

PEACEBUILDING RELATED ISSUES IN THE GREAT LAKES SUB-REGION OF AFRICA.

ADVOCACY DOCUMENT PRODUCED DURING
THE SUB-REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM « YOUTH
FOR PEACE » FIRST EDITION.

BUJUMBURA, 28 – 29 NOVEMBER 2023



CONTEXT

The Great Lakes region of Africa has been plagued by conflict for decades and has seen some of the continent's worst wars. These often-interconnected conflicts between Burundi, DR Congo and Rwanda are complex. Narratives and some research on the region tend to focus more on images of division, precariousness, and insecurity instead of the potential and capacity of the populations of these three countries to transform narratives and respond to challenges.

A number of resolutions, policies and programs have been put in place to promote the role of youth in conflict prevention from the international to the country level, these include UNSCR2250, the continental framework on the YPS agenda at the continental level and other efforts carried at the sub-regional and national levels, although these instruments exist, the challenges facing youth in the area of peace and security in Africa in general, and in the Great Lakes sub-region in particular, remain major.

In response to this, Youth for Peace DRC from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Youth Empowerment and Leadership Initiative (YELI) from Burundi, Young Women Leaders (YWL) from North and South Kivu in the DRC, Association Modeste et Innocent (AMI) from Rwanda and We Got your Back Rwanda with financial and technical support from the Peace and Reconciliation project of the Schoenstatt Fathers' community Mont Sion Gikungu, the University of Burundi and the University of Fribourg (Caritas Studies) and Life & Peace Institute (LPI), organized the First Edition of the sub-regional symposium called "Youth for Peace", bringing together youth from Rwanda, Burundi and the DR Congo to reflect on the major challenges of peacebuilding and youth involvement in peace processes in these respective countries.

This first edition was held in Bujumbura from November 28 to 29, 2023. The symposium was held in Bujumbura because of the efforts made by the Government of Burundi to promote the youth, peace and security agenda.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE SUB-REGION: EXPERIENCES FROM THREE COUNTRIES.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

Several initiatives have been put in place to promote youth, some of them are:

- The adoption of the National Action Plan on the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, which makes DRC the third country in the world after Finland and Nigeria.
- The creation of the National Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, which brings together youth organizations working on the field on peace and security, the establishment of the 2250 National Technical Secretariat and provincial youth advisors.
- Etc.

Nevertheless, these efforts face several challenges, some of them are:

- Lack of funding for youth peacebuilding initiatives,
- Translation of documents into local languages,
- Recurrent conflicts and wars, which impede the implementation of policies and plans on YPS.

BURUNDI

Several initiatives have been put in place to promote youth, some of them are:

- Ongoing process for the establishment of the national strategy on the youth, peace and security agenda and its action plan 2024 - 2028,
- Outstanding recognition of the contribution of youth to peace and security by His Excellency, Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, named the Champion of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa by the African Union.
- Existence of the National Youth Council of Burundi and the Youth Forum organized every year,
- Existence of BIJE (Youth Investment Bank), PAEEJ (Youth empowerment and economic mentoring program), set up by the government, and FIGA (Impulse, Guarantee and Accompaniment Fund).
- Etc.

However, these efforts face several challenges, some of them are:

- Lack of financial resources to implement the youth, peace and security agenda,
- Youth unemployment,
- Ethnic conflicts that have shaken the country,
- Psychological trauma following cycles of violence.
- Etc.

RWANDA

Several initiatives have been put in place to promote youth in Rwanda, some of them are:

- Youth integration programs such as Youth connect, among others,
- Support for youth initiatives and several international youth exchange programs,
- Rwanda built on the experience of the first Women, Peace and Security agenda to draw up the second National Action Plan, which will run until 2026.

Nevertheless, these efforts face several challenges, such as:

- Transgenerational trauma,

- Insecurity in neighboring countries,
- Low rate of youth employment.
- Etc.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SYMPOSIUM.

The symposium ended with an output of recommendations on conflict prevention through the promotion of the sub-region's youth:

1. To donors of funds and United Nations agencies

- ✓ Promote initiatives for youth inclusion in decision-making structures, and their participation in democratic processes in the sub-region,
- ✓ Make funds available to support youth initiatives that are related to youth partnership and collaboration in the sub-region,
- ✓ Promote action research on peace and reconciliation in the sub-region.
- ✓ Support young people's entrepreneurial projects,

2. (International) non-governmental organizations

- ✓ Support capacity-building initiatives for youth networks and organizations in peacebuilding in general in the sub-region,
- ✓ Support entrepreneurial and economic empowerment projects for young people,
- ✓ Promote intergenerational dialogue in the sub-region,

3. To Civil Society Organizations and youth-led initiatives

- ✓ Set up a youth network that aims to create a common space for dialogue, knowledge sharing and best practices, offering participants the opportunity to discuss the major challenges linked to conflicts in the sub-region and the possibilities for sustainable peace through the effective and active involvement of young people in decision-making bodies, organizations, and peace processes at all levels in the sub-region,
- ✓ Strengthen experience-sharing activities between young people in the sub-region, on the continent and outside the sub-region,
- ✓ Promote the sharing of experiences and information on the cultures of each country in the sub-region, the reduction of stereotypes and prejudices, and mutual empowerment,

4. To the African Union and Regional Economic Communities

- ✓ Promote exchange and experience-sharing gatherings between young people, youth orga-

- nizations and networks from different countries in the sub-region,
- ✓ Encourage member states to develop youth promotion policies,
- ✓ Support capacity-building initiatives for youth networks and organizations promoting youth participation in decision-making bodies and peacebuilding in general in the subregion,

5. Institutions and governmental authorities at country level

- ✓ Promote initiatives for trauma and memory management, good governance, social justice, and sustainable development,
- ✓ Promote local mechanisms for dealing with the past,
- ✓ Open spaces for the inclusion of youth in peace processes.



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