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Abbreviations

AA	ActionAid International Uganda
AMSA	Acholi Makerere Students' Association
BTVET	Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training
DFID	Department for International Development
DRT	Development Research and Training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDP	Internally displaced person
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
KII	Key informant interview
LASA	Lango Students' Association
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MUTOSA	Makerere University Tooro Students' Association
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NEMSA	Nebbi Makerere Students' Association
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NUSU	National Union of Students of Uganda
NUYO	National Union of Youth Organisation
NYC	National Youth Council
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation
SUSA	Sheema Students' Association
TESDA	Teso Student Development Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNNGOF	Uganda National NGO Forum
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPFYA	Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs
USE	Universal Secondary Education
YFU	Youth Farmers' Union

Executive summary

This study provides an insight into the situation of young people in Uganda by highlighting the challenges they face and their impact on peace and security. At the same time, it assesses the social, political and economic environment of young people, with a special focus on development programmes, employment and wellbeing. The study also points to the potential of youth to contribute to peace and security and goes on to propose policy recommendations for different stakeholders.

Background literature

Previous studies on the youth – in particular, International Alert’s recent publications¹ – demonstrate the challenges experienced by Ugandan youth, and how these could provoke conflict and insecurity in the country. Against this background, this study analyses how the youth’s position on identity, exclusion and marginalisation, unemployment and access to opportunities may be a source of instability if due attention is not given to these issues. On the other hand, the potential of youth could also be an opportunity worth tapping into, possibly leading to positive development.

The study is based primarily on a systematic review and interpretation of Alert’s previous reports, namely: *Youth Perspectives on Identity and National Unity in Uganda*; *Youth Participation in Government Programmes in Uganda*; *Youth Perceptions on Economic Opportunity in Northern Uganda – Findings from Acholi and Lango*; and a special issue of the *Journal of Development Studies: Perspectives on Youth and Development*.² This literature was enriched by additional data on youth perspectives on the political economy collected from young people living in and around Kampala – mainly youths from institutions of higher learning, but also working youths.

Key findings

Employing a political economy approach, the study critically examines government policies and programmes on youth affairs and the reality on the ground. It looks at how these policies and programmes affect young people’s participation in governance and decision-making as well as their access to opportunities.

Youth identity and exclusion

The study observes that, in the absence of strong feelings of national identity, ethnic, religious and political diversities appear to define the political and socio-economic structure of Uganda.

¹ See 2013 International Alert reports: *Youth Perspectives on Identity and National Unity in Uganda*, available at <http://www.internationalalert.org/resources/publications/youth-perspectives-identity-and-national-unity-uganda>; *Youth Participation in Government Programmes in Uganda*, available at <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/youth-participation-government-programmes-uganda>; and *Youth Perceptions on Economic Opportunity in Northern Uganda – Findings from Acholi and Lango*, available at <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/youth-perceptions-economic-opportunity-northern-uganda>

² Uganda Martyrs University and International Alert (2013a). *Journal of Development Studies: Perspectives on Youth and Development*, Vol. 3, No. 2. Kampala.

Consequently, young people closely identify with their ethnic groups, area of origin, religious affiliations and cultural institutions. The youth look up to their cultural and religious institutions because of the values inherent in these institutions and the socio-economic benefits young people derive from them. While association with cultural institutions has demonstrated positive developments for young people, there are potential grounds for ethnic, religious and political conflicts. Politicians have been criticised for allegedly exploiting such youth associations to rally political support for their own ends.

Further analysis reveals that the youth have been marginalised and excluded from participating in politics and governance. While there are youth structures established to nurture leadership roles and skills, the government or politicians who provide funds to run their activities are accused of controlling and manipulating many of these associations for personal gain.

Youth access to resources and employment

Meaningful participation of young people in development activities is dependent on access to resources and job opportunities that would enable them to make the transition from childhood to adulthood and secure a livelihood. However, youth access to resources is constrained by challenges associated with: regional economic imbalances; stringent requirements of financial institutions; ownership and user rights of land; corruption, especially political patronage; and government policies, such as the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) bylaws to evict roadside traders. This study found that the economic environment of business ventures is hostile to young people. High interest rates and ever-increasing rental fees frequently edge many young people out of their preferred economic activities.

The youth also face the challenge of unemployment, mainly because young people lack requisite skills or qualifications. As a result, they cannot access job opportunities providing them with financial stability and a satisfactory standard of living. There is a risk that this will draw them into criminal activities. Unemployment also emerged as a major reason why young people get involved in demonstrations and civil strife.

This study observes that marginalising and excluding young people from participating in politics and government programmes compounds governance challenges and constrains their potential in relation to economic development. Youth exclusion and marginalisation leads to resentment and reduces young people's hope for a better future.

Potential of youth to promote peace and security

However, the study also found that young people have the potential to promote peace and security. Their willingness to start business ventures – such as farming (mainly poultry), *boda-boda* riding [passenger motorbike], hairdressing, selling second-hand clothes, or even belonging to a savings group – is a positive development. Young people resent being used as agents of violence, and many of them want to participate actively in peace and reconciliation initiatives. Their suggestions for non-confrontational approaches to resolving conflicts, especially riots and demonstrations, between them and the police, and their strong support for community policing are indicative of a generation that wants to live in a peaceful environment.

Key recommendations

Some of the main recommendations emerging from the study relate to the following stakeholders.

Government

Government should strengthen existing youth platforms, especially youth councils, and establish

many more for rural youths. Such platforms should provide for training in leadership skills, communication, and monitoring and evaluation of government programmes.

Government should address the grievances of young people who are making an effort to improve their livelihoods. Issues such as exorbitant rental fees, high taxes or harsh law enforcement by KCCA officers all need to be addressed.

Government should promote the engagement of young people in sports, drama or leadership roles – activities that would occupy them and prevent idleness or possible conscription into criminal activities. Sports and drama activities could be earmarked too as alternative sources of employment for unemployed youth.

Government should initiate and provide tax subsidy incentives to private sector units to encourage them to offer internships and training programmes to the youth. This would enable young people to acquire much-needed work experience and to gain employable skills.

Youth and cultural institutions

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs (UPFYA) and the National Youth Council (NYC) should lobby parliament to enact a law that requires youth funding to be built into the national budget and to be treated like other priority areas.

Cultural institutions (and, by implication, religious institutions) should roll out *Ekisaakaate*-like³ programmes in different regions of Uganda to equip young people with values and skills for development.

Civil society and Electoral Commission

Civil society organisations should conduct awareness-raising programmes on youth grievances through research and evidence-based targeted advocacy, to help influence policy for the benefit of youths. At the same time, the Electoral Commission should urge existing and new political parties to establish youth wings, with specific training targets that encourage youth participation.

3 *Ekisaakaate* is a Luganda word for 'The Royal Enclosure' – a cultural camp aimed at revitalising and strengthening moral values, leadership, domestic duties, spiritual and practical skills among children and youth in Buganda. For more information, see: A. Kiyaga (2013). '600 children attend Buganda's Ekisaakaate training programme', *The Observer*, 8 January 2013.

1. Introduction

While Uganda's population is estimated at 37 million people, it is increasingly becoming younger, with nearly half of the population below the age of 15.⁴ It is anticipated that the population structure will remain youthful for the next 15 years.⁵ This implies that the country's dependency ratio is high and will continue to rise. It also means that greater attention needs to be paid to the requirements, fears and challenges of young people.

The youth represent an enormous untapped potential that could significantly contribute to the country's economic development. Therefore, unlocking the potential of young people could help to unlock the economic potential of Uganda because young people constitute a prospective labour force that could spur accelerated economic growth. Not only do young people constitute a human resource that could be absorbed by various industries; they could also encompass a pool of future leaders who would ultimately plan for the socioeconomic and political development of the country. Uganda's National Development Plan 2010/11–2014/15 aims:

“...to improve the stock and quality of the human resource. Moreover, this particular objective is of more significance to the youth than any other category of Ugandans on account of the fact that they are the drivers of the next generation private and public sector investments and social services.”⁶

For these reasons, neglecting issues of the youth, who constitute the majority of the Ugandan population, risks compounding governance challenges, constraining the realisation of young people's potential and provoking violent conflict. However, engaging the large number of economically and politically marginalised youths in a meaningful way is a challenging but crucial task.

The high rate of school dropouts, unemployment, exclusion from participating in political activities and from accessing economic resources not only pose an economic burden to government, but could also lead to political instability. Such challenges have driven frustrated young people into criminal violence or even into armed movements and gang activities.⁷ Lack of requisite skills equally constrain young people's opportunities for securing gainful employment.

⁴ Republic of Uganda (2010). *National Development Plan 2010/11–2014/15*. Kampala.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ World Bank (2011). *The World Development Report, 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*. Washington: World Bank. For more information, see Republic of Uganda (2010). Op. cit. p.78.

Box 1: Vicious cycles of conflict – when security, justice and employment stresses meet weak institutions

Internal causes of conflict arise from political, security and economic dynamics. Yet, it is difficult to disentangle causes and effects of violence. Lower gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is strongly associated with both large-scale political conflict and high rates of homicide. Youth unemployment is consistently cited in citizen perception surveys as a motive for joining both rebel movements and urban gangs.

Feeling more secure and powerful, on the other hand, is cited as an important motivator across countries, confirming existing research that shows that employment dynamics concern not only income but also respect and status, involving social cohesion as well as economic opportunity. Political exclusion and inequality affecting regional, religious or ethnic groups is associated with higher risks of civil war (and is also cited in citizen surveys as a key driver of conflict alongside poverty). At the same time, inequality between richer and poorer households is closely associated with higher risks of violent crime.

Many countries face high unemployment, economic inequality or pressure from organised crime networks, but do not repeatedly succumb to widespread violence and instead contain it. The World Development Report (WDR) approach emphasises that risk of conflict and violence in any society (national or regional) is the *combination* of exposure to *internal and external stresses* and the social incapacity to cope with stress through *legitimate institutions*. Both state and non-state institutions are important. Institutions include social norms and behaviours – such as the ability of leaders to transcend sectarian and political differences and develop bargains, and the capacity of civil society to advocate for greater national and political cohesion – as well as rules, laws and organisations. Where states, markets and social institutions fail to provide basic security, justice and economic opportunities for citizens, conflict can escalate.

Source: World Bank (2011). *World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development*. Washington: World Bank. pp.6–7.

Several studies on youth in Uganda reveal that young people still face enormous challenges with regard to employment: such challenges concern access to financial and social capital for self-help projects, appropriate education and skills for employment, and participation in government programmes and political processes.⁸ These studies also underline youth perspectives on identity and nationhood, as well as their engagement in conflict, peacebuilding and post-reconstruction programmes. Such challenges have both covert and overt bearings on peace and security in Uganda, and thus affect prospects for economic growth.

A snapshot of Uganda's history points to marginalisation, lack of a serious and definite agenda for youth, exploitation of youths for selfish ends, and a tendency among young people to join criminal gangs or to become conscripted into fighting groups.⁹

8 Uganda Martyrs University and International Alert (2013a). Op. cit. For more information, see International Alert reports: *Youth Perspectives on Identity and National Unity in Uganda* (2013b); *Youth Participation in Government Programmes in Uganda* (2013c); and *Youth Perceptions on Economic Opportunity in Northern Uganda – Findings from Acholi and Lango* (2013d). Kampala.

9 BRAC (2011). *Problem or Promise? Harnessing Youth Potential in Uganda*. Kampala.

While interventions by the Ugandan government and other development agencies have admittedly had a positive impact on young people, particularly in post-war northern Uganda, gaps remain and many expectations of young people remain unfulfilled.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was four-fold. First, it sought to deepen understanding of the situation of young people in Uganda in order to highlight the most salient challenges facing them, as illustrated in Alert's previous studies, and to underline the youth's potential to provoke or heighten a conflict situation. Second, the study sought to assess the social, political and economic environment of young people, with a special focus on development programmes, employment and wellbeing, and their impacts on peace and security in Uganda. Third, it aimed to establish the contribution of young people to promoting peace and security, with a special focus on economic, social and physical security. Fourth, it sought to propose policy recommendations on peace and security for different stakeholders.

1.2 Areas of focus and justification

The Ugandan government's commitment to youth affairs is very clear. The National Youth Policy (2001) recognises young people as "the country's most valuable asset" and as "an integral component of the development process". However, it also acknowledges the challenges facing young people, including "poverty, inadequate education and skills, inadequate work/employment opportunities, exploitation, diseases, civil unrest and gender discrimination".¹⁰ Despite the government's establishment of policies aimed at addressing young people's concerns,¹¹ the youth in Uganda still face enormous challenges. Against this background, the current study focuses on the following issues: identity, exclusion, unemployment and access to economic opportunities. Other studies on young people indicate that youth-related problems, including identity issues, unemployment, marginalisation and lack of access to economic opportunities, increase the risk of situations of conflict and have the potential to disrupt the socioeconomic gains of a country.¹² An appeal by the United Nations Association of Finland, the Guides and Scouts of Finland and the Finnish Youth Co-operation to the UN Secretary General aptly sums up such challenges: "high levels of unemployment, social exclusion and growing discontent amongst youth are not only acute problems of social development, but may also trigger severe regional and global unrest."¹³ It is also important to note that, even in conflict-free circumstances, marginalisation and exclusion from social and economic resources can drive young people into criminal activities.¹⁴

10 Republic of Uganda (2001). *The National Youth Policy: A Vision for Youth in the 21st Century*. Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. p.2.

11 The major policies targeting young people include the National Youth Council (Amendment) Act, 2003; the Universal Primary Education Policy; the Universal Post-Primary Education and Training Policy; the Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy; and the National Employment Policy.

12 BRAC (2011). Op. cit. For more information, see: A. Larok, H. Okiring and J. Mayambala (2010). *At Crossroads? The Youth, Politics of Interest Groups and Influencing National Policy Processes in Uganda*, Paper prepared for a Youth and Development Symposium at MS TCDC, Arusha, Tanzania. Available at http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/at_crossroads_youth_engagement_in_policy_in_uganda.pdf; M.C. Paciello (2012). *The Political Economy of Youth Exclusion in the Mediterranean: Continuity or Change?* Op-Med [Opinions on the Mediterranean]. Available at http://www.iai.it/pdf/mediterraneo/GMF-IAI/Op-Med_02.pdf

13 UN Association of Finland (2011). 'Initiative on "Youth, Peace and Security"'. Available at <http://alli.fi/binary/file/-/id/669/fid/2703/>

14 M. Mutto (2007). *The Youth of Africa: A Threat to Security or a Force for Peace?* New York: United Nations Development Programme.

The challenge of identity has been highlighted by previous studies, which reveal that young people's perceptions on national identity influence their future aspirations and sense of self-worth.¹⁵ Other studies demonstrate that young people identify with their respective ethnic groups, religion and cultural institutions. This hinders a sense of nationhood and breeds ethnic tensions and tribal conflicts.¹⁶ An examination of Ugandan politics and national development programmes points to youth exclusion from participating in government activities and decision-making processes on matters affecting young people.¹⁷ Therefore, the issue of youth exclusion is considered to be equally important because it usually leads to a sense of injustice and resentment among those who experience exclusion.¹⁸ The problem of youth unemployment is another challenge facing the government. A joint report by ActionAid International Uganda (AAU), Development Research and Training (DRT) and the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF) indicates that 61.6% of the youth are unemployed.¹⁹ Those most affected are young women (14–30 years). This phenomenon is likely to continue because it is estimated that, given current unemployment trends, the labour market in Uganda will need to absorb about 8.2 million people by 2015.²⁰ Unemployment brings with it enormous challenges for the government – including rural–urban migration, crime, poverty and so on. Lastly, the focus on youth access to economic opportunities highlights the challenges facing young people in terms of accessing credit facilities, job opportunities and other economic means²¹ that would ensure a decent livelihood. Alert's study on the economic opportunities available to young people in northern Uganda shows that such opportunities are not only limited but also heavily skewed towards male youths.

Arguably, several generations of young people have grown up in circumstances of ethnic tension, without a coherent and mutually accommodating national identity, and facing the reality of marginalisation and exclusion from public governance, poor access to economic opportunities and growing unemployment. Consequently, these circumstances have shaped the thinking and practices of young people. Unless deliberate efforts are made to understand these issues and to address them in an effort to avert the vicious cycle of conflict, similar circumstances could re-emerge, triggering further conflict.

1.3 Methodology

This report is based primarily on a systematic review and interpretation of Alert's previous reports, namely: *Youth Perspectives on Identity and National Unity in Uganda*; *Youth Participation in Government Programmes in Uganda*; and *Youth Perceptions on Economic Opportunity in Northern Uganda*. It also drew on a special issue of the *Journal of Development Studies: Perspectives on Youth and Development*. Additional data on the political economy perspectives of Ugandan youth was collected in and around the capital city of Kampala. These findings were analysed in relation to government policies on youth affairs and actual practices on the ground.

15 Civil Society Coalition for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) and Jamii Ya Kupatanisha (2004). *The Need for National Reconciliation: Perceptions of Ugandans on National Identity*. Kampala: CSOPNU.

16 C. Tumwine (2009). *National Identity Development: Reflections on the Cases of Uganda and Tanzania*, Paper No. 2 in the series: Promoting Pluralism Knowledge in Uganda. Kampala. For more information, see CSOPNU and Jamii Ya Kupatanisha (2004). Op. cit.

17 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit. For more information, see International Alert (2013c). Op. cit.

18 International Alert (2010). *Programming Framework for International Alert: Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*.

19 AAU, DRT and UNNGOF (2012). *Lost Opportunity? Gaps in Youth Policy and Programming in Uganda*. Kampala. Available at http://www.actionaid.ie/sites/files/actionaid/youthrepot-final_0.pdf

20 Republic of Uganda (2010). Op. cit. p.204.

21 International Alert (2013d). Op. cit.

The study adopted a political economy approach, whereby Ugandan youth were perceived as an economically exploited group, without political representation and excluded from making decisions on matters that concern them. Specifically, the study sought to gain an insight into the political economy of Uganda's youth by documenting young people's voices in order to discount misleading views that the youth were unaware of their disadvantaged position in the political economy.

The term 'political economy' in this context is perceived as:

*"...a perspective that investigates the root causes and consequences of the positioning over time of the youth segment in relation to those (adults) in a given society with political and economic power, and thus how those in power see fit to develop policies that might recognise the political rights of the young, and therefore, support their economic interests."*²²

In this regard, the dominant political and economic power entities are intertwined. Therefore, government policies and practices tend to favour the interests of those who wield economic control and ignore the interests of those who do not possess economic power.²³

The political economy approach necessitates in-depth critical analyses of the historical, economic, political and cultural factors orchestrated by human actors. It requires a 'critical emancipatory' position, which urges those who might accept their exploitation as 'normal' to see how they can overcome such false beliefs.²⁴

Political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time. When applied to situations of conflict and crisis, political economy analysis seeks to understand both the political and economic aspects of conflict, and how these combine to affect patterns of power and vulnerability. A political economy approach should incorporate a wide historical and geographical perspective, explain why the relative power and vulnerability of different groups changes over time, and explain how the fortunes and activities of one group in society affect others. In this context, Alert's peace factors lend themselves appropriately. These factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Power – the degree to which relationships between young people and governing or otherwise powerful institutions allow for participation, accountability, mutual support, and legitimate and effective decision-making and actions;
- Access to income and assets – the degree to which young people have equal access to opportunities to make a living, and are able to invest in and manage economic assets that provide them with capital to improve their livelihoods and offer protection during difficult times; and
- Wellbeing – the degree to which young people have equal access to shelter, health, education and a decent living, and the extent to which they can reasonably aspire to improve their living conditions.²⁵

22 J.E. Côté (2014). 'Towards a new political economy of youth', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.836592>

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 International Alert (2010). Op. cit.

2. Exclusion and identity – threats or opportunities for peace and security?

2.1 Youth exclusion from civic engagement and government programmes

Exclusion refers to the practice of discriminating against certain groups based on ethnicity, religion, descent, age, gender and so on. It is multidimensional and includes disadvantages that are interrelated – such as unemployment, lack of political participation, lack of voice and decision-making power, and lack of access to means of livelihood.²⁶ This section specifically examines instances of youth exclusion from participating in civic and political engagement as well as government programmes. Deprivation or exclusion involving weak political participation and inequality in economic status have been identified as some of the factors that may increase violence in society.²⁷

The exclusion of Ugandan youth from civic engagement allegedly dates back to the pre-colonial era. Traditionally, informal education for young people in Uganda, and Africa in general, was aimed at “character formation” and at instilling “values such as respect for and obedience to elders, conformity to cultural and traditional values and a recognition that the youth had to accept their station [status] in life until they were of an age to be called elders”.²⁸ This socio-cultural practice has continued to hamper participation in decision-making in many areas, particularly in rural settings, where robust traditional authorities that do not recognise the status of young people are still thought to prevail.

The post-independence era witnessed youth activism through organisations such as the National Union of Youth Organisation (NUYO), the National Union of Students of Uganda (NUSU) and the Youth Farmers’ Union (YFU). However, their positive impact relied on donor aid from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).²⁹ Since then, youth participation in government activities or politics has been primarily channelled through youth organisations and associations. However, the formation of these organisations has been spearheaded and greatly influenced by the governments of the day, which have also provided funding. Therefore, there have been criticisms of government exploiting these organisations for selfish ends, largely to support their political programmes, rather than benefiting the youth themselves.³⁰ Youth organisations that have emerged without government support (especially during Idi Amin’s regime) have frequently met with stiff resistance from government forces or have been infiltrated to frustrate their cause.³¹

The current government has attempted to address youth issues by establishing a legal framework – the National Youth Council Act (1993) – to involve young people in political and economic activities. The institutionalisation and establishment of the National Youth Council (NYC) provides for youth representation in local governance structures, and it is intended to empower and grant

26 Department for International Development (2005). *Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion*, A DFID policy paper. Available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/docs/social'exclusion.pdf>

27 Ibid.

28 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit. p.13.

29 Republic of Uganda (2001). Op. cit.

30 Ibid.

31 International Alert (2013b). Op cit. pp.28–37.

young people opportunities to develop and practise leadership skills.³² In addition, young people are represented at various organisations, as stipulated under the Equal Opportunities Act, 2007. This Act is a positive development because it seeks to monitor and ensure that policies, laws, programmes, practices and traditions of government institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector comply with “equal opportunities and affirmative action in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, creed, social or economic status, political opinion, disability, gender, age or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom”.³³

The new National Youth Policy highlights the significance of youth participation:

“Effective youth participation is about creating opportunities for the youth to be actively involved in influencing, shaping, designing and contributing to policy formulation and development processes. There is increasing global concern in youth participation in decision-making.”³⁴

In spite of the establishment of these policies, Uganda’s young people are still not empowered enough and have been left out of many political and economic activities. The youth structures that have been set up are not productive because of inadequate funding, alleged manipulation by politicians, or lack of political will to strengthen such structures. These efforts have also been criticised as being mere tokenisms because the youth structures are ineffective and weak. Most of the political activism seems to be largely limited to university students, which leaves out the majority of youth, who live in rural areas.³⁵

In cases where young people have been recruited into several political parties, there is a risk of manipulation by older people.³⁶ As an example, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government’s interest in youth organisations has been criticised for being anchored in the political support it draws from these groups.³⁷ Government does not appear to be keen on funding and supporting a strong youth movement possibly for fear that it might stage a political challenge to its existence.

Some youths have also complained that politicians create youth associations or support existing ones during campaigns only to solicit votes, thereafter suspending their support until the following election.³⁸ This implies that such organisations neither address the actual interests and challenges of the youth nor nurture leadership skills among young people.

Although cultural associations at most institutions of higher learning are formed along ethnic lines or one’s geographical area of origin, they are potential avenues for nurturing leadership skills among their members. The members are encouraged to participate in and stand for university and national leadership positions. However, some argue that both incumbent and aspiring members of parliament have used these associations as avenues through which their political ambitions can be realised. They fund the groups’ activities on condition that they are supported during campaigns. This practice renders them platforms for politicians’ selfish gains.

32 For more information, see the Local Government Act, 1997. Other youth-supporting structures include the establishment of the National Youth Policy, 2002, and the provision for youth representation in parliament.

33 Republic of Uganda (2007). *The Equal Opportunities Act, 2007*. p.8.

34 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2013). *National Youth Policy*, 2013. Kampala.

35 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

36 J.N. Jorgensen (2009). *Young people’s possibilities for influence in Uganda*. A report for the Danish Youth Council. Available at http://duf.dk/uploads/tx_tcshop/Young_People_s_possibilities_for_influence_in_Uganda.pdf

37 Ibid.

38 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

It should also be noted that, while these associations appear to be important to the youth, they only benefit the *elite* youth since the groups function within a formal education context. Thus, they exclude the rural and unschooled youth, who therefore cannot associate and assert their needs to policymakers.

Government should bear in mind that neglecting to nurture young people into leadership roles risks denying the country future responsible leaders. It also risks entrenching a culture of violence among the youth and future leaders, who may resort to violence to get their way and who could in the future use similar methods to remain in office and frustrate those who try to replace them. The political party brigades and paramilitary groups have always recruited young people during electioneering processes to further the motives of various political leaders.³⁹ It is alleged that they have often employed aggressive means while looking for votes.

While youth involvement and participation at local and national levels are provided for under the Constitution of Uganda, 1995, the Local Government Act and the National Youth Council Act, a review by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development reveals that there is limited participation by the youth (see Table 1).

Table 1: Extent of youth participation and involvement in the decision-making at various administrative levels

	Community level	District level	National level
Participation to a great extent	13.8%	4.7%	2.8%
Participation to a moderate extent	40.6%	18.2%	7.5%
Not at all	45.6%	77.1%	89.8%

Source: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2011). *Review of the National Youth Policy*. p.15.

The study notes that young people have been excluded from participating in most government programmes. A recent study carried out by Alert indicates that only 10.8% of male respondents and 16.3% of female respondents felt that their participation was very strong.⁴⁰ Moreover, 35.7% of male respondents and 31.6% of female respondents indicated that they did not participate in government programmes.⁴¹ In addition, the study found that youth participation in political parties' activities, such as meetings, was very minimal. On the other hand, 68.7% of male respondents and 66.6% of female respondents indicated that they were highly involved in soliciting votes for political leaders during campaigns.⁴² In reference to the finding that politicians do not bother to consult young people in decision-making, one of the young interviewees explained:

*"I think the youth are just used by politicians to get what they want. For example, just the other week, the youth MP for West Nile [sub-region] was used by the NRM to propose another term for the president. She never consulted fellow youths in the area where she comes from."*⁴³

39 Uganda Youth Network (2010). *The National Youth Manifesto*. Kampala.

40 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit. p.32.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Interview with male youth, Nebbi district, 23 February 2014.

Marginalisation is not only confined to political participation – it also exists in development processes and activities. Inadequate allocation of resources for youth-oriented activities and programmes has been cited as one of the major challenges hindering youth participation in development activities. The youth leaders themselves are concerned about low budgetary allocation to youth councils, as this prevents them from participating in development processes.⁴⁴ This suggests that government's commitment to involving young people in government programmes is lukewarm. In Kampala, the leaders of different city divisions complained that the new Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) Act does not provide for a youth budget,⁴⁵ from which funds could be drawn to enable young people to contribute to social and economic development. While the National Youth Policy recognises the potential of young people and advocates their participation in both planning and implementation of government programmes,⁴⁶ the reality is different.

The study also found out that marginalisation and exclusion of young people from government programmes has taken on another dimension: limited participation of young people in National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) activities has been attributed to discrimination based on real or perceived political affiliation, as well as discrimination based on marital status.⁴⁷ In some instances, local politicians have been accused of using some of the government development programmes to persuade the youth electorate to their political side, thus making them politically rather than socio-economically oriented. Consequently, the youth who do not subscribe to the political ideology of the wooing party are allegedly disregarded or shunned altogether. One youth explained the challenges associated with these programmes:

*“Most of the current government youth economic programmes are started and operated on political arrangements rather than development strategies. Funds are allocated to those who supported/support the party in power. The country has no clear strategy of the youth empowerment. The youth fund has no clear guideline. The age bracket/target group is not defined. Some people of 60 years are benefiting from the youth fund, yet the constitution of Uganda clearly defines who a youth is...”*⁴⁸

Another implicit exclusion mechanism lay in the lack of money to meet co-funding requirements, thus only benefiting youth or adults who are already successful. Studies on the Youth Venture Capital Fund exemplify different levels of marginalisation and exclusion, which were inherent in the criteria that young people had to meet in order to access the funds. For instance, the number of intended beneficiaries was limited by criteria such as complying with local business licensing requirements, presenting a business project plan, showing proof of registration certificates, memoranda and articles of association, and owning a three-year-old enterprise. The collateral requirement in the form of a land purchase agreement or car logbook further excluded some youths from accessing these funds. These requirements favoured an elite group of youths who possessed knowledge of and competences in project writing, and those who already owned business ventures.

It is not surprising, therefore, that remote districts such as Kotido and Koboko did not benefit.⁴⁹ While these programmes target Ugandan youth, it is not clear whether they are intended to liberate the rural youth from abject poverty or for the urban/elite youth. These covert and overt exclusion practices entrench both economic and political divisions among young people. As one youth leader commented:

44 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2011). *Youth Policy Review*. Kampala.

45 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

46 Republic of Uganda (2013). Op. cit.

47 International Alert (2013c). Op. cit.

48 Interview with a youth, Teso region, 28 February 2014.

49 International Alert (2013c). Op. cit.

“Those who have money have greater chances to join politics and become richer because when you do not have money in Uganda you cannot win an election. To me, the rich will continue to rule this country ... at the expense of the poor...”⁵⁰

This study argues that marginalising and excluding young people from participating in politics and government programmes compounds further governance challenges. At the same time, it constrains the realisation of young people’s potential in the economic development of Uganda. Once young people have a feeling of exclusion and marginalisation, they do not envision hope for a better future. Therefore, it would be very difficult to enlist them in social change efforts aimed at economic development. Marginalisation and exclusion deny young people the opportunity to fulfil their civic responsibilities.

As noted above, civic and political engagement is more prominent in institutions of higher learning and among the elite and urban youth. This demonstrates the crucial nature of education:

“...education is undoubtedly a powerful socialisation force, and it is not the only factor that is likely to influence young people’s civic and political participation.”⁵¹

This study therefore contends that young people can only play an effective role in political activities and government programmes if they possess the knowledge, skills and values needed to enable them to do so. Unfortunately, the government has not provided the majority of youth with the means to access development activities – the kind of political literacy gained through political mentoring or through the education system. Yet, it has instituted a minimum level of education for one to qualify to take up influential political offices.

2.2 Harnessing youth identities

One of the primary concerns that Ugandan society has had to grapple with is national unity. From this issue stems the challenge of ethnic, religious and political diversities, which continue to define the political and socio-economic structure of the country. Earlier studies have observed common descent, culture, language and religion as the major components around which Ugandans converge.⁵² These levels of diversity have also led to a lack of sense of nationhood and contributed to several problems evident in inter-ethnic clashes, corruption, poverty, unemployment, poor education and so on.⁵³ However, efforts towards social cohesion in multicultural communities exist – these include language adoption, mutual respect and intermarriages.⁵⁴ The government acknowledges this diversity by recognising the indigenous communities in Uganda in the Third Schedule of the Constitution, while Article 21 provides for non-discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion and social or economic standing. In this regard, deterrent measures to prevent ethnic hatred and clashes have been enacted in the Penal Code Act, Section 12, which spells out types of practices and circumstances that constitute offences related to religious or ethnic prejudices and preferences. Despite these penalties, prejudices and preferences are prevalent, while allegiance to cultural and religious institutions is high.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Key informant interview (KII), youth leader, Rubaga Division, 28 February 2014.

⁵¹ J. Lopes, T. Benton and E. Cleaver (2009). ‘Young people’s intended civic and political participation: Does education matter?’ *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp.1–20.

⁵² C. Tumwine (2009). Op. cit. For more information, see CSOPNU and Jamii Ya Kupatanisha (2004). Op. cit.

⁵³ International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

⁵⁴ J.S. Ssentongo (2013). ‘Youth, social heritage, political manipulation and pluralism in Kibaale district, Uganda’, *Journal of Development Studies*, Special Issue, pp.33–62.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

During the post-independence era, the formation of youth organisations was based on a nationwide structure aimed at uniting the youth; however, they existed in an environment that favoured divisionism. Moreover, the establishment of political parties and praxis, which were religious and class-based,⁵⁶ undermined national identity and unity. Similar ethnic, religious and political cleavages have continued to challenge Ugandan society to the present day. Consequently, the youth who have grown up amidst these cleavages still closely identify with ethnic, religious and political institutions.⁵⁷

Among the components that Ugandan youth closely identify with – ethnic groups, area of origin, religious affiliations and cultural institutions⁵⁸ – religion in particular appears to influence the day-to-day lives of most Ugandans. It has had a perennial influence on political affiliation and the choice of educational institutions, as well as instilling moral values among young people. Religious institutions have also incorporated deliberate programming for the youth in their activities.

Currently, the formation of youth associations at higher learning institutions is largely dependent on ethnic and geographical areas of origin. Each cultural association is formed primarily to unite students who hail from the same geographical area. For instance, the youth associations Acholi Makerere Students' Association (AMSA), Teso Student Development Association (TESDA), Nebbi Makerere Students' Association (NEMSA), Lango Students' Association (LASA), Sheema Students' Association (SUSA) and Makerere University Tooro Students' Association (MUTOSA) bring together students from their respective regions. Similarly, the associations *Basoga Nsete* and *Nkoba za Mbogo* unite students from Busoga and Buganda regions, respectively. Membership is only restricted on ethnic grounds, but not on the basis of religious affiliation. Some focus group discussants argued that the existence of youth associations based on ethnic grounds perpetuates sectarianism and tribal divisions because such organisations champion individual interests or those of a particular group rather than galvanising nationwide support to speak as one or to advance the interests of youth as a whole. They also argued that associations are used to obtain jobs or ascend political governance – a factor that undermines merit or precludes those who may not have opportunities to access well-connected politicians who can argue in their favour.

However, a counter-argument in favour of these associations is that, since universities are big places, students feel isolated and need to meet up with other students from their region to get to know each other. Another reason for the establishment of these groups is to promote culture – for example, at the university cultural gala day, various groups take part in these competitions.⁶⁰ Further analysis shows that membership is equally driven by strategic interests to secure future careers. The youth associations are used by some students as channels through which they meet politicians or government officials, who in turn link them to prospective employers. It is also believed that they develop links with local governments (districts), which will absorb the students after their studies.

Most young people (80.6% of males and 82.3% of females) seem to identify more readily with their area of origin – for example, Karimojong, Baganda, Acholi or Bakonjo – before identifying with their national Ugandan identity.⁶¹ Some youths argue that this is because the state has withdrawn from its social responsibilities and is no longer relevant for the people to be proud

56 M. Mamdani (1999). *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers. For more information, see: R. Wanambwa (2010). 'Religion: Museveni's new headache in Kigezi', *Daily Monitor*, 15 August 2010.

57 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

58 Ibid.

59 Focus group discussion (FGD), Makerere, 25 February 2014.

60 KII, youth association leader, Makerere University, 25 February 2014.

61 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit. p.16.

of it. It should be noted that pride in ethnic identity largely relates to: the clan system and the monarchy (among those ethnicities where cultural institutions have been restored); the heroic acts of ancestors; and the authority that elders wield, including the power to cast a spell or condemn someone to death. In fact, some scholars have argued that it is wrong to view ethnic groupings as negative and backward because modern states still cling to ethnic identities and have turned ethnicity into an asset, harnessing diversity for socio-economic development.⁶²

Cultural institutions are also looked up to because of their ability to provide for the socio-economic and educational needs of young people – for instance, providing education bursaries to marginalised youths. In addition, they instil social and cultural values in teenagers, as well as cultivating a common identity. For example, the institution *Ekisaakaate* is valued for reviving the hitherto forgotten traditional and cultural values and practices among the modern Baganda youth (see Box 2).

Box 2: Culture in development

Adam Kajoba, a former pupil of Kampala Parents School, could not have asked for a better holiday than this – at the camp, he learnt how to make pies. Donning a green apron inscribed with the word *Ekisaakaate*, he quickly made his way around the kitchen and began the task of cooking.

Adam was no longer afraid of the cooking fire – like he was on the first day, when he reluctantly made his way to *Ekisaakaate*, a two-week camp on culture and morality, held under the guidance of the *Nnaabagereka* [Queen of Buganda] Development Foundation (NDF).

“I told my mother I did not want to come because I thought it would be boring. I questioned everything that I had heard would take place at the camp, especially the one on boys peeling *matooke* [green bananas].

“But after learning my language, Luganda, and how to make rice and chicken pies, I must come back here next year. Oh, I love pies,” he exclaimed excitedly.

This year marked the eighth *Ekisaakaate* – under the theme: ‘Integrity: a precondition to development and excellence’. The camp was based on 13 sub-themes, including: resisting peer pressure, initiating business, personal hygiene, team-building, decision-making, food and nutrition, social skills (coping with anger), and involvement in government.

As Andrew Adrian Mukiibi, head of the trainers, outlined in an interview: “We are teaching the children about involvement in government because we want them to appreciate and have knowledge of Ugandan society. [This will help] the government to know what to do for them as they play their roles too.” He added that this was the first time that they were teaching the participants about involvement in government. Andrew explained that the children should also be able to follow news stories every day and to engage in community meetings.

Ronald Kiggundu is a living testimony of a life transformed by *Ekisaakaate*. There are numerous other stories of lives that have been transformed by the camp. Ronald Kaaya, aged 14 and a former pupil of Wakiso Junior School, is ready to start a business to support his upkeep in secondary school.

Source: A. Kaggwa and R. Ninsiima (2014). ‘Ekisaakaate closes with a host of transformed lives’, *The Observer*, 19 January 2014.

62 This argument was highlighted during a Public Dialogue at Makerere University, organised by Alert on 4 March 2014.

On the other hand, these identities can harbour potential grounds for ethnic, religious and political rivalries. They can be a source of mistrust across different identities, inter-ethnic clashes and high levels of corruption. Politicians and other leaders in society have been accused of invoking them to deny 'others' economic resources and services, rally political support and affiliation, or even recruit fighters. While different governments have made attempts to prevent these divisions and unite Ugandans, some politicians and policymakers have been criticised for allegedly exploiting them for selfish gains to entrench their political powers.⁶³ The youth have been drawn into these sectarian conflicts on grounds of fighting for unity and, on several occasions, have been directly involved in inter-ethnic clashes. The 2009 Buganda riots, for example, witnessed a high participation of youths, who exhibited their loyalty to the Kabaka. Not only did they claim they were defending the interests of Buganda Kingdom, but they also participated in harassing non-Buganda people.⁶⁴ They reportedly mounted roadblocks at several road junctions and demanded that whoever wanted to pass had to sing the Buganda Anthem. It is alleged that harassment involved 'othering' those who could not sing the anthem or trace their genealogy, as they were not considered part of 'us'. The participation of young people in ethnic tensions demonstrates how deep-seated the problem of ethnic division is and reflects a broader societal dilemma.

Lack of a sense of nationality fuels crime as well as violence among the population.⁶⁵ However, harnessing national unity and pride requires education, economic progress, inclusion of young people, acceptance of diversity, and encouragement of collective responsibility and individual development.⁶⁶ If the youth do not perceive this kind of recognition and participation, they will feel excluded, and both their self-worth and perceptions of the institutions that should be supporting them risk being lowered.⁶⁷

⁶³ C. Tumwine (2009). Op. cit.

⁶⁴ For more information, see the following articles: '10 feared dead in city riots', *Daily Monitor*, 11 September 2009; 'Riots rock city as Buganda Banyala standoff escalates', *New Vision*, 11 September 2009.

⁶⁵ World Bank (2007). *World Development Report 2007*. Washington DC: World Bank.

⁶⁶ Public Dialogue at Makerere University, organised by Alert on 4 March 2014.

⁶⁷ M. Arnot, L. Casely-Hayford, P.K. Wainaina, F. Chege and D.A. Dovie (2009). *Youth Citizenship, National Unity and Poverty Alleviation: East and West African Approaches to the Education of a New Generation*, RECOUP Working Paper No. 26. Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty.

3. Youth access to economic resources and employment

This section assesses young people's perspectives on access to and distribution of economic resources across the country. It also examines the current challenges facing the youth – including unemployment and lack of requisite skills for employment – and how these are likely to impact on peace or trigger a potential conflict situation.

3.1 Youth access to economic opportunities

Meaningful participation of young people in development activities is grounded in access to resources and job opportunities, which would enable them to secure a livelihood. Access to economic resources is dependent on the decisions and actions of those who make decisions or provide services to people in society.⁶⁸ Therefore, access to economic opportunities is intricately linked to the distribution of resources. Those who hold power control economic resources and thus determine the distribution of these resources. This implies that knowledge of and/or being associated with people who control resources affords one an opportunity to access these resources. Since economic resources are concentrated in the hands of a few people, distribution of resources is equally selective and restricted.

An earlier study shows that Ugandans' perceptions of the distribution of resources throughout the country are uneven, and that this is a deliberate action by political leaders.⁶⁹ The study also found that young people believe that Uganda has sufficient resources to meet the needs of its citizens. However, these resources are not fairly distributed among the various regions, districts and individuals.

Measures to ensure that there is equal access to resources are outlined in the Ugandan Constitution. Objective 15 of the Constitution provides for social justice and economic development for Ugandans with regard to access to education and health services, along with other basic needs. The Equal Opportunities Act (2007) also emphasises equal opportunities and access to resources and services. The new draft of the National Youth Policy (2013) highlights 'access to resources and services' as one of the priority areas. It states:

“Government recognises that in order to improve the well-being of young people in the country, it is imperative that they have access to resources and quality services...”

This includes education, health, agricultural extension services and finance, among others. The Youth Livelihood Programme specifies the target beneficiaries of the programme as well as a clause that is supposed to guarantee gender responsiveness (30% of the beneficiaries) and equitable regional distribution. The programme will be initially financed by government over a period of five years and additional funding is to be sought from development partners – an indication that government is not committed to continued funding.

⁶⁸ International Alert (2010). Op. cit.

⁶⁹ CSOPNU and Jamii Ya Kupatanisha (2004). Op. cit.

Nonetheless, the question regarding how economic policies and practices play out for ordinary citizens remains unresolved. One of the major issues is the unequal distribution of wealth and economic opportunities, which is noticeable across the country – particularly between northern and southern Uganda, especially in the regions directly affected by armed conflict. A generation of youths has grown up in internally displaced person (IDP) camps, amidst poverty and insecurity, without access to economic resources, services or education/skills training that would enable them to access these resources. There are significant variations in poverty rates across the sub-regions in Uganda (from 4% in Kampala to 76% in the north-east), with more people living under the international poverty line in northern Uganda.⁷⁰

*“The number of poor people in the central region more than halved, while that of the north marginally increased by three hundred thousand people between 1992/93 and 2009/10. Consequently, the central region’s share of the poor declined from 24% in 1992/93 to below 12% in 2009/10, while the northern region’s share increased from 29% to nearly 38% during this period. The northern region and the eastern regions now account for two-thirds of the poor in Uganda...”*⁷¹

Examples of regional disparities in the distribution of health and education services emerged strongly during the interviews. The youth argued that regional gaps have resulted in the development of some regions, while others remain undeveloped. They argued that this disparity has led to rural–urban migration of youth in search of employment and opportunities. These perspectives seem to support the view that resources are not fairly distributed. There was a strong perception among the respondents that most of the resource allocation is heavily tilted towards western Uganda. One focus group discussant explained:

*“Well, many times I have heard people mention that western parts of the country are favoured when allocating resources. If one considered the fact that most top positions are occupied by people from the west, then it directly implies that they will influence resource allocation in the favour of the western region; this will, therefore, deny most youths access to opportunities and services that would help improve their economic status.”*⁷²

This perspective correlates with a recent national survey, in which 65% of the 2,000 respondents answered “no” to the question of “whether national jobs are allocated fairly and proportionately to all Ugandans”. Only 440 interviewees (22%) answered “yes” to this question.⁷³

Young people, particularly in northern Uganda, have often encountered challenges in accessing credit facilities, even when special programmes are intended for them.⁷⁴ The exclusion has been mainly on grounds of lack of capital and requisite skills or qualifications. For example, 44% of young men and 35% of young women believed that lack of capital limited their engagement in the preferred economic activity.⁷⁵ This implies that young people cannot engage in economic development activities if they lack the means with which to embark on some of these activities.

70 Republic of Uganda (2010). Op. cit. p.14. For more information, see: Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2012). *Poverty Status Report*. Kampala: Economic Development, Policy and Research Department. p.20.

71 World Bank (2012). *Poverty Trends in Uganda. Who Gained and Who was Left Behind?* Washington DC: World Bank. p.3. Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUGANDA/Resources/uganda-poverty-and-inequality-trends-full-policy-note.pdf>

72 Interview with male youth, Arua, 2 March 2014.

73 T. Butagira (2010). ‘Government jobs not fairly distributed – poll’, *Daily Monitor*, 7 June 2010. Available at <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/933384/-/x0r1ry/-/index.html>

74 Uganda Youth Network (2010). Op. cit.

75 International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

Despite the existence of financial institutions in most parts of Uganda, a large number of youth (81% in northern Uganda) do not have access to credit facilities; this is mainly attributed to a lack of collateral.⁷⁶ One young person observed:

“I wish the government eliminated and closed all banks because they are thieves. All banks are only interested in making profits and not supporting youths and other people to develop. They do not bother to educate people on which businesses to engage in so as to make meaningful profits. Banks and other microfinance institutions only seduce people to take loans and their major interest is the collateral and interest.”⁷⁷

According to the youths interviewed, most of the financial institutions, especially commercial banks, do not trust young people with funds. The youths also said that very high interest rates not only exclude them, but also discourage those who are engaging in business for the first time. One focus group discussant explained how cumbersome the process of acquiring loans is and how it is rife with corruption and discrimination:

“It’s not easy to access a loan or credit as an individual, but the youths have been advised to form groups so as to easily access loans especially from government programmes, but these are failed by corruption. For instance, officials can ask you to give them 10% of the total loan amount before it is processed and the interest rates are always high. The issue of security [collateral] before you can access a loan is a challenge to many youths. One may be required to present a land title before accessing a loan.”⁷⁸

This study observes that, despite government’s efforts to make funds available to young people through commercial banks, the majority of Ugandan youth have not been able to access these funds because of the stringent demands from banks.

Youth access to economic resources is also constrained by challenges associated with ownership and user rights. Young people generally do not own property and do not possess land titles, which would enable them to access loans in order to carry out business projects. Most of the youths live on the land of their parents or guardians.⁷⁹ They cannot use the land without the permission of their parents – or the parents may dictate the business ventures that they feel should be carried out on their land. For example, if a young person wants to rear pigs, the owner of the land may not be interested in such a project and, therefore, will not grant permission for such use. One youth explained:

“Land is just bought first. To buy the land, you must have a job, and as I said, many youths don’t have jobs. Therefore, the first challenge is money. Land in Uganda is very expensive and few youths are able to raise money to purchase it. Some are very lucky to inherit it from their parents, but these are very few.”

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ FGD, Rubaga, 12 March 2014.

⁷⁸ FGD, Makerere University, 25 February 2014.

⁷⁹ Similar constraints related to demand for collateral, especially land titles by financial institutions, are highlighted in several International Alert’s reports (2013b, c and d). This undermines NRM’s manifesto claims to provide loan and procurement opportunities to young people.

The study further notes that accessing economic opportunities, especially employment, seems to be dependent on ‘technical know-who’ (i.e. who you know) rather than defined benchmarks.⁸⁰ Other youths argued that the knowledge of a discipline/field is crucial, but that it is also useful to know someone who will link a young person to a prospective employer. Further interaction with the youths indicated that resources are given to people whose political ideology is similar to those who dispense the resources. For example, access to government programmes seems to exclude young people who are perceived as belonging to a different political affiliation.⁸¹ Politicians allegedly allocate more resources to areas where they have political advantage or links, but they allot very few resources to areas where they have little influence.⁸² This clientelism-based practice leads to skewed development and inequalities in income.

One young university student explained how she had difficulties accessing a placement for her internship in one of the institutions in Kampala before her request was finally granted; however, she remarked that her Banyankore friends from western Uganda were easily accepted. The study also found signs of patronage, cronyism or nepotism with regard to access to education bursaries in institutions. In one of the FGDs, a female discussant outlined how, in her former secondary school, education bursaries were given to children of the influential local leaders or children of members of the governing board, even though their parents could afford to pay for tuition. Similarly, it is alleged that state scholarships often go to the rich or those near the corridors of power instead of to students who have excelled and deserve them.⁸³

Unequal resource distribution breeds income disparities – this not only exacerbates poor standards of living but also creates a divide among the youth, as illustrated by the following statement:

“You find that some youths are able to access many opportunities while others are not in a position to access some opportunities like others. This leaves other youths behind as others progress. For example ... youths from some of the regions here in Uganda are already benefiting more than other youths in other regions. Youths in Karamoja and parts of eastern Uganda are being left behind compared with youths in central and western Uganda. The decision-makers do not allocate resources in a fair manner.”⁸⁴

There are concerns that young people’s efforts to access economic opportunities have been thwarted by government policies. In the face of high unemployment challenges, young people have attempted to create their own businesses. A considerable number of the young people interviewed revealed that they have been involved in a business of some sort, making an attempt at an independent life; however, they have encountered serious challenges that threaten their livelihoods (see Table 2).

80 This view came up several times at a Youth Symposium organised by Alert and held on 25 February 2014 in Kampala at the Uganda Manufacturers’ Association (UMA) Conference Hall.

81 For more information, see International Alert (2013c). Op. cit. p.25.

82 For more information, see: E.M. Sserunjogi (2013). ‘Campaign finance and how it tilts polls in Museveni’s favour’, *Daily Monitor*, 2 December 2013.

83 Recent reports indicate that this scheme has been suspended because of corruption and will now be administered by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

84 KII, youth leader at TESDA, Makerere University, March 2014.

Table 2: Economic challenges that threaten young people's livelihoods

Form of economic insecurity	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Land grabbing/eviction/fake land titles	28	17.7	22	26.8	50	20.8
Lack of savings	30	19.9	17	20.7	47	19.6
Sports betting	34	21.5	8	9.8	42	17.5
KCCA laws	27	17.1	13	15.9	40	16.7
High taxes	25	15.8	12	14.6	37	15.4
Exorbitant rental fees	14	8.9	10	12.2	24	10.0
Total	158	100.9	82	100.0	240	100.0

Source: Field data

The young people complained of high taxes and rent, as well as disruption from the authorities, which erode the little savings they have and eat into the profits they make. One of the threats to their economic livelihood is the KCCA policy of banning street and roadside trading (16.7%). They complained that, with the enforcement of this law, most of their merchandise is usually confiscated by law enforcers who demand a lot of money to release the merchandise back to them. Others described how their roadside businesses were demolished by KCCA bulldozers. This study observes that, while the KCCA decision to prevent street vendors and roadside businesses from operating aims to make the city clean and modern, it has driven many young people into the suburbs to operate or into hiding, thus posing a threat to residents' security and peace and putting the livelihoods of young people at stake.⁸⁵ One youth noted that:

*"The reason we are not pick-pocketing on the streets is because we have this simple work to do. If this is also taken away, don't be surprised if there is an increase in the rate of crime."*⁸⁶

Another worrying development is the recent execution of two Ugandans in China who were convicted of drug-trafficking. In addition, more than a hundred young Ugandans are currently being held in China on similar charges.⁸⁷

Other challenges encountered by young people in trying to secure a decent livelihood include the high taxes imposed on small businesses (cited by 15.4% of the young respondents), high interest rates on bank loans, the ever-increasing rental fees from property owners, and the uncertainty of being evicted or shut down for defaulting on rent payments. In Kampala, it is reported that many property owners and banks frequently increase their rent and interest charges, thus driving away many young people with small businesses because they cannot cope. One focus group discussant explained:

85 K. Nabuzale (2013). 'To fight crime, we must first tackle unemployment', *Daily Monitor*, 1 August 2013. Available at <http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Commentary/To-fight-crime--we-must-first-tackle-unemployment/-/689364/1932922/-/a4bv1dz/-/index.html>

86 J.K. Abimanyi (2011). 'Vendors' eviction puts Kampala at a crossroads', *Daily Monitor*, 6 September 2011. Available at <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/-/691232/1231744/-/8qdb9z/-/index.html>

87 New Vision (2014). 'China executes Ugandans found with sh 6.6b cocaine', Vol. 29, No. 131, 2 July 2014; see related story at: <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/657113-china-kills-2-ugandans-over-drug-trafficking.html>

“Government does not provide youths with the necessary start-up capital, yet it is taking away even the little property that youths have accumulated. For example, here we are doing carpentry work, but the taxation charged from us is very high and unfair. When URA [Uganda Revenue Authority] people come to this workshop, they only look at the many chairs we have displayed for selling and then determine the taxation based on that. They do not even consider the long period that these chairs spend here before they are sold off. The revenue authorities do not also consider that the profit we make from a particular chair is very small. For example, after using capital worth UGX 1 million to manufacture a set of sofa chairs, I am only able to make a profit of UGX 20,000. Therefore, the conditions are not at all favourable for business.”⁸⁸

Because of the informal nature of their businesses, these youths are not insured against possible risks. Therefore, they suffer losses without compensation when an accident such as a fire or looting occurs. The start-up capital they use is usually borrowed from the bank or comes from meagre personal savings, the sale of land, cows or goats, or even school allowances. This means that the youths have no fall-back option once their property is looted or consumed by fire, or when KCCA officials confiscate their entire business stock, especially that of hawkers or roadside traders. Since most of the youths lack collateral, they end up losing the mortgaged assets to the financial institutions. On a few occasions, politicians offer help when there is a catastrophe, such as a fire. However, the leaders of business groups have also been accused of embezzling the money meant to help those who lost their property. One youth remarked:

“I have business selling second-hand clothes. [I] got a small loan from our village SACCO [to start up this business]. The problems I am encountering in this business is that I am renting a small kiosk, but rent is so high and the KCCA dues [taxes] are also high and at any time we may be evicted from this place, because they do not want kiosks alongside main roads. I was given a verbal notice to vacate this place within four months, yet I had paid for ground rent for a year and you can imagine they continue to ask for money. So we live in uncertainty. You don't know whether you will find your business the following day or not. Even these fires that come from nowhere and burn things are making business very risky. For example, just recently, Owino Market caught fire and almost all the market was burnt, yet the headquarters of the fire brigade in the country is just next to it. That is why some people start wondering whether the leaders are responsible. To make matters worse, no one comes out clearly to explain what caused the fire.”⁸⁹

Young people do not perceive government to be fair in its dealings with people. This leads to despondency among young people since they expect government to be supportive. As a result, many young people have become frustrated by government and have lost morale in participating in government programmes because of alleged corruption. The youth complain that they cannot achieve anything or access resources without knowing the right people or without kickbacks. This is worrying as economic disparities and unequal distribution of wealth and corruption constitute some of the major drivers of conflict.⁹⁰

88 FGD, Kampala, 15 March 2014.

89 Interview with male youth, Nakawa Division, 1 March 2014.

90 International Alert (2013a). Op. cit.

3.2 Youth unemployment

This section examines the means through which economic opportunities – that is, employment opportunities – can be accessed in order to economically empower young people in Uganda. It demonstrates that employment opportunities are not only scarce but also thwarted by marginalisation and exclusion.

It is important to note that access to economic opportunities, assets and paid labour enables young people to make the transition from childhood to adulthood, leading to independence.⁹¹ It is believed that employment:

“...is critical both to the status and well-being of youth. Only through work can they attain the financial independence necessary to look after themselves and start their own families, and to attain respect and recognition from their households and communities.”⁹²

Addressing employment issues concerning the youth is important for the government because unlike their adult counterparts:

“Young women and men bring numerous assets to the labour market – such as relevant and recent education and training, new ideas, enthusiasm, willingness to learn and be taught, openness to new skills and technology, as well as mobility and adaptability.”⁹³

The National Youth Policy, 2001 highlights employment as one of the priority areas. The review of this policy found that 44% of the youth did not have adequate skills necessary for self-employment, while 46% lacked employable skills.⁹⁴ Government also responded by instituting the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training Act (2008), the Employment Act Cap 16 (2006) and the Equal Opportunities Act (2007). The second objective of the new National Youth Policy – namely, “to enhance the productivity and employability of youth for sustainable livelihood” – further underlines the significance of youth employment. However, this study notes that, while Article 40 of the Ugandan Constitution provides for people “to work under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions”, it does not commit government to providing work or creating employment opportunities for its citizens.

Accessing the few available jobs is a gruelling task for most youths who are not politically or socially connected.⁹⁵ This is exacerbated by a lack of relevant skills. Lack of education, especially vocational training, inhibits their access to economic opportunities and leadership positions.⁹⁶ Early school leaving affects youth access to economic resources and reduces their sense of self-worth. It evokes feelings of marginalisation since early school leaving drives the youth to do menial work that is low paid.⁹⁷

91 K. Çelik (2008). “‘My state is my father’: Youth unemployment experiences under the weak state welfare provisions of Turkey”, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4. pp.429–444.

92 BRAC (2011). Op. cit. p.62.

93 United Nations (2007). *Review of National Action Plans on Youth Employment: Putting Commitment into Action*. New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs. p.8; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2011). Op. cit.

94 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2011). Op. cit.

95 FGD, Makerere University, 7 March 2014.

96 International Alert (2013c). Op. cit.

97 Ibid. For more information, see International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

Because Uganda does not have a welfare regime and families do not provide the necessary support that youths require, unemployed youth are not protected to enable them to have a reasonable standard of living.⁹⁸

In order to address the problem of lack of adequate and appropriate skills among youths, the government launched the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Strategic Plan 2011–2012, also known as the ‘Skilling Uganda’ programme. This plan aimed to redress the challenges of access to and relevance, quality and equity of education and training, among other things. However, in addition to a lack of awareness of the programme among the youth, the government has been criticised for showing no adequate financial commitment to the programme. Moreover, the BTVET centres are unevenly distributed and some areas do not have access to these centres.

Further analysis indicates that, while the concept of BTVET is positive, government’s alleged lack of commitment to providing for adequate resources could be deemed as hypocritical. If sufficient resources are not committed to vocational schools, they may come to be regarded as low-cost schools intended for early school leavers or children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such schools could therefore risk reinforcing the traditional social class system. The concern is that youths graduating from BTVETs would occupy low-paid jobs while children of affluent parents would continue with their undergraduate and graduate degrees, thus entrenching the class divide.⁹⁹

Undeniably, vocational training forms one of the core elements aimed at enhancing the employability of young people. However, it should be noted that “employability begins with literacy”.¹⁰⁰ In spite of vast improvements, there is still a huge literacy gap, as demonstrated by the current Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) failure rates in many rural schools.¹⁰¹ Therefore, an important function of the education system, particularly BTVETs, should be the progressive development of employability skills among young people.

Another concern is that job allocation is prone to corruption and sectarianism. One respondent explained that most people in big offices prefer employing relatives regardless of their expertise or qualifications. In the army, there appears to be a western bias:

*“Efforts by the army to make top command positions more nationally representative, as required by the constitution, have yet to show remarkable results. For example, five out of six army generals, four out of six lieutenant generals and 12 out of 19 major generals come from western Uganda.”*¹⁰²

Although this was attributed to “a historical accident” of National Resistance Army (NRA) fighters who gathered in 1981, a similar pattern of inequality still allegedly exists in ranks among young officers.¹⁰³

98 See K. Çelik (2008). Op. cit.

99 J.E. Côté (2014). Op. cit. For more information, see C.O. Ayayi (2013). ‘Youth unemployment and post-conflict recovery in the Acholi sub-region’, *Journal of Development Studies*, Special issue. pp.177–196.

100 United Nations (2007). Op. cit.

101 Uganda National Examination Board (2011). *The Achievement of Primary School Pupils in Uganda in Numeracy, Literacy and Oral Reading*. For more information, see article: ‘70 per cent of pupils can’t read or count’, *Daily Monitor*, 25 March 2012.

102 ‘Questions still linger over top army jobs’, *The Observer*, 26 March 2012.

103 For more information, see article: ‘The tribalism question: Who is who in government?’, *The Observer*, 16 July 2013. Available at http://observer.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26450:the-tribalism-question-who-is-who-in-government&catid=78:topstories&Itemid=116

While it might be argued that the scarcity of job opportunities leads government and the private sector to require experience of two or more years – or even to ring-fence jobs by specifying an age limit in job advertisements – the youth cited this as another exclusion hurdle. Young people raised the question of how a new graduate could acquire experience of more than two years when they had just graduated. This may be perceived as another way of denying young people financial security while extending the tenure of older adults in jobs. One suggestion that emerged frequently during the FGDs was to reduce the retirement age in order to give young graduates greater access to opportunities, although this would increase the burden of having to support a large cohort of pensioners.

Lack of access to employment opportunities and high and rising unemployment levels in the country are challenges that require urgent attention because unemployment can reduce young people's sense of self-worth. Unemployment and poverty among young people has the potential to trigger social and political instability, increase crime rates and lead to civil disobedience.¹⁰⁴ In most circumstances of unemployment, the youth become vulnerable and are prone to risky behaviour. For instance, unemployment was cited as a major reason (31% of respondents) for youths getting involved in demonstrations (see Table 3).

Table 3: Factors that drive young people to participate in demonstrations and rallies

Reason	No.	%
Unemployment	52	31.0
Oppressive policing	39	23.2
Used by politicians	33	19.6
Change of political establishment	26	15.5
Paid to participate	18	10.7
Total	168	100.0

Source: Field data

Most of the young people do not have access to or own productive resources such as land; therefore, they are not engaged in productive work that occupies them full time. They are at risk of being left idle and frustrated because they lack employment and are constrained by hostile economic conditions. Young people who are not employed risk being exploited by those who believe that engaging in civil disobedience will change the difficult economic situation they are experiencing. In addition, they can be paid to participate, since they do not have sufficient funds of their own.

In a separate but related issue affecting young people, one of the respondents attributed youth involvement in sports betting to a lack of productive or meaningful employment:

“First, the youth are unemployed, and as a result they become redundant – making them vulnerable to manipulation by politicians. For example, in Kiseka Market, many people there are youths and they are involved in different dubious business like stealing car lights. When chaos comes to the city, for them, they look at it as another venture of vandalising people’s property.”¹⁰⁵

104 United Nations (2007). Op. cit.

105 KII, youth leader, Uganda Martyrs University, 12 March 2014.

Similar explanations emerged during the FGDs, whereby youth involvement in civil strife was attributed to frustration with injustice and corruption, the belief that government had neglected them, and the conviction that problems such as unemployment could be solved if the political *status quo* changed.¹⁰⁶ In assessing the increased crime rate in Kampala city, one commentator argues:

*“Most of the perpetrators of these crimes [violent robberies in Kampala] are desperate unemployed youth, though we cannot rule out drug abusers and hard-core criminals who earn a living from crime.”*¹⁰⁷

Employment, therefore, is central to the ability of young people to meet their current and future needs and to save and invest for the future, opening up greater economic and social opportunities for themselves and their households.¹⁰⁸ Without access to employment or livelihood opportunities, most young people cannot afford a house or other necessities of adulthood, or to start a family. This implies that their social standing in society will remain insecure, thus delaying their transition to adulthood.¹⁰⁹ Providing employment or creating avenues for job opportunities is crucial for reducing poverty, forestalling migration to urban centres and, most importantly, averting security threats that may otherwise be perpetrated by young people.

106 FGD, Makerere University, 10 March 2014.

107 K. Nabuzale (2013). Op. cit.

108 BRAC (2011). Op. cit.

109 L. McLean Hilker and E. Fraser (2009). *Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and Fragile States*, Report prepared for DFID's Equity and Rights Team. Available at <http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/CON66.pdf>

4. Youth potential in promoting peace and security in Uganda

Young people are sometimes demonised and considered lazy, badly behaved, irresponsible or untrustworthy rather than serious and hardworking individuals. As a result, they are usually left out of decision-making processes. Youth marginalisation and exclusion from civic engagement and accessing economic resources is telling. However, an analysis of the youth environment regarding social, political and economic development demonstrates that they have the potential to contribute significantly to the country's development. Ugandan youth perceptions on national unity and identity reveal the increased level of awareness among young people with regard to social and cultural conflicts that have plagued Uganda.¹¹⁰

Young people also have the potential to promote peace and security. Although some of the youth perceptions seem to replicate the entrenched position of their parents, young people possess a willingness to change the status quo and to prevent a re-occurrence of conflict in Uganda.

This study found that one of the most overriding factors behind young people's involvement in violent activities – such as demonstrations, riots or being conscripted into rebel activities – is lack of activity or unemployment. Most of the young people do not have access to or own productive resources such as land; therefore, they are not engaged in productive work that occupies them full time. They are left idle and frustrated because they lack employment and feel constrained by hostile economic conditions.

The youth show a willingness to start business ventures and participate in government programmes, despite hurdles encountered in accessing credit facilities and frustrations emanating from the implementation process.¹¹¹ Several of the young respondents indicated that they were engaged in some small-scale business activity – such as farming (mainly poultry), *boda-boda* riding [passenger motor bike], hair-cutting, selling second-hand clothes, or belonging to a savings group.¹¹² This youth optimism demonstrates a willingness and readiness among young people to engage in income-generating activities – a development that would realise young people's full potential, thus promoting peace and security.

Another study shows a trend towards opportunity-based entrepreneurship emerging among the educated youth.¹¹³ An increasing number of young graduates seem to prefer self-employment to salaried employment.¹¹⁴ This demonstrates their effort towards independence and securing a future livelihood, which fosters the country's economic security.

Another positive attribute is that many young people are not willing to be used as agents of violence.¹¹⁵ This is demonstrated in their active participation in peace and reconciliation initiatives

¹¹⁰ International Alert (2013b). Op. cit.

¹¹¹ International Alert (2013c). Op. cit.

¹¹² FGDs. For more information, see International Alert (2013d). Op. cit.

¹¹³ BRAC (2011). Op. cit.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ J.S. Ssentongo (2013). Op. cit.

in the Kibaare and Kony conflicts.¹¹⁶ Moreover, it is now more frequent to find intermarriages across different ethnic divides, unlike in the past. Intermarriages are more common among young people – an indication that they have transcended the limitations of ethnic cleavages. These observations suggest that the youth have fewer qualms about ethnic diversity in Uganda; it is the older generations who seem to be fuelling ethnic clashes.

To enhance these positive aspects, respondents suggested increased interaction – especially for those who are not exposed to multicultural environments during their formative years through national service in different parts of the country. However, this can only be achieved if these regions offer opportunities in terms of jobs and occupational activities to ‘outsiders’ rather than reserving them for their own sons and daughters.

While in most instances of peace negotiation, young people have been left out,¹¹⁷ they have been instrumental in participating in the post-negotiation activities – for example, in music composition.¹¹⁸ Several music composers, including Twong Gweno and Obol Simpleman in northern Uganda, composed songs calling on their peers who were involved in war activities to renounce violence.¹¹⁹

The study also observed non-confrontational approaches suggested by young people to resolve conflicts, especially riots and demonstrations between the police and the youth. During interviews and FGDs, suggestions for curbing violent conflicts through diplomatic means (cited by 26.7% of the respondents – see Table 4) included establishing cordial relations between the police and the youth; quelling riots ‘diplomatically’; and getting involved in dialogue to solve problems. This is an indication that these young people do not advocate violent means as a way of resolving conflicts in society.

Table 4: Suggested means of fostering peace and security in communities

Ways of curbing insecurity in communities	No.	%
Diplomatic means, e.g. collaborating with security organs	62	26.7
Community policing (community sensitisation)	46	19.8
Reporting wrongdoers	35	15.1
Assisting security organs (joining patrol units)	31	13.4
Alerting police	28	12.1
Forming volunteer neighbourhood watch groups	18	7.6
Monitoring intruders in the community	12	5.2
Total	232	100.0

Source: Field data

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ D.N. Tshimba (2013). ‘Narratives of the youth in post-war Kitgum, northern Uganda’, *Journal of Development Studies*, Special Issue. pp.97–114.

¹¹⁸ L.O. Olanya (2013). ‘Youth reconciliation and political participation: The case of northern Uganda’, *Journal of Development Studies*, Special Issue. pp.77–96.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Furthermore, the youth group discussions revealed a strong advocacy for community policing through sensitising the community and collaboration between residents and security organs (19.8%). When asked how they could contribute to peace and security in their communities, the young respondents pointed to the following factors as being crucial: reporting lawbreakers and suspected criminals or impending riots or strikes to the police (15.1%); alerting police on an impending crime (12.1%); and forming volunteer peace and security teams or neighbourhood watch groups in their communities to monitor wrongdoers (7.6%). They also suggested monitoring intruders (5.2%). A considerable proportion of respondents (13.4%) indicated their willingness to join security organs in patrolling their localities. The above findings are indicative of youth awareness about the possible ways that can be employed to foster peace and security in a community. Therefore, involving young people in securing their communities is crucial because they are directly affected by most conflicts.

Finally, respondents suggested youth platforms through which they could interact with decision-makers, politicians and leaders to give their perceptions on peace and security. These should not be perfunctory meetings but ones that are mutually beneficial. Government needs to plan with young people because they are not only victims of conflict and insecurity, but also potential perpetrators of violence.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This report set out to assess the social, political and economic situation of youth in Uganda – focusing on development programmes, employment and wellbeing in order to explain their impact on peace and security. It also aimed to establish the contribution of young people to promoting peace and security, with a special focus on economic, social and physical security.

Employing a political economy approach, the study carried out an analysis of the historical, social, economic, political and cultural factors impacting youth affairs.

Overall, since independence, young people have been impacted negatively by ethnic and political tensions, religious and social divisions, the decline in the economy, rising inequalities and corruption. These challenges have recurred in subsequent regimes, shaping the thinking and practices of the youth.

National unity seems to have eluded Ugandan society, owing to the ethnic, religious and political diversities, which appear to define the political and socio-economic structure of Uganda. The findings indicate that young people closely identify with their ethnic groups, area of origin, religious affiliations and cultural institutions. All these considerations prevail over national identity. The rationale for this identification is explained by the reverence young people attach to their ancestors and the authority they exude, the cultural values inherent in both religious and cultural institutions, and the socio-economic benefits they provide to the youth.

Further analysis indicates that young people have been marginalised and excluded from participating in political and public governance. This practice seems to be rooted in the traditional belief that youths should not be permitted to speak or participate in a public gathering, and thus not encouraged to participate in decision-making. Various youth associations have been established to nurture leadership roles and skills. However, most of these associations are funded by government or politicians to run their activities. Consequently, they are compromised and often do not attain the goals for which they were set up.

The study also focused on youth access to economic resources and opportunities, which enable young people to make the transition from childhood to adulthood and from a dependent life to an independent one. While exclusion from accessing economic resources is largely related to lack of capital and requisite skills or qualification, the study also found that the economic environment is often hostile to young people, particularly when they try to engage in business. High interest rates and the ever-increasing rental fees usually edge many young people out of their preferred economic endeavours. Moreover, many young people cannot access opportunities because they do not have direct links with ‘people who matter’. As a result, they are excluded from government programmes, education opportunities, loan facilities and so on. Many youths are left unemployed, feeling socially excluded and frustrated. This in turn increases their potential to be lured into violence.

Nevertheless, a glimmer of hope remains – the youth recognise their potential to contribute to the peace, security and development of Uganda. Moreover, young people are aware of other avenues available to address their marginalisation and exclusion, such as constructive dialogue at various levels and with various stakeholders such as government and government organs (e.g. law enforcers). They just need to be given an opportunity to acquire the requisite tools – education,

skills, credit and so on – to enable them to attain economic independence and become self-sustainable. This would be the basis for youth contribution to peace, security and development in Uganda.

Recommendations

Government

It would be beneficial if government, at all levels (central or local), strengthened the already existing youth platforms, especially youth councils, and established many more for rural youths. These platforms should incorporate training in leadership skills, as well as communication and participation in designing, monitoring and evaluating government programmes. Through these platforms and centres, young people should be able to freely express their views. Investing in young people and empowering them is important for equality and security, which are prerequisites for lasting peace. Suppressing the voices of dissenting youths through harsh police crackdowns on demonstrations may only provide temporary relief, sowing the seeds for greater conflict and potential future violence in the long term.

Government should play its civic role by revisiting the education system and curriculum in order to instil a national outlook in the minds of young people and move beyond ethnic, religious, gender and political prejudices. Nationhood cannot be expected of young people if it is not cultivated through their upbringing and education.

Government should address the grievances of young people on issues such as exorbitant rental fees, high taxes or harsh law enforcement. While initiatives taken by institutions such as KCCA to ‘clean up’ the city may be appreciated, realistic options should be made available and accessible to the youths affected and other street vendors. Lack of immediate forms of livelihood or provision of vending venues may drive the youth into illicit activities.

Government should help young people to engage in activities such as sports and drama, or to take up leadership roles – taking part in activities that occupy them rather than being idle and possible targets for conscription into destabilising activities. Sports and drama activities should be particularly encouraged both as sources of employment and as a means of occupying unemployed youth.

As a way of alleviating youth unemployment, government should provide training for young people in vocational skills. Training offered by BTVET institutions ought to be targeted so that it provides for marketable skills rather than sticking to traditional courses, which may not offer employment opportunities to young people on graduation. Government should also ensure that training institutions receive adequate funding lest they remain idle and non-effective structures.

In order to tackle the problem of lack of employable skills, government should initiate and provide tax subsidy incentives to private sector units to encourage them to offer internships and training. This would enable the youth to gain much-needed work experience and to develop employable skills.

In all government interventions, it should be essential to ensure a gender balance by tackling the inequalities that often disenfranchise female youths. Similarly, issues of youths with disabilities should receive paramount consideration.

Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs and National Youth Council

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs (UPFYA) and the National Youth Council (NYC) should lobby parliament to enact a law that requires youth funding to be built into the national budget and be treated like other priority areas. In particular, they should ensure that government allocates a specified percentage of all sector budgets to youth-based programmes or interventions. Benchmarks should be established to ensure that funds that are annually built into the national budget are used appropriately for youth from grassroots to national levels.

On the basis of review and analysis of existing policies and available statistics regarding employment, unemployment and underemployment of young people, the UPFYA in collaboration with the NYC should establish a consultative process to lobby for initiatives to tackle youth unemployment in national budgeting.

Cultural and religious institutions

Cultural and religious institutions nationwide should emulate and even improve on the *Ekisaakaate* approach to addressing youth needs. There should be a particular focus on imparting marketable and employable skills to young people.

Private sector

The private sector should be encouraged to accommodate a reasonable number of youths in internship/apprenticeship roles. As well as giving the young beneficiaries work experience, businesses should appoint mentors to help nurture entrepreneurial skills among the interns/apprentices.

Civil society

Civil society organisations focusing on youth issues should conduct awareness-raising programmes on youth grievances through research and evidence-based targeted advocacy. A key aim should be to influence policy for the benefit of young people.

Civil society organisations should carry out outreach programmes, particularly to target deprived rural youths. Such programmes should address capacity-building, skills training, the formation of associations and access to credit.

Electoral Commission

In its monitoring role, the Electoral Commission should ensure that all registered political parties have a visible and functional youth sector that puts young people forward for leadership roles. This should be an essential requirement for party participation in the electoral process.

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