

# Putting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda into practice

## White Paper





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**Good practices for enhancing the positive contribution of youth to conflict prevention and peacebuilding**

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December 2021

# Synthesis

## Good practices for enhancing the positive contribution of youth to conflict prevention and peacebuilding

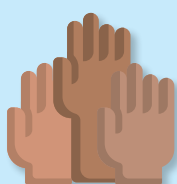


# Context

**R**esolution 2250 of the UN Security Council, on **Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)**, adopted in December 2015, recognised that youth make a positive contribution to maintaining and promoting peace and security. This landmark resolution, which has since been complemented by resolutions 2419

(2018) and 2535 (2020), urged Member States and relevant actors to **increase the representation of youth and their inclusive, effective and meaningful participation** in conflict prevention and peace-building efforts.

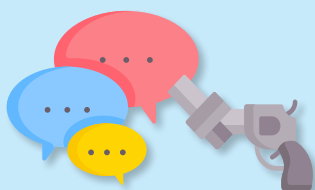
## The five pillars of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda



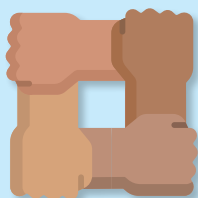
**Participation:** Involve young people in efforts to promote social cohesion, conflict prevention and resolution, and increase their representation in decision-making processes related to these issues.



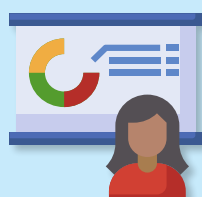
**Protection:** Protect young people in conflict, including from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and ensure the respect of their human rights.



**Prevention:** Recognise the role of young people and accompany them in the implementation of activities to prevent violence and strengthen social cohesion, and promoting a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural dialogue involving youth.



**Partnership:** Support politically, financially, technically and logistically the participation of young people in peacebuilding and encourage partnership between young people and different stakeholders to counter violent extremism.



**Disengagement and reintegration:** Integrate the needs of youth affected by armed conflict into disengagement and reintegration activities and build youth capacities through relevant training.

In practice, however, this agenda faces barriers in terms of access, resources, and representation. The dominant discourses and practice tend to position young people either as beneficiaries, or as “at risk youth” (particularly in the context of prevention of violent extremism), instead of realising their potential as leaders of positive and sustainable change.

These challenges and their consequences were identified in *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (hereafter *The Missing Peace*), an independent study mandated by the UN Secretary-General that was presented to the Security Council in April 2018.<sup>1</sup> The study is the result of a participatory process that involved 4,230 young people and 261 focus groups, six national consultations, seven regional consultations, and 25 country studies. One of these was *Youth Speak Out! Participatory analysis of their engagement for peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire*. Prepared by Interpeace and its partner Indigo Côte d'Ivoire,<sup>2</sup> it inspired a series of **recommendations** that encouraged organizations and States to:

1. **Invest in young people's capacities, agency and leadership** by building networks, strengthening capacity and providing substantial funding support.
2. **Transform the systems** that reinforce exclusion and address structural barriers that limit youth participation in peace and security.

3. **Prioritise partnerships and collaborative actions** that consider young people to be equal and essential partners for peace.

In this context, between 2019 and 2021 Interpeace and Indigo Côte d'Ivoire developed the project ‘YPS in practice: self-analysis and strengthening of youth leadership in the prevention of political violence in Côte d'Ivoire’ (henceforth ‘YPS in practice’). Funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, its aim was to **increase the participation of young people as actors and leaders** in efforts to prevent electoral conflicts by strengthening their capacities for analysis and action. Placing 40 young people, from two Abidjan communes at its heart, the project operationalised **the recommendations of the independent study** and promoted bridges and partnerships with national and international decision makers.

This **White Paper**, written by Interpeace and Indigo Côte d'Ivoire together with the project's youth leaders, draws out **key lessons and good practices** from the initiative. It is one response to the challenge of implementing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda nationally and locally, and provides **practical guidance** to governments, agencies, NGOs, international organizations, and private sector actors who wish to strengthen the participation of young people and their contribution to peace and security efforts.

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1 UNFPA and PBSO, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (2018), available on: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/youth/youth-web-english.pdf>

2 Interpeace and Indigo Côte d'Ivoire, *Youth Speak Out ! Participatory analysis of their engagement for peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire - Contribution to the Progress study on Youth, peace and security requested by Security Council resolution 2250* (2017), available on: <https://www.interpeace.org/resource/yps-cotedivoire-fr/>

# Project Description

The project aimed to leverage the potential of youth as actors and leaders in peacebuilding by strengthening their capacity to analyse and take action to prevent political violence in Côte d'Ivoire. More specifically, it helped a selection of young leaders to

1. Critically analyse youth involvement in political violence and peacebuilding.
2. Take more strategic, inclusive and impactful actions to prevent violence.
3. Connect with national and international policy makers to optimise youth involvement and collaboration on YPS issues.

To achieve these objectives, the project identified 40 young community leaders already active in seven community initiatives, trained them in peacebuilding, and accompanied them as they designed and implemented peacebuilding projects. The project built its action strategy on four pillars:



### **Inclusive mapping and selection of young leaders**

- It mapped 50 local initiatives committed to social cohesion in the Abobo and Yopougon communes of Abidjan.
- It selected 40 leaders under 35 years old from seven initiatives. The leaders had varied socio-cultural backgrounds. Half were girls; half were under 25.
- It selected seven social elders and community leaders as mentors.

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### **Practical capacity building for young leaders**

- The young leaders were trained in participatory action research (PAR), project management, and communication.
- Supported by Indigo CI and the mentors, the young leaders then used PAR to find out why young people mobilised in support of political violence.

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### **Young leaders design and implement projects on social cohesion.**

- The young leaders designed and implemented local projects that strengthened social cohesion and prevented political violence.
- Projects were funded and supported by a Participatory Technical and Financial Support Mechanism (MEPAS), composed of representatives of the initiatives, mentors, and members of Indigo.
- MEPAS members mapped, selected and accompanied two new initiatives.

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### **Young leaders communicate and advocate on the results.**

- The projects ran communication campaigns on social networks.
- The leaders organised meetings with local government officials and national and international decision-makers.
- They held public events to present the White Paper.

Through these actions, the youth leaders highlighted and communicated the positive role that young people play in promoting social cohesion and reducing violence in their communities. Bridges were also built with local, national and international decision-makers, who were encouraged to involve and empower youth in the design and implementation of peace and security policies.

# Results

At the conclusion of the project, the young leaders noted changes in themselves and in their environment.

## Analytical and strategic planning skills

- They analysed context in a more nuanced and participatory way before taking action to promote social cohesion. They were better able to take account of sensitivities, the diversity of actors, and the dynamics of youth participation in political violence.

*"Today we've understood that, to resolve a problem, you have to get the views of the different communities affected by it."*

Mariama Diomande, member of Jeunesse Unie pour le Développement (JUD).

*"Thanks to PAR, we included in our activities ex-combatants, young people from the fumoirs*

*[places to consume drugs], transport workers and shopkeepers. Through the focus groups, we learned that each of these milieux has its own perception of political violence and the reasons that push young people to engage in violence."*

Alassane Coulibaly, member of the Génération Consciente de Côte d'Ivoire

- They designed and implemented actions more strategically, because actions were rooted in PAR analyses and shared good practices, helping to promote peace in their communities.

*"It's true we did lots of things in our communities, but with this project we saw things differently. We understood that when you want to run a project, when you really target the right people, your project can make an impact."*

Kiteni Yeo, member of Tchêlê Woyê.

*"The PAR method enabled us to have a better approach to detecting problems and a better process for resolving them. For example, when there's a problem in a community, you have to find the right people in relation to that problem and involve them in searching for a solution."*

Aïcha Diabaté, member of the Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbékoi.

## Valuing the role and resilience of youth

- Young people abandoned a defeatist and resigned discourse about the participation of young people in political and electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire. They found new motivation and the capacity to work and act on conflict prevention.

*"I realised that I can be the problem if I don't engage, if I don't take the first step. But I also understood that I can be the solution by bringing [young people] together."*

Idriss Ouattara, member of Association Génération Consciente de Côte d'Ivoire in Bobo (GCCl).

*"I understood that young people can initiate action to bring their community together."*

Aya Sandra Kouakou, member of Femmes Progrès.

- **Young leaders affirmed and revalorised their positive role** as actors who promote social cohesion and prevent violence in their communities.

*"People who used to reject us greet us, saying 'children we are here'. People in our neighbourhood can count on our support to strengthen their capacity."*

Kiteni Yeo, member of Tchêlê Woyê.

*"Thanks to the project, I have become a role model for the young people we work with, they admire what we do for the community as young people."*

Fatoumata Yéo, member of Tchêlê Woyê.



## Governance

- **Initiatives are more participatory and inclusive.** They value the competences of each individual and empower women and young people under 25.

*"At the level of YIPE, we understood after the critical self-evaluation that we had to structure our organization better. Today we have put our girl members in positions of responsibility where they can decide YIPE's future."*

Jean-Luc Konan, member of Young Ivorian Promoters of English.

*"Today, we take account of everyone's opinion, even those under 25. Before, only the leaders picked activities and managed the finances."*

Abdoulaye Coulibaly, member of Génération Consciente de Côte d'Ivoire.

- **Project management skills and practices** have improved (budgeting, result monitoring, project development, communications, drafting of statutes, etc.).

*"As we work today, we've understood that, when you do an activity, you have to make a financial*

*report and a narrative report on it."*

Kiteni Yeo, member of Tchêlê Woyê.

*"Through our Facebook page, our activities are filmed, photographed and posted. It helps to create a Facebook page because you can publicise your initiative and actions on social*

*media."*

Mariam Coulibaly, member of the Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbékoi.

## Collaboration among youth and with decision-makers:

- **Initiatives collaborate better, with each other and other young people**, when they design and implement social cohesion projects.

*"As part of our efforts to bring synergy to our activities, members of the NGO Tchêlê Woyê, which works for women, participated in the focus group of the girls of Agbékoi. This structured and reassured the initiative and the participants."*

Aïcha Diabate, member of the Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbekoi.

*"JUD and YIPE came in to help us to analyse systematically the results of our consultations. We participated in YIPE's focus group and brought them our experience."*

Fatoumata Yéo, member of Tchêlê Woyê.

- They built **bridges between community initiatives and leaders** to reverse a dynamic that excluded youth from participating in peace and security activities in their communities.

*"The initiative these young girls have taken is one that should be encouraged. I call this youth awareness. Few manage to share. Few are able to bring people together. But if the adults lack ideas, if the elders lack ideas, but young people*

*have ideas, we should ask God to bless them to continue."*

Pastor Zeze, Agbekoi district in Abobo, about the Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbekoi

## Inter-community rapprochement and conflict prevention

- **Inter-community rapprochement progressed and dialogue resumed** between members of opposing ethno-political groups, whose conflicts threaten social cohesion and the conduct of peaceful elections.

*"I didn't think the two neighbourhoods could play football without starting a fight. But with this project, it was possible."*

A student from Yopougon after a match organized by Jeunesse Unie pour le Développement (JUD) between the Doukouré and Yao Sehi neighbourhoods, which have been in conflict since the 2011 post-election crisis.

*"Before you could see that people were separated, at the least they mistrusted each other. But now that's not the case. That became clear, for example, during the recent demonstrations when young people from Abobo started to threaten members of the Hausa community [after a false rumour was spread accusing Nigerien Hausas of torturing Ivorians]. When that happened here at the Academy, we, all the youth together, protected the Hausas."*

Kouadio Taki Alexis Koffi, participant in the project of Tchêlê Woyê.

# Good Practices

## 1

### **Undertake a comprehensive mapping of youth that takes into account diversity among the youth population, before selecting participants.**

*The Missing Peace* underlined that young people are not a homogeneous group, nor are they only represented by youth organizations. They are found in every category and stratum of society. Action that aspires to be inclusive must therefore go beyond young people who are easily accessible or part of the elite. It must reach young people who, because of their origin, geographic location or level of education, are rarely heard or supported by projects of national or international scope. The involvement of all young people gives meaning to Pillar 1 of the YPS agenda on the effective and inclusive participation of young people.

To identify participants, it is necessary to do a detailed and inclusive mapping of young men and women whose actions have an impact on the dynamics of peace and social cohesion in areas of intervention. A mapping process, using individual or group interviews, can identify which young people are most relevant and can contribute most to the objectives of the project.

As well as groups and associations that explicitly address peace or social cohesion, it is important to identify more informal initiatives, such as tontines,<sup>3</sup> student associations, or local youth associations, which seek to bring communities together in their neighbourhoods and have in-depth knowledge of socio-community dynamics. Mapping must also take into account the heterogeneity of ‘youth worlds’, in other words, the different spheres in which young people operate (as activists, artists, members of student or transport unions, security personnel, etc.) and their modes of organization. Each of these ‘worlds’ contains many potential peace actors with the influence and will to act positively on their environment.

*"When you implement [your project], you have to tell yourself that you'll have to engage with some worlds you were afraid of. You'll involve these worlds because they are relevant to the implementation of your projects in a given community."*

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Jean-Luc Konan, member of the Young Ivorian Promoters of English.

When deciding the selection criteria for a YPS project, it is often challenging to set the age limit. *The Missing Peace* showed that the passage to adolescence or adulthood is neither uniform nor predetermined. Official chronological age markers are often considered stages that indicate periods of transition in life: the end of childhood or the beginning of adulthood.<sup>4</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, it is not uncommon to find ‘youth presidents’ who are more than 40 years old. Under these conditions, it is necessary to balance internation-

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<sup>3</sup> A group of women who gather subscriptions for a fund that each member draws on in turn.

<sup>4</sup> *The Missing Peace* (2018), p. 9.

al standards and local practices, and to adopt a flexible approach that serves the objectives of the action. In this project, the age limit for participants was set at 35, but the team was careful to include younger people who had influence and capacity to mobilise.

Profile of youth initiatives selected for the project	
<b>Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbekoi (AJFA)</b> Agbekoi district (Abobo)	An association of young girls under 25 years of age that brings Christian and Muslim girls together for dialogue, recreational and health activities, in a neighbourhood where years of socio-political crisis have generated a deep identity divide.
<b>Génération Consciente de Côte d'Ivoire (GCCl)</b> Bocabo district (Abobo)	A neighbourhood association that brings together groups of young people from different ethnic backgrounds and sectors, as well as young people and social elders.
<b>Association des Jeunes Unis de Belleville (AJUB)</b> Belleville district (Abobo)	A neighbourhood association that works to improve health and social cohesion in Belleville, and increase the recognition that youth groups receive from social elders.
<b>Young Ivorians Promoting English (YIPE)</b> Toit Rouge district (Yopougon)	An organization of young students and pupils that initially formed to promote use of the English language by holding debates on social issues. More recently, it became involved in issues of social cohesion, particularly the risks associated with manipulation of information.
<b>Jeunesse Unie pour le Développement (JUD)</b> Doukouré district (Yopougon)	A neighbourhood association that brings together the Doukouré and Yao Séhi neighbourhoods through dialogue, street cleaning and sporting activities. The neighbourhoods have been in conflict since the last socio-political crisis.
<b>Tchêlê Woyê</b> Several districts of Yopougon	An NGO that promotes women's empowerment in several localities in Côte d'Ivoire, and has worked more recently on peace and social cohesion issues in Abidjan.
<b>Femme Progrès</b> Several districts of Yopougon	A local association, previously active on gender-based violence, health and women's literacy, which more recently has become involved in peace and security issues.

# 2

## Anticipate the risk of political appropriation and prioritise initiatives that show strong civic commitment to their community.

In Côte d'Ivoire, as elsewhere, young people are aware that they can be instrumentalised and used by adults and political elites, by political organizations but also gangs or armed groups.<sup>5</sup>

In 2020, before the Ivorian elections, political actors sought to mobilise youth groups to convey their messages and there was a significant risk that certain projects would be **politically appropriated**. Rather than target young people with a strong political commitment, 'YPS in practice' therefore selected initiatives that had a public utility, were independent of political parties, and did not favour any particular identity group. These criteria were not exhaustive; they could be adapted to the objectives and realities of each initiative. Some initiatives that were slightly politicised were selected because they showed a willingness to question their practices and promote peace. Through the project, these initiatives gradually became aware of the risks that certain logics of political mobilization carry for social cohesion, recognised that neutrality is important when trying to bring people together across community divides, and adapted their discourse and actions to be more inclusive.

If, during the design phase, a project foresees that some stakeholders may become involved in violence or with politicised actors, it should analyse the risks and opportunities associated with their participation, their capacity to be actors for change, and take measures to prevent the project from being instrumentalised for political ends, in order to protect young people and their civic engagement.



5 Ibid., p. 40.

# 3

## Involve social elders as mentors as well as decision-makers, in order to bridge the intergenerational gap and increase the impact of initiatives

Youth participants in *The Missing Peace* stressed the importance of intergenerational dialogue to counter negative stereotypes of youth and reduce gaps in participation and representation in peace and security efforts.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore important to create bridges and inclusive forms of dialogue between young people and decision-makers, that reach beyond a simple invitation "to the adults' table". Such steps promote the active participation of youth in decision-making (pillar 1 of the YPS agenda) and cause social elders and authorities to recognise their contributions to peace.

To achieve this goal, 'YPS in practice' encouraged community leaders to mentor youth leaders and engaged policy makers through advocacy. The mentoring system served a triple purpose. First, the mentoring relationship made social elders more aware of the positive roles youth play and the need to value them. Second, it facilitated youth access to decision-making spheres and to other community leaders relevant to their initiatives. Third, it fostered an exchange of skills and mutual aid that helped narrow the intergenerational gap. To identify mentors, it is important to consider several criteria, including their experience, skills, networks, availability, and predisposition to promote the role of youth in peace and security issues.

*"Our objective was to facilitate the initiatives of young people in the community. The role of an elder is to be willing, supportive, to listen as well as possible, in order to work together. Our role was not to impose our vision. The youth set up their own initiatives, when they are not sure, we bring them our experience."*

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Noubonnaua Koné, project mentor.

Contacts with political and administrative decision-makers in towns, ministries and other institutions are also valuable in several ways. Interviews with decision-makers enable youth leaders to better understand the peace, security and youth policies of their institutions. Presenting their work to decision-makers makes young people feel valued as peace actors and builds their advocacy and networking capacity. They can also explore the possibilities of partnership and institutional or financial support for future projects. In return, decision-makers discover a pool of peace actors who are ready to promote social cohesion and security in their neighbourhoods.

*"We understood that these young people of Yopougon and Abobo have resources. We came to accompany the youth, but we also received from them."*

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Gnininmankiyé Ineka, project mentor.

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6 Ibid, p. 66.

Through 'YPS in practice', decision-makers also learned how innovative and creative young people can be when they promote social cohesion in their neighbourhoods, and this inspired them to develop their own peace and security actions.

*"I appreciated the approach [the youth] took to implement their activities. A diagnosis was made at the start, to understand what elements could have generated the various misunderstandings that occurred in the different targeted communities. On this basis, the youth were able to work with people in the communities, and overall the results were positive. It's an interesting thing. I think that on this point, we can count on our youth, they show through these initiatives that there are still people who are attached to peace, which is a precondition for development."*

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Arsène Okobe, representative of the Ministry of Youth Promotion, Professional Insertion and Civic Service.

Collaboration with community mentors and policy makers aligns with Pillar 4 of the YPS agenda on partnership, which encourages different stakeholders to support youth to participate in peacebuilding, politically, financially, technically and logistically.

As noted in good practice (2), projects should analyse the potential affiliations of mentors and decision-makers with political parties, violent groups, or other influential actors, to assess whether they represent opportunities or risks for the project, and to protect young people and their civic engagement (pillar 2 of the YPS agenda on protection).

## 4

### Empower women and youth under 25

Resolution 2250 stressed the central role of inclusion in peace and security issues, emphasised the essential contribution of civil society actors and encouraged participation by traditionally excluded groups, including women and youth.

In Côte d'Ivoire, there is a tendency to infantilise people younger than oneself, even within the same age group, and to exclude them from decision-making. Similarly, young women tend to remain on the margins of discussions and actions on peace and security issues, despite their distinct experiences and roles in these dynamics.

'YPS in practice' therefore aimed to increase their participation in activities and their initiatives and to empower them. Half the young leaders selected were under 25 years old and half were women from mixed and women's initiatives. In addition to numerical balance, the project sought to empower women and younger people through training and activities. It encouraged them to share their opinions and undertake strategic tasks, such as facilitating dialogue sessions, taking notes, or presenting during debriefings and public meetings. Although some participants were initially critical, the competence and legitimacy of women and those under-25 gradually became apparent during group exercises and collective actions.

*"At the beginning, as a junior member of the group, I was afraid to get involved and to speak at trainings. I thought the training was above my level, I couldn't express myself, I was ashamed. But during the first discussion groups, I, Aminata, facilitated. When I go around the neighbourhood today, my friends see me differently. I feel valued."*

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Aminata Traoré, member of the Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbekoi.

The inclusion of women's initiatives also made it possible to approach exclusively female social circles that confront identity conflicts relevant to electoral violence and 'YPS in practice'. Although some of these groups (tontines and women's literacy associations) do not seem at first glance to focus on preventing political violence, their members are often women from a variety of groups who try to calm their neighbourhoods and are well aware of the conflictual dynamics.

This confirms the intersection that exists between the agenda of resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and the agenda of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security intersect. As *The Missing Peace* pointed out, this linkage creates opportunities to address the critical role of young women and the construction of gender in preventing violent conflict and sustaining peace.<sup>7</sup>

*"Today in the initiative girls are increasingly valued, they are taking on responsibilities and even strategic positions. Putting girls at the forefront of activities has allowed men to understand that young girls can initiate actions for peace and this has motivated and encouraged other girls and women in the community to give credit and take interest in our project."*

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Gueu Jean-Paul Siaman, member of Young Ivorian Promoters of English.

## 5

### **Train young people to analyze conflict dynamics to inform and guide their actions**

To be strategic, and to contribute effectively to peace and security, an initiative must take into consideration all the dynamics and actors that influence conflicts in the target area. If they analyse the context and all the factors that influence peace positively or negatively, young leaders can more successfully prioritise the challenges that must be addressed in their communities (tensions between rival gangs, conflicts in the field of transport, hate speech on the networks, stigmatisation of certain groups, etc.) and decide which actors must be involved and what actions should be taken to achieve the desired results.

*"Our religious leaders were in conflict and even as sons of the neighbourhood we didn't know. There were disagreements between our religious guides, disagreements between the community leaders, and it was through the discussion groups that these things came out. And after our debriefings we were able to put certain things in place [to resolve the disagreements]."*

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Fousseni Traore, member of the Association des Jeunes Unis de Belleville.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

To enable young leaders to do these assessments autonomously in their initiatives, the project trained them in participatory action research (PAR) techniques. PAR is a qualitative and collaborative tool that gives a voice to the main actors concerned by a problem and involves them in developing sustainable and peaceful solutions by analysing their experiences and knowledge of the issue in question. It is one of many methods of conducting conflict analysis that use knowledge "of the grassroots, for the grassroots", focus on dialogue, and involve in the search for solutions people who will be necessary to implement those solutions.<sup>8</sup>

*"We had to reach out to gnambros [people responsible for collecting public transport fees and loading passengers], we had to reach out to the unions [groups that organize informal transport], we even had to go to the fumoirs [places to consume drugs] to meet people we thought were really relevant in the search for solutions to this problem."*

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**Jean-Luc Konan, member of the Young Ivorian Promoters of English.**

After training, the young leaders ran a participatory analysis by themselves in different neighbourhoods of Abobo and Yopougon. This exercise helped them understand why their peers mobilise in support of political violence and enabled them to change their perception of political violence and its manifestations in society. The young leaders also acquired skills they could apply in future projects - in mapping actors, writing interview questions, running dialogue sessions, etc.

*"At the beginning, the JUD did not listen to people, if I may say so, to find out what the problem was. Today, we realise that to identify a problem you have to know the views of the different communities that are affected. (...) So from now on, at the JUD, we seek out the views of different groups as we work out what the problem is."*

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**Mariama Diomande, member of Jeunesse Unie pour le Développement.**

Without becoming academic researchers, the young leaders realised the value of this methodology and started to replicate it in their efforts to understand social phenomena that influence peace and design inclusive forms of action that meet the needs expressed. The practical training they received in participatory conflict and context analysis responds to pillar 3 of the YPS agenda on prevention, in that it improves the capacity of young people to better prevent political or inter-community violence in their neighbourhoods.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on PAR methodology, see <http://communitylearningpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PARtoolkit.pdf>.

# 6

## Accompany young leaders when they design and implement their peace and social cohesion projects

While it is widely acknowledged that young people are key actors who should be included in peace and security-building efforts, in practice they are often relegated to roles as 'beneficiaries' or 'workers' in already planned initiatives. Young people therefore perceive that their inclusion and participation is symbolic and not meaningful. Young people consulted for *The Missing Peace* said that youth should be involved from the start in the design of peace actions, and should participate in decision-making and key stages of implementation. This would move young people from being *subjects* to becoming *actors* in projects, enabling them in the process to develop the skills they need to carry out their own initiatives independently.

Such an approach implies a paradigm shift in the way that projects are managed. Projects will need to give significant attention to capacity building and coaching throughout their design and implementation. The 'YPS in practice' team made sure that actions to reduce the risks of political violence were designed, decided and implemented by young leaders, who were supported by training and local coaching.

After conducting a participatory PAR analysis, each initiative was asked to write a short project proposal to address a social cohesion issue relevant to the prevention of electoral violence. The team helped young leaders to write their proposals, which included a conflict analysis, objectives, activities to achieve the objectives, a budget and a timeline. After they had reviewed and validated their proposals, the young leaders then drafted monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to enable them to evaluate the results and impacts of their projects and learn from their mistakes. To implement project activities, the programme set up a participatory grant scheme (MEPAS<sup>9</sup>), which the young leaders also managed. Each initiative was required to send requests for funds, supported by documentation, to a local youth leader who had been appointed administrative and financial manager. The manager reviewed requests and transferred them to Indigo Côte d'Ivoire for validation. Money then passed through the manager to the project. In this way, the programme achieved its objective, to ensure inclusiveness and youth participation from design to implementation, including monitoring and funding, fulfilling pillar 1 of the YPS agenda.

This process was accompanied by training in project management and coaching tailored to the needs of each initiative. Training and coaching were delivered by Indigo Côte d'Ivoire, but also by mentors and young leaders, thereby promoting endogenous transfer of skills. The provision of support required human and financial resources, including mentors who possessed appropriate experience and were ready to give time to young leaders. Support was also facilitated by a good knowledge of the field and expertise in running activities with young people from all backgrounds in ways that make them comfortable and confident. The approach adopted - customised training followed by practical application adapted to the context of each initiative - aligned with pillar 5 of the YPS agenda on disengagement and reintegration, which emphasises the value of relevant training to integration of young people in society, and also promoted a culture of peace as recommended in pillar 3 on prevention. Although the 'YPS in practice' approach faced some challenges, it

9 Mécanisme Participatif de Soutien technique et financier (Participatory Mechanism for Technical and Financial Support).

enabled young leaders to see themselves as legitimate actors for peace in their communities rather than simple beneficiaries of a project.

*"It's a pleasure to participate in the development of a project because it's a first time for us. With the discord that exists in my neighbourhood, I managed to create for them [the conflicting actors] a space for exchange. Things have started to improve, I am in great demand in my community now because of the image the project has given me. The current president of the neighbourhood asked that I be the future president of the neighbourhood youth. He and I decided to involve other social elders to increase the impact of our actions."*

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**Idriss Ouattara, member of Génération Consciente de Côte d'Ivoire.**

The combination of close accompaniment, training, and PAR enabled young leaders to question their practices, their attitudes and the way they carried out past community actions. Many became aware of the need to adopt calmer and more neutral behaviours to bring conflicting groups together.

*"A good facilitator is one who is not biased, who keeps his or her cool whatever the problem and has the ability to listen to everyone. A good moderator who's able to value everyone regardless of their rank and milieu."*

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**Julius Tra Bi Tra, member of the Association des Jeunes Unis de Belleville.**

They also recognised that they needed to clarify their social cohesion objectives, and give time to dialogue and discussion of the issues. Most of the projects they delivered were not only appreciated by the community but had a real impact. They helped people to live together and prevented violence at neighbourhood level, meeting pillar 3 of the YPS agenda on prevention.

*"AJUB plays its role in bringing us together (...). AJUB allows me to sit today next to a Guéré person, AJUB allows me to sit next to a religious leader (...) All these people have come together."*

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**Representative of the Baoulé ethnic group in Belleville (Abobo).**

Another lesson learned is that young people's civic engagement runs alongside their daily lives. Some work, others study, and they cannot dedicate more than one or two days a week to project activities. The selection of young leaders must therefore consider their availability, to avoid them dropping out. Whether the same leaders are present at all project activities, or initiatives run a rotation system, it is also important to make sure that leaders report back to other members of the initiative.

# 7

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## Promote collaboration between and within youth organizations

To strengthen the role of young people in peace and security issues, there is a need to increase collaboration and solidarity among young leaders, so that they can support each other, learn from each other's experiences and amplify their demands. The importance of partnerships, coalitions and networks to increase collaboration is emphasised by pillar 4 (on partnership) of resolution 2250 and is a major recommendation of *The Missing Peace*. Strengthening youth collaboration is particularly important in the Ivorian context, where competition often occurs between organizations and sometimes between members of the same organization.

*"When you want to carry out an activity but most members aren't available, you shouldn't have to drop the activity because there aren't enough people, so all of a sudden members of other initiatives brought back up to help us do things."*

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Kiteni Yeo, member of Tchêlê Woyê.

MEPAS allowed representatives from each initiative to meet regularly to inform each other of progress, successes and obstacles encountered. Participants exchanged good practices and lessons learned, but also offered assistance to initiatives in difficulty. MEPAS representatives were also tasked with selecting two new external initiatives to strengthen social cohesion and prevent political violence and accompanied the creation of the new projects.

*"During implementation of our action plan, the collaboration and accompaniment of the Association des Jeunes Unis de Belleville (AJUB) allowed us to adopt a more relevant strategy for our work. We hadn't taken part in the PAR trainings, but with AJUB supporting us in each of our activities we were able to run discussion sessions with the youth."*

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Jocelyn Ahibey, member of Africa Stop Immigration by Entrepreneurship (an initiative selected and supported by MEPAS).

During the coaching sessions, the project team pushed young leaders to question the quality of collaboration in their initiatives, particularly the distribution of roles between members and decision-making mechanisms. Some of them reviewed their organizational and governance model, and transferred certain responsibilities to other members - who then felt freer to express themselves and suggest actions to promote peace and cohesion in their communities.

*"Now, when we plan our activities, we take the opinion of everyone, even the 'smallest'. After each meeting, we take minutes. And if there is a problem, we call everyone and open a debate."*

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Aïcha Diabate, member of the Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbékoi.



## Conclusion

By placing young men and women from reputedly sensitive neighbourhoods in Abidjan at the centre of peace and political violence prevention projects, ‘YPS in practice’ aimed to apply the precepts and five pillars of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda at local level. Through training, mentoring and networking, the young men and women of the project have increased the impact of their initiatives on peace in their communities, and promoted the positive role of youth to local and national authorities.

This white paper presented the lessons and good practices learned by the team and young leaders. These can help to strengthen and enhance the positive contributions of youth to peace and security.

Among them is the need to consider youth in their diversity, to capitalise on initiatives that already work at all levels for peace, and to accompany and empower young leaders in an inclusive and participatory manner.

In Côte d'Ivoire, as elsewhere, young people show a willingness to commit themselves at all levels to promote peace and reduce sources of tension in their environment. It is up to national and international actors to recognise, value and support their positive energy, which can help strengthen models of civic engagement and contribute to an inclusive and lasting peace. ■



This White Paper has been written with the support of youth initiatives accompanied by the ‘YPS in practice’ project (in alphabetical order):

- Association Femmes Progrès Côte d'Ivoire
- Association des Jeunes Filles d'Agbékoi (AJFA)
- Association des Jeunes Unis de Belleville (AJUB)
- Génération Consciente de Côte d'Ivoire (GCCl)
- Jeunesse Unie pour le Développement (JUD)
- ONG Tchêlê Woyê (Women let us stand)
- Young Ivoirian Promoters of English (YIPE)



indigo CÔTE D'IVOIRE  
Initiative de Dialogue et Recherche - Action pour la Paix

**Indigo Côte d'Ivoire** (Initiative de Dialogue et de Recherche-Action pour la Paix) is a non-governmental organization under Ivorian law committed to strengthening social cohesion and promoting development through the establishment of an informed and inclusive dialogue oriented towards change. For nearly eight years, Indigo Côte d'Ivoire has been implementing participatory action research processes in different regions of Côte d'Ivoire. Indigo Côte d'Ivoire has about twenty projects implemented or in progress. Its main areas of expertise are support for the reintegration of vulnerable or at-risk populations, community dialogue for peace, and thematic participatory research.



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**Interpeace** is an international peacebuilding organization. With over 25 years of experience, it has implemented a wide range of peacebuilding programmes in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Interpeace aims to strengthen the capacity of societies to manage conflict in a non-violent and non-coercive manner, supporting national actors in their efforts to develop social and political cohesion. In Côte d'Ivoire, Interpeace has been working since 2012 with its local partner Indigo-Côte d'Ivoire to facilitate the implementation of inclusive responses to challenges related to political violence, rural land management, and youth participation in peace and security efforts. Our strategy emphasises local ownership and expertise, including as much as possible all affected groups and actors from different spheres of society: from national authorities to civil society and communities.





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