

Provisional programme

Youth and the State: addressing the violence of exclusion and building partnerships

Wednesday 11 – Friday 13 December 2019 | WP1715

With over 1.8 billion youth between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world today, we are living with the largest youth population in history. Supporting and empowering young people is a rising priority for policymakers, governance and inclusive growth agendas and investment at local, national, regional and global levels.

At the same time, many decision makers and politicians continue to fear that large youth populations may ignite political unrest and violence while states often neither ensure safe and inclusive spaces for youth nor fully tap into the potential that young people bring to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

While the overwhelming majority of youth do not engage in violence, nations with large youth populations often have shrinking civic space and higher levels of state repression. Grievances against the state for negligence, marginalisation and abuse are a consistent predictor for political violence, including violent extremism.

Addressing these root causes are critical in ensuring young people exercise their individual agency and voice and have an enabling environment to meaningfully engage in development processes. Such engagement could also support the broader revitalisation of inclusive politics and policy-making in our societies.

This meeting seeks to build on the Wilton Park dialogue Youth, Peace and Security and CVE, which took place in Washington DC in April 2019. At that event, participants focused on the 2018 report, ["The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security"](#) and the paper, ["Youth and the Field of Countering Violent Extremism,"](#) (2019) published by Promundo. Key themes that emerged from the discussion include the following:

- There is need for seismic change – ‘business as usual is not working’ – and the

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critical importance of political will to effect change;

- Unless we tackle systemic issues – government, security and police repression etc. – we will not address the main problems affecting youth;
- Trust (or lack of trust) is a central component in youth-state relations. Loss of trust in governments and in representative democracy or in multilateralism is matched and often reinforced by loss of trust in economies which appear to exclude young women and men;
- Corruption and political instability drives grievance and exclusion; the same happens when state security services work against youth;
- There is a need to challenge the dominant narrative of youth as ‘trouble’ and lacking capacity to do peacebuilding well (youth typically do not have the political space to promote peace and security);
- Young people’s peaceful protest and legitimate political activities are often suppressed and targeted in the name of CVE or CT. Hence young people are often more afraid of their governments than they are of terrorists or extremist groups;
- Current development and C/PVE approaches lead to initiatives which do not always include the youth we need to reach;
- Approaches to youth challenges focus on short-term projects and programmes; even when programmes go to scale, they are unsustainable once the funding comes to an end;
- There is an alternative, creative investment path in the sources of youth resilience and through opening up spaces for the positive contribution of young women and men through inclusion and participation;
- How can high-level political will translate into practical implementation?
- How are online communities shaping societies? What are examples of credible approaches and voices in social media spaces?

The follow-up event at Wilton Park in December 2019 is on Youth and the State. Participants will connect this discussion to the above-mentioned reports, as well as to [Frontlines](#), recently released by UNDP (May 2019) and Agenda 2030, in particular SDG16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Participants will analyse relations between youth and state and the reasons why they are so often based on fear, mistrust and resentment as well as assumptions that are misleading and counterproductive. The event also will reference promising practices that seek to improve youth-state relations, even when state repression and exclusion of youth is significant.

Central to the discussion will be examining how key actors (governments - including security sectors - and regional organisations, youth activists, donor institutions and practitioners) address or avoid central factors in the youth-state dynamic. Instructive examples and approaches that promise to enable inclusive and collaborative youth-state engagement will be highlighted.

The purpose of the meeting is to identify key constraints and opportunities for reversing youth exclusion and improving relations between young people and their respective governments, linking this to broader processes of building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. This will include developing a plan for concerted action that draws from the reports and existing normative and policy frameworks, and then addresses the specific roles of youth activists, governments and regional organizations, other development partners/donor institutions and practitioners. This action plan may be developed further in subsequent meetings.

**In partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, Mercy Corps, USAID and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
In association with Search for Common Ground**

Wednesday 11 December

1500-1545

Participants arrive. Tea and coffee on arrival

1545

Welcome and introduction

Alison Hilliard

Programme Director, Wilton Park

Marc Sommers

International Consultant, Washington DC

Saji Prelis

Director, Children & Youth Programmes, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), Washington DC

1615-1730

1. Youth-State dynamics - The Violence of Exclusion

How are youth-state relations characterised today? Why is 'business as usual' as an approach to youth-state relations so unproductive? What drives many states to repress and marginalise youthful citizens? How has this shaped the exclusion many young people experience, and negatively affected broader governance processes? To what extent does youth that exclusion range from institutional and political spheres to economic and social spheres as well? How does gender impact youth-state relations? How do states engage with female youth and male youth? Do male and female youth employ different strategies when they deal with state authorities? What is an effective approach to addressing the main problems affecting youth and states today?

Graeme Simpson

Director, Interpeace USA; Lead Author, Youth, Peace and Security Progress Study, United Nations, New York

Ikram Ben Said

Feminist Activist, Aswat Nisaa, Tunis

Wevyn Muganda

Programme Coordinator, Haki Africa, Mombasa

1730-1800

Tea/coffee

1800-1900

2. Youth-State dynamics - The Violence of Exclusion

Mohamed Bangura

Minister of Youth Affairs, Government of Sierra Leone, Freetown

1900

Reception followed by dinner

Thursday 12 December

0800-0845

Breakfast

0830

Briefing for working group facilitators

0900-1030

3. The key constraints and challenges in improving relations between young people and the state

What are the key constraints to improving relations between youth and states? Can a middle ground be created? If so, how? How should systemic issues, such as state repression and youth exclusion, be addressed? How can trust be nurtured in youth-state relations? And how can this be addressed given the perceptions and the reality of growing horizontal inequality, increasingly exclusive economies and the lack of opportunity or future vision for young people? How should gender-specific differences in youth-state relations inform policy reform, programming and advocacy efforts involving youth and their governments?

Marc Sommers

International Consultant, Washington DC

Barik Mhadeen

Senior Researcher, Human Security, WANA Institute, Amman

Noëlla Richard

Youth Policy Specialist (Global), Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, United Nations Development Programme, New York

1030-1115

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

1115-1215

4. Breakout groups

Why is it important to strengthen dialogue and opportunities between youth and State institutions? What are the main sensitive-yet-vital issues that need to be addressed? When fear and suspicion of the other is at its peak, what can be done to promote productive conversations between youth and states institutions? What can be done to improve youth-state relations when states actively repress youth and when youth are protesting on the streets?

Facilitators:

Lilian Aber

Chairperson, National Youth Council, Kampala

Lorraine Degruson

Leading Coordinator, United Network of Young Peacebuilders, The Hague

Roy Sasaka Telewa

Chief Executive Officer, National Youth Council of Kenya, Nairobi

Ahmet Soguktas

Programme Coordinator, World Urban Youth Councils Network, UN Habitat, New York

1215-1315

5. Feedback

Feedback from break out groups.

1315-1415

Lunch

1415-1500

Free time

1500-1630

6. Key opportunities for reversing youth exclusion and improving youth-state relations

What are the key opportunities for reversing youth exclusion and improving relations between young people and their governments? Examples of promising youth-state relations exist. Can these examples be modelled and adapted elsewhere? How should interested parties (governments, regional organisations, donors, UN agencies, international NGOs and local civil society) advocate with governments to reform state approaches to youthful populations? What strategies do or do not work at different levels of governance, from local to national?

Saji Prelis

Director, Children & Youth Programmes, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), Washington DC

Alexandra Bowe

Multilateral Engagement, Home Office, London

Lydia Mathia

Senior Youth Advisor, Office of the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, Nairobi

Maurice Amollo

Chief of Party, Mercy Corps, Abuja

1630-1700

Tea/coffee

1700-1715

7. Soft launch of online toolkit on integrating youth in democracy, rights and governance

Michael McCabe

Agency Youth Coordinator, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Washington DC

1715-1830

8. Break out groups

How can seismic change in youth-state relations take place? What priorities would support a major breakthrough? What must each group – governments, regional organisations, donors, UN agencies, international NGOs, civil society – do to facilitate a breakthrough?

Facilitators:

Lawrence Muli

Consultant, Commonwealth Youth Programme, Commonwealth Secretariat, London

Michael McCabe

Agency Youth Coordinator, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Washington DC

Lynrose Genon

Co-Director, Project YACAP; Faculty Member, Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Iligan City

Charles Kajoloweka

Executive Director, Youth and Society (YAS), Mzuzu

1830

Reception followed by dinner

Fireside chat facilitated by:

Rowan Laxton

High Commissioner to Cameroon, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Yaoundé

Panellists:

Foutsou Mounouna

Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education Cameroon, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education, Yaoundé

Achaleke Christian Leke

Pan-Commonwealth Coordinator, Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN), London

Friday 13 December

0800-0845

Breakfast and checkout

0900-1000

9. Feedback

Feedback from break out groups.

1000-1130

10. Designing a future framework for action for improving youth/state relations

Where does leverage exist for reforming youth-state relations? Exactly what must be done? How can there be accountability for effective follow through? Should certain groups employ UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace and security or SDG 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies in particular ways to enhance sustainable positive impact? If so, how? Why does there seem to be strong international support for the youth, peace and security agenda, yet this does not translate into national contexts? How can youth ministries work with all other Ministries of the Government, and with local government and civil society, to implement this agenda.

Anna Sherburn

Deputy Head, Countering Violent Extremism Unit, Commonwealth Secretariat, London

Uzra Zeya

CEO and President, Alliance for Peacebuilding, Washington DC

Malual Bol Kiir

Founder, African Youth Action Network, Juba

Intissar Kherigi

Programmes Director, Jasmine Foundation, Tunis

1130-1200

Tea/coffee

1200-1215

11. Evaluation survey

Completion of online survey

1215-1330

12. Next steps, identifying practical actions, recommendations and way forward

Selena Victor

Senior Director, Policy & Advocacy, Mercy Corps, London

1330

Lunch

1430

Participants depart