

## The question of youth participation in peacebuilding processes in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The available body of literature addressing the roles of young people in armed conflict provides evidence of extensive child and youth involvement in warfare. For instance, Ukiwo (2003) draws attention to the role of young people as key actors in the escalation of violent conflicts in Nigeria's Plateau State city of Jos, while other scholars emphasise the notorious use of violence by youths during Europe's political crises and conflicts of the 1930s. Contrary to the dominant perception of youths as inherently violent, this paper posits that young people are not intrinsically inclined to violent behaviour; rather, they are products of their societies. It is argued, therefore, that the incorporation of young people in peacebuilding processes is bound to facilitate the realisation of sustainable peace in society, by redirecting the energies of young people to the implementation of constructive peace projects. This paper takes the position that the incorporation and utilisation of youths in peacebuilding processes would facilitate their transformation from agents of violent conflict, to agents of peace in their societies.

### Introduction

Based on Ake's definition of political stability as 'the regularity of the flow of political exchanges' (1975:273), the Nigerian political environment could be considered a relatively stable one since the re-birth

of the country's democracy in 1999.<sup>2</sup> Nigerian politics has witnessed a regular flow of political exchanges in the three democratic changes of power that occurred between 1999 and 2011. These democratic and sequential transitions of power and other political activities reflect Nigeria's growing stability and conformity with the provisions of the constitution, which are core elements of a stable society. However, despite the increasingly stable outlook of the country's political system, its propensity to violence cannot be overlooked. Indeed, Nigerian politics, since before independence in 1960, has been partially characterised by ethnic disparity and political distrust. This was evident in the tense relations between the northern and southern regions of the country during the latter part of the colonial era. This argument is supported by Alapiki's claim that the 'post-1953's... agitation was associated mainly with minority ethnic groups who [sic] demand for the creation of more states on the basis of perceived fears of political domination by the majority groups' (2005:53). Furthermore, Nigeria's

2 It is important to emphasise that the concept of political stability has been deliberated from diverse theoretical standpoints, without success in arriving at any universally accepted definition or understanding of the concept. Ake's (1975:273) definition implies that the political stability of the state can be measured in degrees, depending on the regularity or irregularity of the flow of political changes. In contrast, other studies view 'stability as dichotomous' (Dowding and Kimber 1983). Political stability, from the dichotomous viewpoint, cannot be measured since it is sharply divided between two conflicting ends. Thus, a country is either stable or unstable. The protracted trend of debates and conflicting comprehension among scholars makes the task of designing a unanimous definition a difficult one.

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Association for Conflict Management 25th Annual Conference which was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa from 11 to 14 July 2012.

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confrontation with incidents of severe conflict range from a secession attempt by the eastern region to a devastating civil war (1967 to 1970) which resulted in the division of the country from three political regions at independence, to 12 states in 1967, and then 36 states in 1996 (Alapiki 2005 and Osaghae 1998). However, this fragmentation has been unsuccessful in reducing fears, tensions and conflicts in the country.

Another noteworthy fact is that religious crises and control of resources are major causes of conflicts in Nigeria. The northern region of the country, particularly the areas of Maiduguri, Kano and Zaria, is well known for incidences of religious conflict, while the so-called 'south-south'<sup>3</sup> geo-political zone of the country is known for crises sparked by the quest for control of resources, advocacy for environmental protection and disputes around ethnicity. Nigeria's middle-belt region is increasingly affected by conflicts which spill over from the northern and southern parts of the country, with the consequence that this region is gradually evolving into another battleground for ethnic, political, social and economic control. States such as Plateau and Benue have witnessed serious conflicts since 1994. According to Human Rights Watch (2011:3):

More than 14,800 people [in Nigeria] have been killed in inter-communal, political, and sectarian violence in the past 12 years. The human cost of this violence has been particularly high in Plateau State, where Human Rights Watch estimates more than 3,800 people have been killed since 2001, at least 250 of these since December 2010. The victims, both Muslim and Christian, have been hacked to death, burned alive, or dragged off buses and murdered in tit-for-tat killings, in many cases based simply on their ethnic or religious identity.

Post-2011 election conflicts in Jos, Kaduna and Abuja are important examples of the current nature of politically-related conflicts in the region.

## Brief historical account of Jos and its conflicts

Jos is the capital city of Plateau State, one of the 36 states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The city was renowned for tin production, earning the name 'tin city'. During the 1940s, Nigeria was the sixth largest producer of tin in the world, with Jos alone accounting for 80 percent of the country's tin ore production (Plotnicov 1967 and Danfulani and Fwatshak 2002). This status placed Nigeria, and Jos in particular, on the world

map and attracted European miners to the country and city. Jos' geographical location and its commercial and political importance as the administrative capital of Plateau State place it in an important position in Nigeria's middle-belt region. Apart from the federal capital city, Abuja, Jos remains one of the few cosmopolitan cities in the middle-belt and serves as the nexus between the northern and southern parts of the country. This makes it the commercial centre of the region, to which an influx of immigrants from different parts of the region and the country have been attracted.

Before the 1990s Jos was renowned for its relative peace. This recognition accorded it the status of 'land of peace and tourism' (Danfulani and Fwatshak 2002:243 and Ambe-Uva 2010:42). However, the occurrence of frequent conflicts and violence in the city since the mid-90s has contradicted that status. The rapid degeneration of Jos into conflict is outlined in reports by Human Rights Watch (2001) which reveal, for instance, that at least 1,000 people were killed in the September 2001 inter-communal clashes in the city. More than 775 people lost their lives in sectarian conflict in Yelwa, Jos, in 2004 (Human Rights Watch 2005), and in two days of inter-communal clashes on 28 and 29 November 2008, following local government elections, at least 700 people were killed in Jos (Human Rights Watch 2009). In addition, Christmas Eve explosions in 2010 destroyed two churches in the city and left about 120 people dead. An additional 250 people lost their lives in other smaller conflicts which occurred between December 2010 and March 2011 (Human Rights Watch 2011).<sup>4</sup>

Although Jos experienced disputes driven by different reasons in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the ethno-political conflict of 1994 – a reaction to the appointment of a non-indigenous candidate as the chairman of a local government – marked the beginning of intense and recurring violent conflicts in the city. While several studies allude to religious motives as the underlying factors responsible for the Jos crises, a historical review indicates that there might be other issues. The discovery of tin ore in the area by the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century necessitated the migration of

3 This includes states such as Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa.

4 Although the validity of the Human Rights Watch data is open to further investigation or verification, the reports provide, to a large extent, more accurate and reliable representation of these events in comparison with statistical findings by national institutions and committees that sometimes understate the figure with the intention of the belittling the significance of events.

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labourers (predominantly northerners) to work in the tin mines. This led to an influx of the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo and other ethnic groups into Jos and its surrounds. However, unlike the latter two groups, the Hausa-Fulani staked claims to political positions, land and other resources in Jos and the Plateau State as a whole (Ambe-Uva 2010 and Danfulani no date). These claims manifested themselves in the increasing visibility and appointment of Hausa-Fulani settlers to key political offices in Plateau State. Counter-reactions from the 'indigenes' led to violent conflict in 1994 which was precipitated by the appointment of Hausa-Fulani Alhaji Aminu Mato as chairperson of the caretaker committee of the Jos North Local Government by the military.



*A voter pushes back on a surging crowd of fellow voters as they wait to cast their votes for a state governor at a polling station in Jos, Plateau State in April 2011*

In 2001, violence again flared up following the appointment of Alhaji Muktar to the position of coordinator of the federal government-initiated National Poverty Eradication Programme (Danfulani no date). The conflict in Jos could thus be understood as a struggle for ownership and domination of the geographical location through the politics of participation<sup>5</sup> by both 'indigenes' and 'non-indigenes'.<sup>6</sup> Events surrounding the various conflicts in Jos consistently point to struggles for dominance and ownership of the city as being the key causal factors. This remains so, even though some of the conflicts could easily be considered as, and often took the form of, religious conflicts in an environment where religious differences between the indigenes

(Christians) and the non-indigenes (Muslims) often also follow ethnic lines. Following the 1994 crisis, the year 2001 witnessed extensive conflict in Jos that was described as a 'scene of mass killing and destruction' (Ostien 2009:13). Again, the conflict was between the indigenes and non-indigenes over key political positions in Plateau State. In May 2004, the situation degenerated further, leading to the declaration of a state of emergency in Plateau State by the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo (Human Rights Watch 2005). Although there have been intervals of calmness and stability in the city, they cannot be described as sustained peace, due to the occurrence of a number of sporadic and spontaneous conflicts since then. This has created concern over Jos' turnaround from the status of 'land of tourism and peace' to another conflict-prone zone in Nigeria. Ongoing developments and events in Jos justify its new status as a conflict-prone zone. For instance, it was reported that the alleged 2011 killing of a man in the city, an incident that could easily have been dealt with in a civil court of law, led to very serious tensions that had the potential to escalate into violence (Lalo 2011).

The national government's efforts to curtail violent conflicts in the country in recent decades have been to no avail. A primary strategy employed was the deployment of military forces to the scenes of violence, leading to 'repression, torture, looting, rape, extra-judicial killing of citizens' and further conflict (Omeje 2006:142). This approach has largely overshadowed the diplomatic measures taken by different regimes in attempts to bring violent conflicts under control. Various committees and commissions<sup>7</sup> were set up and tasked with investigating the root causes of the conflicts, identifying individuals and structures that play significant roles in the conflicts and designing strategies aimed at enhancing justice and peace in the communities (Danfulani no date).

The government's propensity to use violence in response to conflict was manifested in the late General Sani Abacha's execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and some of his Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) contemporaries in 1995. This act shocked the world, inviting condemnation from various

5 This understanding, however, does not negate the uniqueness of conflicts, which are dependent on the events surrounding them.

6 According to Prof. Shadrach Gaya Best (2007), the Hausa, also known as the Fulani, hold that they established Jos and nurtured it into a modern city without the assistance of the indigenous ethnic groups in Jos. This, in their view, justifies their claims as indigenes of Jos.

7 Examples of such commissions include the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Clashes in Wise Local Government Area, headed by Justice Jummai Sankey, whose results were submitted in May 2001 and the Federal Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Communal Conflicts in Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau and Taraba states, 2002 (Danfulani no date).

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international bodies and organisations and resulting in Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth. The country also experienced other bilateral and multilateral sanctions aimed at forcing political change (Omeje 2006). A widely publicised case of the Nigerian government's lethal approach to conflict management took place on 1 November 1991 when over 20 villagers from Umuechem were brutally killed by paramilitary forces in an early morning raid on the village (Ibeanu 1997). This was in response to a protest staged by the villagers against the multinational petrochemicals giant, Shell, a day before. The recurring conflicts in Nigeria raise doubts concerning the effectiveness of this approach to conflict management, peacemaking and peacebuilding in the country, and indeed, in any society.

Politicians, businessmen and young people play significant roles in the majority of conflict events in Nigeria (Ambe-Uva 2010). Politicians and businessmen, using their influence in society, mobilise the masses, and in particular young people, in favour of their interests. As Ginifer and Ismail (2005:8) explain, 'This permeates entire Nigerian states where political elites mobilise the pool of unemployed youths, often along the lines of ethnic, religious and party affiliation as a vital political resource'. They add that in the run-up to the 2003 elections, some incumbents aided the proliferation of small arms and light weapons into Nigeria by arming youths and political thugs to manipulate electoral outcomes through the kidnapping or killing of political opponents, threatening and intimidation of electorates, destruction of lives and property and disruption of election campaigns (Ginifer and Ismail 2005).

A common phenomenon in the different events of violent conflicts in Nigeria, and Jos in particular, is the significant presence of youths as key actors in the escalation of various violent conflicts. Irrespective of the dearth of statistical evidence of the active participation of Nigeria's youths in violent conflicts, scholars such as Omeje (2006), Egwu (2004), Osaghae (2007) and Ambe-Uva (2010) have repeatedly alluded to youths as active agents in conflict, playing significant roles as organisers, actors, benefactors and victims of these conflicts. The roles of youth movements, like the Odua People's Congress, the Arewa People's Congress, the Ijaw Youth Council, the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force, the Bakassi Boys, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, the Hisba or Sharia vigilante groups in the Muslim north, and the militias of the Tiv, Jukun and other youth groups in Nigeria's conflicts cannot be overstated. They have

become innovative in developing tactics, designing effective training and acquiring necessary weapons and ammunition for the execution of their various missions. Abbink (2005) and McIntyre (2010) concur with assertions that young people play key roles in most of the armed conflicts and criminal networks that currently operate in Africa.

With reference to the 2001 Jos crises, Ginifer and Ismail (2005) emphasise the military sophistication of both Christian and Muslim youths and their readiness to battle at the slightest provocation. They partly attribute this to the youths' exclusion from participation in the nation's political, social and economic spheres. Such exclusion, including inability to access public and social services such as education, healthcare and well-paying jobs, is a reality that threatens young peoples' ability to avoid participating in violence (de Boeck and Honwana 2005 and Abbink 2005). There is a generally-held view among some scholars that youths are depicted as being inherently rebellious and violent towards political and social structures in society (Felice and Wisler 2007 and De Boeck and Honwana 2005).



*Unemployed youths are easily mobilised and encouraged to participate in violence and crime*

## Defining 'youth'

The term 'youth' is a very familiar one, although it is a fluid concept which needs to be defined within the context of this paper. As with many other social constructs or phenomena, an understanding of the term varies from society to society. Abbink (2005) notes that some authors include groups that are advanced in biological age in their definition of youths, while others do not. It is common in some societies to define youths as people in their late thirties or early forties, who are yet to complete their education, or who are unemployed, or who are not in a position to raise a family. According to Shrestha

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(no date), Nepal's National Youth Policy considers youth to be those people between the ages of 16 and 40 years. In contrast, young people in their mid-twenties, who are successful in the aforementioned areas of life, are easily considered adults in other societies. The United States of America (USA) Population Reference Bureau, for instance, categorises people from the ages of 10 up to 24 as youths. In comparison, Nigeria considers youths to be those people between the ages of 18 to 35 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2001). Inconsistencies of this nature make a universal understanding of the term difficult to achieve. The disparity in the various conceptions of youth as a category is strongly informed by chronological age, as well as by the specific functional<sup>8</sup> and cultural<sup>9</sup> requirements and expectations of people within a given society.

The undisputed assertion, nevertheless, is that youth is an intermediate class gradually merging into the status of an adult. The complexities inherent in the conceptualisation of youth as a stage of human development mainly lie in the reconciliation of the chronological, functional and structural components as they vary from society to society. Youth in the western world is primarily defined by age, while most African countries and other countries in the southern hemisphere hold a greater appreciation for the functional and cultural implications of youth. Owing to the differences in the definition of youth and the geographical focus of this study, this paper limits its understanding of youth to all genders within the 18 to 35 years age bracket, as defined in the Nigeria National Youth Policy of 2001 (Ibid.).

## Youths and violent conflicts

Youth activism leading to the escalation of conflict is a subject that has received close attention from scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict. Such activism reflects a reality that plagues all societies irrespective of race, nationality or social or economic background. Scholarly discussions of conflict around the globe highlight the relentless contributions and involvement of youths in the escalation of violent conflicts. In his reflections on Europe's political conflicts of the 1930s, Kustrin (2004) acknowledges the notorious use of violence by youths in response to crises and

conflicts in their societies. He highlights this in his discussion of the Spanish Second Republic, which was characterised by a worrying form of political mobilisation in which violence was a prominent tool. Political violence was strongly justified as necessary by the public media during this era. For instance, on 4 November 1933, a socialist newspaper, *Renovacion*, proposed that fascism had to be fought on its own territory and with violence; youths were exhorted to take up the fight (Kustrin 2004). Violence was considered an important instrument for achieving political and social objectives, and young people in particular were considered very important in this process. As a result, the roles of youths in political mobilisation became increasingly important in Europe, from France to Germany, Denmark and the United Kingdom. This was accompanied by an increase in the movement of youths across Europe.

Unlike in Europe, where youth involvement in conflict is predominantly political in nature, in Latin American communities young people's involvement takes the form of participation in gangsterism. According to Booth (1974:657), the wave of political conflict in Colombia between 1948 and 1963, which embraced and utilised guerrilla warfare, assassination, extortion, torture and mass murder, was so intense that it became synonymous with its generic name *la violencia*. Irrespective of the highly political nature<sup>10</sup> of *la violencia*, researchers still consider it a composite of two separate conflicts. In Booth's (1974) view, one of the conflicts emerged out of allegiance to a political party, while the other was apolitical to a certain extent, and involved banditry and gangsterism. Bailey's (1967) findings support Booth's (1974) assertion that *la violencia* was entirely in the hands of a highly-organised and institutionalised consortium of rural bandits and urban gangsters. These findings convey the depth of youths' involvements in violent conflict. They were active agents in both politically-related and apolitical conflicts in Europe and South America.

In Africa, Omeje (2006) considers former Liberian President Charles Taylor's exploitation of the youths' vigour as one of the primary explanations, not only for his success in destabilising Sierra Leone, but also his ability to gain access to diamonds during the course of the country's civil war. Young people in Liberia were the tool that Taylor used to disrupt the country in order to plunder its diamonds.

8 'A period of age between certain ages' (United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery 2006:15).

9 This 'involves a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, marked by rituals or physical changes' (Ibid.).

10 This was conflict between the two political parties, the conservatives and the liberals.

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Abdullah (2005) also considers the use, by politicians, of the violent activities of the *rarray boys*<sup>11</sup>, who were turned into an electioneering tool and used as thugs and gangsters during electoral processes. Such exploitation deepens the violent tendencies in youths.

This situation was no different in Nigeria where it was claimed that the youths were at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. According to Omeje (2005:34), empirical studies suggest that youths were perpetrators of 90 to 95 percent of violence in Nigeria. This is reflected in the ever growing militia groups such as the Pan Niger Delta Revolutionary Militias, MOSOP, the Ijaw Youth Council, the Ijaw National Congress, the EBA, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, the Ijaw Nationality Rights Protection Organisation and the Ogoni Patriotic Union in Nigeria (Ojatorotu and Okeke-Uzodike 2006). Some of these groups became synonymous with young people due to their dominant membership and active participation in violent conflicts in Nigeria. Ukiwo (2003) draws attention to the key role played by young people in the escalation of violent conflict. He reveals how, in 2001, the Jos and Kaduna crises deepened as Muslim youths took to the streets to celebrate the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US. Following a retaliatory attack by the US on Afghanistan, the celebrations degenerated into riots, leaving hundreds dead. These events illustrate the ease with which youths can be lured into participating in violence.

From the reviewed literature, it is clear that a lot of studies have been done to examine the issue of violent conflict in Nigeria; however, not a lot of attention has been paid to the issue of youth participation in peacebuilding. This paper therefore builds on previous studies and available literature in introducing a new and unique dimension to the discourse of peacebuilding, conflict transformation and state security in Nigeria generally, and the city of Jos specifically. This study specifically focuses on the participation of youths in peacebuilding as the subject of interrogation, given the dearth of such studies in this field.<sup>12</sup> Although youths are often active agents in violent conflict, their voices are seldom heard in studies addressing the issue of peace and conflict resolution. The central positioning of youths as the subject of study and key respondents in this research further establishes the novelty of the study. It offered

youths the opportunity to express their ideas and vision in relation to how they could be active and constructive participants in peacebuilding processes.

## Youths: Agents of peace in society?

A study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (2005:9) states that:

There is an automatic tendency to problematise youth as a factor in violent conflict while overlooking their many positive contributions to a society, including their potential role in sustaining the social fabric and peace, as well as their survival in impossible environments.

Researchers and scholars, employing several theories, have studied the management, resolution and transformation of conflict as part of the move towards the restoration of peace in conflict-shattered areas. It is evident from the reviewed literature that such studies emphasise the involvement of youths in the escalation of violent conflicts without adequate explanation of how they could be positive instruments in the peacebuilding processes. As McEvoy-Levy (2001) points out, the growing body of literature on the roles of young people in armed conflicts provides evidence of intensive child and youth involvement in warfare.

Furthermore, Omeje (2006), Ukiwo (2003), Kustrin (2004), Booth (1974) and Weaver and Maddaleno (1999) have written extensively on youths' direct involvement in the majority of incidences of political violence that affected the political economy of states. Ukiwo (2003), in particular, draws attention to youths as key actors in the escalation of violent conflicts in Jos. Most of these studies are done without providing recommendations or proposals on how the negative actions of youths could be stemmed or transformed for the benefit of society.

It must be noted that a conflict situation or violent conflict cannot be brought to rest, managed or transformed, without adequately exploring how the energy of its primary agents could be redirected for the attainment of sustainable peace in a society or country. This study employs the institutionalist approach of liberalism in its argument that sustainable peace can be attained by harnessing the vigour and exuberance of young people. Consistent with liberal views which fundamentally maintain that 'human nature is basically good and, more importantly, altruistic; thus perfectible' (Duncan et al. 2008:33),

11 'These were mostly unemployed young males on the edge of the society...living by their wits' (Abdullah 2005:175).

12 Abbink (2005:3) proposes further studies on youth and peace-related themes.

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this paper argues that youths are basically good and that they are perfectible if the necessary institutions for their development are put in place. This position is informed by institutional liberals' views that 'international institutions help promote cooperation between states' (Jackson 1999:119), which suggests that national institutions would promote cooperation between different communities. Although liberals acknowledge the realist argument of the importance of individual self-interest as a crucial motivating factor, they insist that the element of self-interest prevails only up to a point. In other words, a person is capable of engaging in a collaborative and cooperative enterprise for the benefit of the larger society when placed in the right environment and disposition. Institutions can foster positive environments in order to harness the energies of the youth in their societies.

In line with the institutionalist liberalism argument that international institutions help promote the liberal philosophy of cooperation amongst countries, international institutions thus have an important role to play in creating the necessary platforms for dialogue and collaboration in efforts to prompt action. In line with this thought, this paper supports the claim that governments' creation of institutions that equip citizens with rational decision-making power would promote youths' disposition to work for the attainment of peace in society (Duncan et al. 2008). In spite of the challenges and setbacks in Sierra Leone's peacebuilding efforts, the country has been labelled as one of the success stories of United Nations (UN) peacebuilding. Of significance to this success story was Sierra Leone's appreciation of youth as an essential category in the peacebuilding processes. With the signing of the 1999 Lomé Agreement, Sierra Leone, for the first time, instituted a provision for dealing with youth and children's issues. According to McIntyre and Thusi (2003:75), the agreement declared that:

The government shall accord particular attention to the issue of child soldiers. It shall, accordingly, mobilise resources, both within and from the international community, and especially through the Office of the UN Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, UNICEF and other agencies, to address the special needs of these children in the existing disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes.

It is with that approach in mind that this paper explores the incorporation of youths into the peacemaking and peacebuilding processes in Jos. It re-echoes arguments for the design and implementation of remedial policies and maintains that local and international organisations should be actively involved in creating

programmes and policies designed to assist young people to attain independence, employment, civic representation and social standing (Abbink 2005). In line with assertions by Jackson (1999), this paper argues that such institutions will provide bridging services and forums through which youth organisations and movements or departments in a city, state or country can participate. Basically, youth-focused institutions could serve as mediums for self-expression and consultation by youths, thereby reducing the possible destabilising effects of their manipulation and use by self-serving politicians to foment violence in their pursuit of parochial political and economic interests.

Efforts have been made to address the question of youths and their contribution to society. According to the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (2005), the UN took the lead through its development of a youth agenda. The agenda, which claims to focus on empowering youths for development and peace, advocates three major issues, including development, participation and peace (Ibid.). The youth agenda aimed to serve as a guiding framework for the development, by individual states, of structures that enhance youth participation in ensuring state development and security. In line with the UN's vision, Nigeria developed its youth agenda in 2001. Irrespective of the richness and relevance of the document, its implementation is yet to commence, a fact which hints at Nigeria's attitude to the question of youth in the country.

Based on this understanding, this paper postulates that the availability of adequate educational infrastructure and systems, employment opportunities and other structures through which youths can be active participants in making decisions concerning their wellbeing and that of the country at large, would go a long way to redirect youths' energy from conflict to societal development. This would consequently enable the development of sustainable peace and security in societies.

## Conclusion

Enhancing structures that promote the participation of youths in peacebuilding processes will actively contribute to young people's engagement with decisions and activities that affect their wellbeing. Policies and institutions that enable investment in children and youth to succeed at the micro and macro levels should be encouraged. These could take the form of full multi-sectoral programmes that target youth in specific areas of activity, such as employment creation and/or peacebuilding projects (Hilker and Frazer 2009). Like every other human being, young

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people need channels for self-expression; a medium or forum which engages them with the democracy or government of the day which promotes self-actualisation and dissuades them from taking violent options in their lives.

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