that is to say, on the ability of the teacher to value and to coach a young person; by adopting a posture more like that of a mentor. On the basis of this relationship of mutual respect and recognition, actions aimed at reforming the educational system can begin to focus not only on the transmission of knowledge, but on the transmission of know-how and life skills (moral education), beyond the mere content of the curriculum.

7. **Ensure educational continuity between the family, the community and the school**. – The response to the crisis of authority of the teacher, which is at the heart of the larger educational crisis, cannot be limited to formal schools. Actions in the field of education must prioritize the development of educational continuity between the family, the community and the school to ensure, first, social recognition and endorsement of the school and of the teacher, and second, consistency between success models promoted among young people and the society in the broadest sense.

8. **Engage all stakeholders towards a better understanding of Koranic education to valorize best practices and identify the best possible junctions with the formal education system**. – Koranic education can be an element of positive resilience against the socialization crisis thanks to its model of close supervision and moral education. To better value best practices existing in this form of education, its students and its teachers, it is important to place the principals and teachers of Koranic schools, as well as the respective communities, at the center of the process aiming at creating a junction between formal education and Koranic education. In addition, it is important that the achievements of Koranic students are recognized by the formal education system.