



Youth in Crisis

The Cost of Inaction

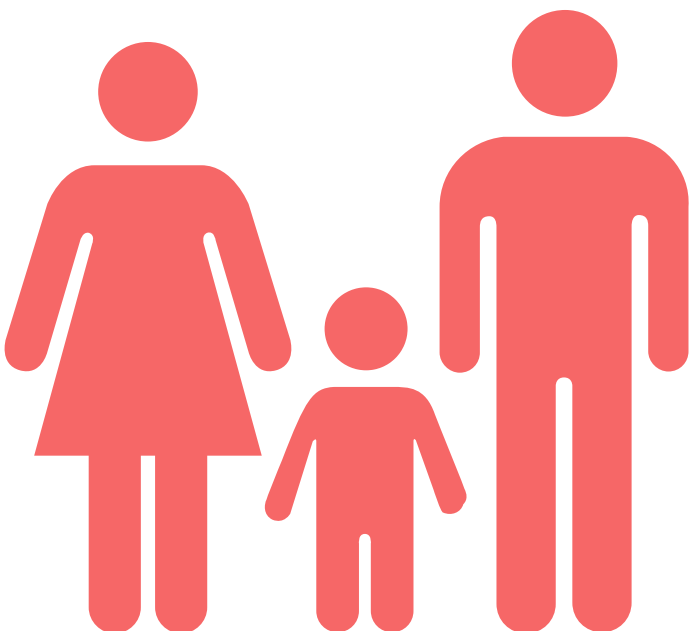
Fast tracking the path to
recovery for the BAY States
of Northeast Nigeria

POLICY BRIEF

JANUARY 2024

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Abbreviation

YLOs	Youth Led Organizations
BAY	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe
NEDC	North East Development Commission
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
NBS	Nigerian Bureau of Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Partners
IFs	International Futures
Y2Y	Youth to Youth
PCNI	Presidential Committee on North-east Initiative
NYP	National Youth Policy
AYP	Africa Youth Policy
HoA	House of Assembly
NAP	National Action Plan
NHF	National Humanitarian Fund
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

Overview

It is worthy of note that considerable efforts have been made to document how, it is that, from 2009 when the events of violent conflict escalated in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states (hereafter BAY States) – Nigeria’s Northeast region; it continues to persist. Through the last decade and more, events of violent conflicts have resulted in large scale socio-economic and political destructions and the direct death of 38,000 persons and 314,000 (conflict-attributable deaths)¹. The cumulative losses in its aftermath are estimated to be above US\$330 billion².

The rising scale of damages to properties and assets has left 2.4million people displaced from their homes³. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) indicates that there are in total 8.4million persons in need of humanitarian assistance in the BAY States⁴, out of which 73 percent are young people under the age of 30years⁵.

National data analyzed for the case study “Engaging the role of Youth Led Organizations at the Intersections of Humanitarian response, Peace Systems and Development interventions”, whose results necessitated this Policy Note, leaves no room for doubt, as regarding the socio-economic conditions and profile of the BAY States before violent conflicts began in 2008. They were the poorest in Nigeria, with very many challenges. Yet, in these conditions, whilst contributing more than half of the GDP of the BAY States, agricultural production was a main economic activity, employing between 65 and 80 percent of the population⁶. The BAY states also have large population sizes with very high dependency ratios of children and non-working-age adults at a total of 86.2 per 100 workers⁷.

About 60 percent of Young people in these BAY states, depended largely on agriculture for income⁸, but with the devastation and collapse of economic activities.

Box 1: Summary of main elements that shape the Peace and security outlook on Youth participation in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.

- 1. What difference will Youth Led Organizations make in resolving the persistence of violent conflict in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states of Northeast Nigeria, seeing it has a multifaceted and multidimensional nature?*
- 2. What are – and if any – the significant value proposition that Youth Led Organizations uniquely possess or can deliver on, by which engaging them should significantly mitigate the risk of conflict transiting further into violence and launch the region onto the journey for recovery. How is this value derived?*
- 3. It just costs more to work directly with Youth Led Organizations. The additional costs to profile, capacitate and effectively tool them is an administrative high-risk for the sensitive timelines and highest standards required by the humanitarian assistance framework for operating in Nigeria's Northeast region.*

¹ UNICEF, 2023

² UNICEF, 2023 (GDP losses US\$27.8 billion; Cost of lives lost US\$204.4billion; Cost of destruction of critical health, education & economic infrastructure and assets US\$100billion)

³ UNICEF, 2023

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) (2023) Intersectional Gender Analysis in Northeast Nigeria – Borno, Adamawa & Yobe States. Available at <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/intersectional-gender-analysis-northeast-nigeria-borno-adamawa-yobe-bay-states> p.19

⁵ Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, (MICS) 2022

⁶ The Buhari Plan (PCNI) (2016) p.16. This was developed by the Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative (PCNI), established in 2016 by President Muhammadu Buhari to serve as the

primary national strategy, coordination and advisory body for all humanitarian interventions, transformational and developmental efforts in the NorthEast region of Nigeria. It was succeeded by the North East Development Commission (NEDC). Available at:

<https://statehouse.gov.ng/policy/councils-committees/presidential-committee-on-north-east-initiative/#:~:text=The%20Presidential%20Committee%20on%20the,North%20East%20region%20of%20Nigeria>

⁷ Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2012, 2013) Demographic Health Survey (DHS) (2013), World Bank Development Indicators Data (2013–2018)

⁸ UNDP. (2019) Measuring the Economic Impact of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism in Africa p.16

suffered from the persistent violent conflicts, it has meant the total loss of their livelihood, induced poverty and unemployment et al.

The impact of these on young people so far, has been a double tragedy and if the situation continues through 2030 without resolve, the populations of Youth, especially young women in the BAY States, will be faced with severe crisis and may not have the opportunity to even recover or return the region to normalcy for another 200 years.

Window of Opportunity: The next five years (2024 to 2030) may hold the one time “window of opportunity” for recovery. This is embedded in the internationally established benefits that can be derived from the meaningful engagement of young people and the organizations they lead in ensuring sustained peace. It implies that fund managers, and policy makers in the humanitarian response, peace systems and development aid sector, must reimagine existing practices towards viewing young people (and their organizations) not only as target beneficiaries but indeed as partners and leaders in resolving the regions conflict and setting it back on the path of accelerated recovery.

Gathered during field visits and consultations with youth leaders and teams at organizations led by young people, especially young women, the case study results revealed that, the business-as-usual operating environment (and Manuals) of Peace Systems, Humanitarian response and development practice and its Youth engagement strategies, established ‘so-called- stricter restrictions in documentary and administrative requirements, localization frameworks and grant making arrangements. These systematically disqualifies Youth Led Organizations (hereafter YLOs) as ineligible for partnership that will enable them have access to resources needed to deliver on their unique value proposition – the design and implementation of Youth to Youth interventions and advocacy. In addition to these, are also the assumption that engaging the direct role of YLOs (mostly categorized as high-risk to medium risk) will indeed attract additional cost ab initio.



The research team, in applying a model Youth participation cost effectiveness analysis, estimate that, in deploying a **Youth to Youth** approach in fast tracking the resolve of the persistent conflict and putting the BAY States back on the path of recovery: the benefits will be US\$631 to US\$1 by 2030 if funds managers and policy makers **ACT NOW**.

2025 > 2030 WILL BE THE 'MAKE OR BREAK' WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Demographic Imperative: In this Policy Note, the research team considered the results of the 2006 Nigerian National Population Census that was released by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The Census results placed the north-eastern region of Nigeria, in the top spot with the highest birth rate of 7.2 over a woman's lifetime, compared to the national average of 4.4/5.4.

Multiple high-quality statistical estimation models –by the NBS and others like the International Futures (IFs) Model⁹– altogether agree, that the region's population size and its age structure indeed will go through a demographic transition in the decades through 2030 to 2050.

Experts, further expect that, the transition should result in a large group of working-age people who can inturn

An example of how **meaningful youth engagement strategies** enable Youth leaders and the organizations they lead, to deploy Y2Y interventions that resolve conflicts and prevent violent incidence:

- In Biu, a town and Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno State, Nigeria, community members trained by CATAI in dialogue **successfully intervened in a long-time conflict between farmers and herders in the Kingal community.**
- The process helped parties to draw lines for cattle routes and land for farming between the farmers and herders. This effort resulted in peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in the community.
- CATAI also identified and recruited thirty people to participate in tailoring, carpentry, and food processing training. They had access to soft loans and grants after the training to engage in income-generating activity to strengthen their resilience against extremist groups' incentives."

⁹ Housed at the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, It is used to forecast change and development in 186 countries worldwide. <https://korbel.du.edu/pardee>

Young people and the organizations they lead, are best positioned in principle and in practice at designing of interventions that build both resilience in young people to resist ideological manipulations which exploits the many grievances which leads to events that perpetrates violent conflicts and are also able to access intelligence needed to sufficiently collaborate with state authorities in protecting themselves from abduction, attack and the destruction of lives and property in their communities.

Figure 1: Youth risk to conflict drivers in Near Future



"Do you know I have more influence on my generation than government? If I mobilize my friends not to dump refuse somewhere, there is greater tendency to listen to me than the government making calls.

- Ishaku Balami CATAI

What real difference can YLOs make to get the BAY States on the journey to recovery?

Paybacks of Meaningful Youth Participation can ensure sustained peace by 2030 and deliver the hope for a demographic dividend as follows:



01

The role of YLOs will be economically beneficial with the capacity to avert 60% of deaths attributable to conflict by 2030.



02

In GDP parameters, even in the most pessimistic scenario, the average net savings from engaging the role of YLOs as strategic partners is close to US\$16.5 billion by 2030. In the most optimistic scenario, the net savings are almost US\$7 billion per year.



03

The bulk of the savings accrue at the household level, where direct costs of conflict in terms of casualties and forgone economic growth are greatest.



04

Sustained peace in the BAY states is also good for the Nigerian national government and the international community. It saves on post conflict humanitarian assistance and security interventions, which are much more expensive than the additional costs for directly engaging youth led organizations.

The key is for fund managers, policy makers and development actors under the principle of “Change Management Reform” and in keeping to the existing international best practices, develop a Youth Participation Investment Framework in the Peace and Security context for Northeast Nigeria. Alongside its’ operation manuals, also adopt special funding vehicles that will enable the allocation of resources designed to fit the unique composition of the typical YLO structure operating in the BAY States. And with it, also target the activities that tool and capacitate them, especially those led by young women.

Building upon the current stagnation in flow of aid to the region for humanitarian response and the need therefrom to do more with less; the realistic capacity strengthening of YLOs in the region whose roles are at the intersections of development (including governance), humanitarian response and peace systems should across board, sufficiently have in place and be able to utilize highly standardized (fit to purpose) procurement and logistics manuals, human resources and administrative policies, protocols and guidelines.

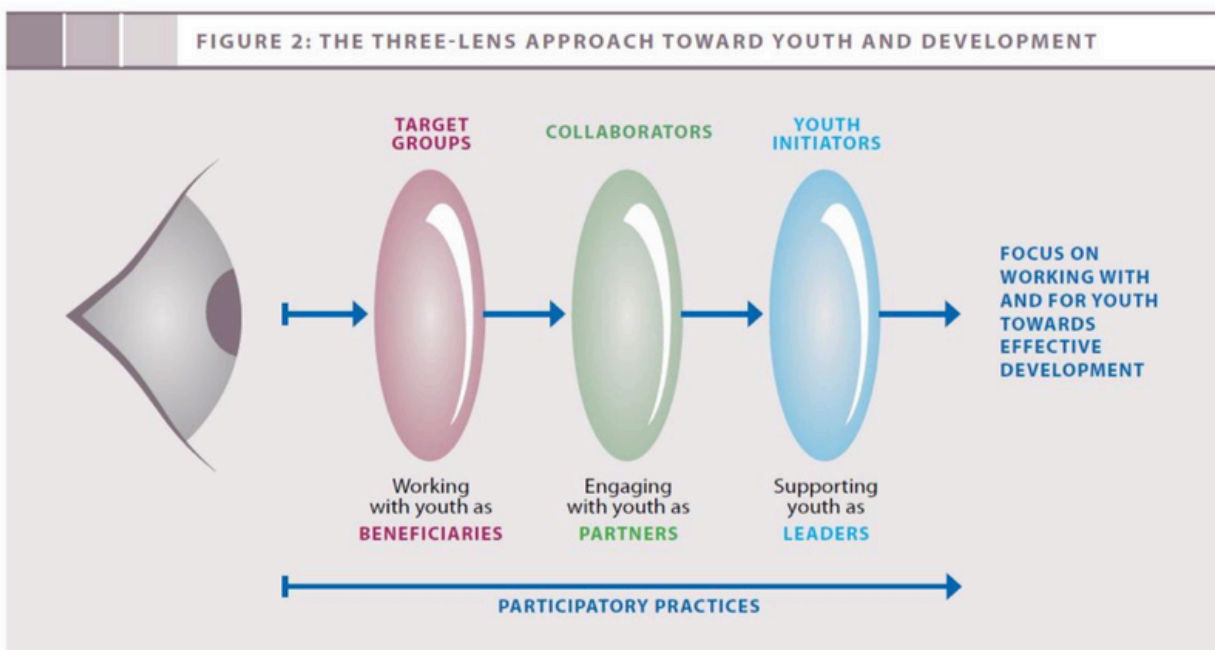


For the majority of YLOs, there will be significant transformation when seeking to formalize direct partnerships as implementing partners with fund managers and policymakers actively intervening to return the region to normalcy, likes of which, otherwise a systemic profiling that categorizes them to be high-risk within the present partnership frameworks.

It is noteworthy that, the proposed framework will gradually make it unpopular for fund managers and policymakers active in Peace and security sector going forward, to continue the outdated practice that focus on working with young people as last line service providers in humanitarian response and peace building (see Fig 2). In other instances, such as providing training for youth leaders in an individual or institutional capacity, that is purposed to providing information only on the 'how to', without giving them avenues to truly build capacity by doing.

01

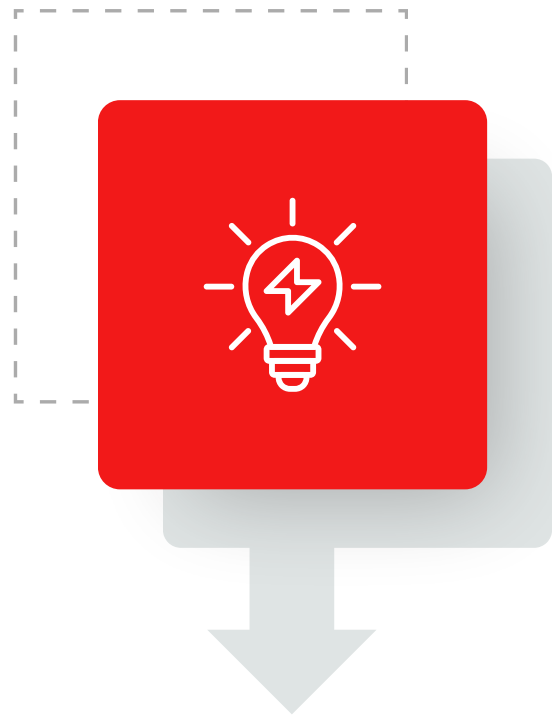
Examples of these a rampant in the operating environment of the BAY States with cases of sub granting partnerships that are structured to conduct all procurements, decision making and governance arrangements on behalf of the YLOs. These have not been characterized as part of the solutions and therefore not considered part of any future funding vehicle that would be established in seeking to implement the proposed Youth Participation Investment Framework on engaging the role of YLOs for a Northeast on the Journey to Recovery.



Source: Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers, 2010.
Figure adapted from: World Bank Development Report 2007

The Solution of a Youth Participation Investment Framework.

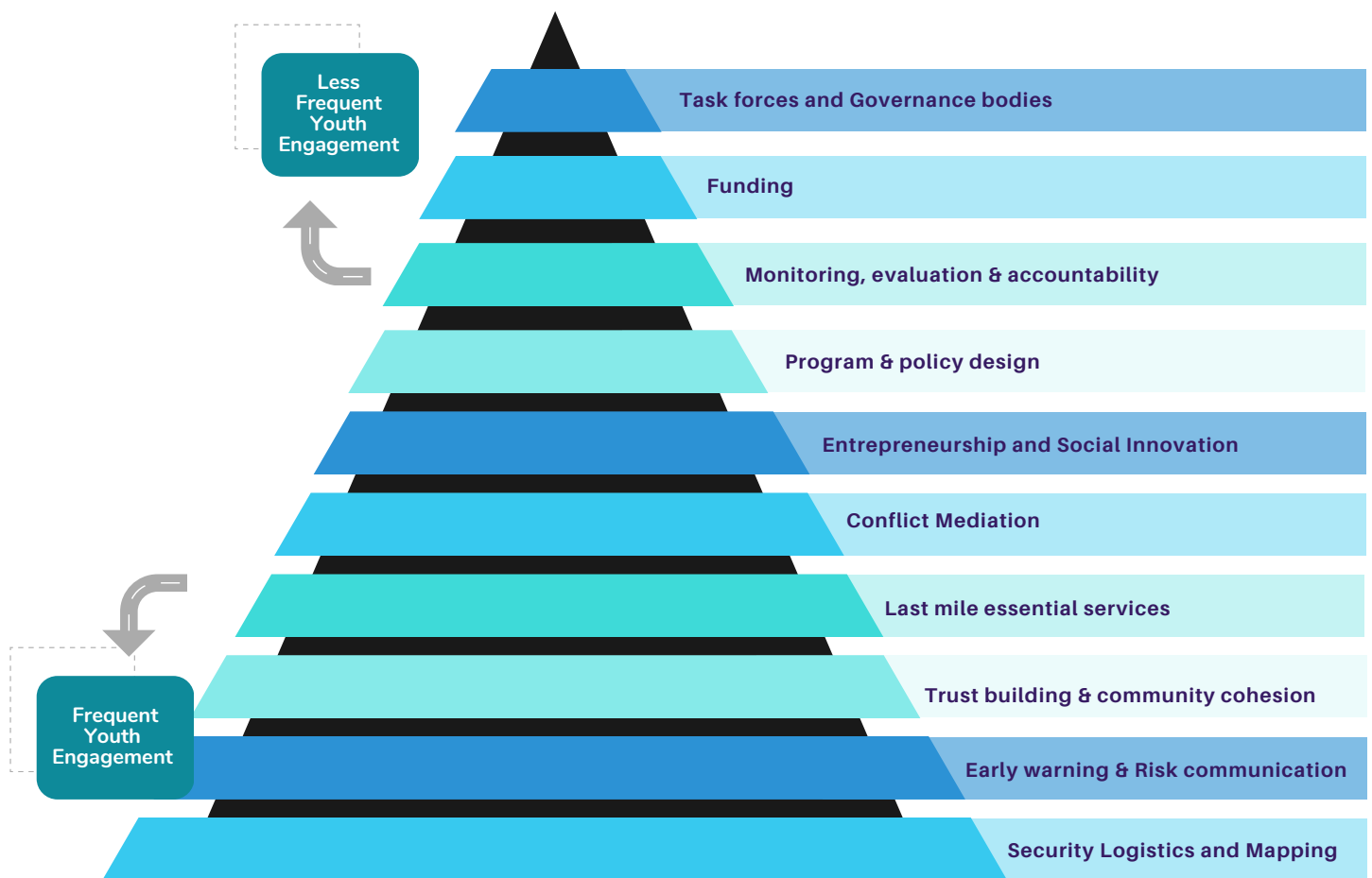
The results of the model in applying a youth participation cost effectiveness analysis, reveal that there is a positive rationale for all stakeholders to support the development and integration of a Youth Participation Investment Framework at the intersection of humanitarian response, development assistance and peace systems. Such a tool will account for a multi-pronged approach, where engaging the role of YLOs to deliver authentic and equitable youth-to-youth interventions should deliver sustainable conflict resolution, peace building and foresee an end to the associated risk cycle of conflict transition into violence.



Theory of Change

If Young people, especially young women: and the organizations they lead (YLOs) in the BAY States are engaged to deliver on Youth to Youth strategies and interventions, as the epicenter of ensuring sustainable peace, THEN, the region will experience as much as 60 percent reduction in the incidence level by which conflicts transition into violence. Consequently, the Northeast region of Nigeria, should envisage an end to the persistent events of violent conflicts that it has faced since 2009, and in sequel, enter a fast track to the path of recovery and normalcy.

Figure 3: Pyramid structure of current Youth Engagement Strategies in the Peace systems, humanitarian response and development aid architecture of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states of North East Nigeria



The current approach of assessing the value and effectiveness of youth participation – although pervasive – is not factual but yet has continued to shape the design and implementation of exclusive rather than inclusive programs whose context of emergence and typology are framed by their operating environments.

The security risk assessment framework of state authorities will always view the youthful population structure of the region as a challenge, therefore deploying

mitigation strategies that end up targeting young people to be part of the problem instead of embracing their participation as equitable partners, possessing greater potential to deliver the kind of strategies and interventions that bring long-lasting solution to a region which is in dire need of peace, recovery and normalcy.

“Every time we talk, it's like no one is listening”.

- Umar Bakari, XPeace Associate

What if Fund managers, Policy makers and Development actors do not ACT NOW!?

The landmark 2015 UN Security Council Resolution (2250) in tandem with The African Youth Charter (2006)[1] agree with the guiding principles and provisions expressed in the Nigeria National Youth Policy (2019-2023)[2] by promoting the institutionalization of young people's rights and participation in peace and security in Africa. These instruments, altogether have encapsulated, the recognition, that, for sustained peace to be foreseeable – and for Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states of Northeast Nigeria – the current typology active in the region of youth participation needs to go through a change management reform.

Doing more with less: The full expression of humanitarian need, according to the United Nations is US\$1.3billion in 2023 to cater for 6 million persons (was 5.5 million in 2022)[1]. Hitherto, at the current level of aid flow to the regions humanitarian response – which has stagnated since 2020 at US\$700million and falling significantly[2]- the challenge for fund managers and policy makers has then been just to focus on the millions who most at risk, especially women and

children .¹⁴The present situation affirms that the role of YLOs has become a sine qua non in the dire need to do more with less .¹⁵It will cost donors, partners and policy makers –roughly estimating a cost of inaction – by 2039 US\$3,326 for every US\$1 not invested in engaging the role and partnership of YLOs.



¹⁰ See <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>

¹¹ The current edition of the Nigerian National Youth Policy (2019-2023) has been put under the scheduled review by the government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The Honorable Minister for Youth and Sports, had on July 28, 2023 inaugurated a 27-person committee, task with reviewing the outgoing edition and to therefrom, produce a new draft national youth policy (2024-2027) by February 2024.

¹² The 2023 Nigerian Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) indicates that humanitarian partners will require US \$1.3 billion to meet the needs of 6 million people with severe, extreme or catastrophic needs

in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states affected by conflict. As a priority, \$631 million is urgently required for an emergency response to 2.4 million people in acute need. See Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan (2023) Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-response-plan-2023-february-2023> p.9

¹³ See Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan Financials (2018-2023) Available at: <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1190?bs=eyJibG9jay0zNWJhYmY4OC1iN2Q4LTQzZGEtYmZkYS0wYWE5NGQ1MjUxN2liOnsidGFyZ2V0IjoxfX0%3D>

The risk of not achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 in the Nigerian north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yola are higher, compared to pre-conflict (2008) conditions. Furthermore, are risks arising from the realization that, the cumulative losses and damage to the socio-economic life and political structure of the BAY States, also bears with it, the fact that the Northeast region will be “left behind” as it is veering off any remaining hope of any recovery.

Economic convergence opportunity loss:

The large working-age population may unfortunately remain a dependency burden because of the lost years of education resulting in poor or inexistent human capital accumulation, multi-dimensional poverty, unavailable primary healthcare services, structural unemployment, hostile doing-business environments; all of these leaving the region unable to leverage the economics of its anticipated demographic transition through 2030 into a dividend.

Spillover Effect: The opportunity to tap the potential of the Northeast Nigeria’s youth demographic as the key sustainably end the episodes of violent conflicts is a unique moment in the sands of time. Without moving on this one-time chance, there is a risk of a ‘Spillover Effect’ in the near future. Wherein, this large population of uncatered to and unskilled working age people who are no longer able to live in an environment that effectively supported their desire to realize their potentials, function productively and contribute to the development of their communities, spillover across borders into nearby regions. They will inturn become the supply of millions of easily ignitable masses of crusaders ready to spread uncontainable violence.

“Capacity is not necessarily about training, it is also about partnership for execution”

- Shuaib Ibrahim, Hope and Awareness Foundation

¹⁴ “Funding for humanitarian work in the north-east of Nigeria has remained stagnant in the last two years (2020-2022)” Matthias Schmale, UNOCHA Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP, 2023) p.06:pp1-2

¹⁵ For dwindling trends in funding of Nigeria humanitarian strategy and response plan: See HRP 2018 Requested US\$1.05b Actual 69.2%;

2019 Requested US\$847.7m; 2020 Requested US\$ 1.08b Actual 58.5%; 2021 Requested US\$1.01b Actual US\$701.7m (69.7%); 2022 Requested US\$1.13b Actual US\$759.5m (63%); 2023 Requested US\$1.31b Actual US\$585.1m (44.6%).

Conclusion

- The typical young person living in the BAY States, was, before the conflict began in 2008 lacking the resilience against threats and vulnerabilities to drivers that exploit the grievances that make them risk factors to perpetrating violent conflicts. They also did not have the know-how of legitimate pathways to engage public and political institutions as democratically necessary; to actualize future ambitions and contribute meaningfully to determine and develop the future of their societies in an authentic, equitable and productive manner.
- ActionAid Nigeria commissioned the Youth in Crisis: Cost of Inaction Case Study to better understand what risks may arise if the longstanding business environment of humanitarian responses, peace systems and development interventions ongoing in Bornu, Adamawa and Yobe States of Nigeria, remain without a strategic shift. Such as reimagines a focus on the needs of much of the population – the youths – who hold the key to lower risks in the transition cycle of conflict into violence. The case study which forms the basis for this Policy Note, finds that, the prevailing business environment in the region do not have scenarios in their results models that support investments needed to deliver Youth to Youth strategies and interventions in peace building.
- The lack of these consequently implies that the youth participation environment in the region, do not only lack the input of most needed resources to design programmes and interventions in response to young people's unique context in how the persistent events of violent conflicts impacts them, with especially significant implications for young women of the Northeast region of Nigeria. But also, the organizations led by young people, who are the best positioned to deliver the most effective intervention strategies are not authentically, equitably and meaningfully engaged as partners for sustainable peace building and recovery.
- The study confirms that one of the major crises facing young people in the BAY States today is the threat of the region's economy nearing the state of total collapse. There is also the threat that given the stagnation of donor aid flows to the region for humanitarian response since 2020 (UN, 2022) the continuing increase in the population of persons in need of humanitarian assistance will be double tragedy for Nigeria as a whole. The spillover effect from the Northeast region is real, due to the interconnectedness of life, economies, property and security.
- If as presented in this Policy Note, the 'window of opportunity' through the next five years to 2030 are not collectively recognized and leveraged by all stakeholders to resolve the conflict and immediately set the region on the path to recovery: the cost of inaction estimated at US\$3,326 for every US\$1 not invested is too staggering to ignore than in a counterfactual case in which YLOs are meaningfully engaged to deliver the Youth-to-Youth (thus far, as Y2Y) approach. In sequel, jump starting the path to a foreseeable resolve of the persistent conflict and accelerate the region's growth towards realistic economic convergence by 2050.

Recommended Actions

FEDERAL

- The National Youth Policy (NYP, 2024-2027) – at the time of this writing this document, the NYP is a draft and yet to be launched – support a National Action Plan for Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 inter alia the African Union Peace and Security framework on Youth
- In collaboration with development partners, support the development of a guidance note on Implementing the National Youth Policy in the context of Peace systems and humanitarian response.

STATE

- Develop a State Youth Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security in collaboration with development partners. This should be considered as part of the implementation arrangement of the (1) above;
- Establish by Act of Parliament (HoA) a State Youth Development Commission. This should provide a high-level coordination and accountability framework to monitor and report on the progress on Youth participation indicators as framed by (2&3) above.



Recommended Actions

DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- **Develop integration mechanism between humanitarian responses sector, peace systems & development aid** – This Policy Note, proposes the development of a Youth Participation Investment Framework. Such a framework with critical mass of buy-in will stimulate sufficient uptake in the regions outlook on engaging the role of YLOs in peace systems, humanitarian responses and development aid financing arrangements. In this framework will be the definition of clear results that capture the mutually reinforcing benefits of targeting youth as beneficiaries, engaging the organizations they lead as partners and building their capacity for sustainable leadership through inclusion in decision making at all levels in an equitable manner. The United Nations and its agencies, multilateral and bilateral actors, broader civil society and the organized private sector including those involved in rapid funding and technical assistance interventions, can also adopt the proposed framework to enable their work in the BAY States align with the new business environment.
- **Establish mechanisms to provide funding and incremental investment for engaging YLOs:** This should be built upon the results expected by the proposed framework in (1) above. For example, in ensuring the resource envelope available for YLOs does not engender 'elitism' among YLOs but, it is accessible and adaptive to engage YLOs whose context shapes their operating composition and structure. Opportunities for this should see the joint basket United Nations supported National Humanitarian Fund (NHF) managed by Office for Humanitarian Assistance (UN OCHA) earmark a resource envelope for the purpose of YLOs to deliver on Y2Y programming.
- Establish a cluster of working groups on young people upto the highest levels of the Peace systems and humanitarian response architecture of the Northeast region. Examples here should include the NHF committees, setting up a dedicated Youth working group or cluster with the aim of ensuring appropriation of funding specific for YLOs are fully and powerfully represented as well as mainstreaming youth sensitive indicators in the design and implementation of results and reporting instruments.



Recommended Actions

- Support periodic Organizational Assessment & Development of YLOs in line with the principles of localization towards reducing transaction cost in humanitarian responses of the region. For example, this can begin with Mapping the landscape of YLO actors. Such exercise, will provide useful database for knowing which YLO is working on what, where and what are their strengths and weaknesses. This will effectively support technical assistance actors to understand the full spectrum of capacity needs and with that design appropriate and relevant interventions that are context compliant.
- Fund managers and policy makers can benefit from this database because it will provide a snapshot of the typical resources envelope that is best in formalizing partnership with an implementing organization that is a YLO.
- Support the buildup of opportunities for leadership roles in policy making bodies as it addresses the plans, policies, resources for peace and security in the region.
- Build capacity of youth leadership and to advocate for broader adoption of YLOs inline with the principle of meaningful, authentic, supportive and relevant youth engagement. For example, in facilitating high level youth engagement and communication in a peace and security context. (E.g in design planning and evaluation of policies for resource appropriation, contingency and recovery plans)
- Build capacity in strengthening YLOs to effectively collect, analyze and appraise the application of a youth lens in evidence base policy analysis and advocacy, proposal development. strategy development, program design, implementation and M & E on violent conflict within their organizations and for the sector at large.





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