



United Nations Peacekeeping Engagement with Youth: MONUSCO Case Study

December 2017

Acknowledgements

This case study was generously supported by the Government of the Republic of Korea and was made possible by the contribution of expert practitioners in MONUSCO. We wish to thank all mission personnel who met with us during the field visit as well as those who participated in informal phone interviews.

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Executive Summary

In December 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015), which is considered a landmark resolution on youth, peace and security because of its recognition that youth can be positive change agents in peacebuilding processes. SCR 2250 (2015) encourages youth participation in peace processes and calls on Member States and the UN to protect young men and women during and after armed conflicts. Although the resolution does not explicitly refer to peacekeeping operations, the prominent role played by peacekeeping operations in conflict situations, makes SCR 2250 (2015) particularly relevant to peacekeeping missions.

Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations such as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) often feature political, protection of civilians, human rights or disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes (DDR) mandates. The successful implementation of such mandates and the ability to foster sustainable peace processes often hinges on the mission's capacity to engage effectively with a wide range of local stakeholders including the youth. And yet, very little guidance is available to peacekeeping actors on how to effectively engage these local actors¹. The purpose of this case study is to examine how MONUSCO engages youth in Eastern DRC in the implementation of its mandate and to draw lessons for other peacekeeping operations.

Research for this report was conducted in August and September 2017 in the DRC, North Kivu and Kinshasa provinces. Focus group discussions with youth aged 15-24 years old and interviews with MONUSCO personnel provided essential information for the understanding of the mission's engagement as well as youth expectations regarding their future and the .

¹ Current official guidance is mostly related to the women, peace and security agenda. Other guidance includes DPKO-DFS Guidelines on Engagement with Civil Society (ref. 2017.06), June 2017, and an Aide-Mémoire on Engagement with non-State Armed Groups. Further guidance on community policing is also under development.

The report argues that youth should not be merely understood as referring to age, but rather it should be understood as a social label and as the basis for identity. In the context of Eastern DRC, different definitions of youth coexist. Young people interviewed for this report defined youth as people aged 18-45 years old, alluding to the notion that young people should be understood as individuals who are not yet able to face responsibilities inherent to adulthood.

The report finds that young men and women in Eastern DRC hold rather pessimistic views of their future and of the government's ability to improve their lives. Young men tend to be slightly more optimistic than young women. Both groups clearly understand their responsibility in bringing lasting change in their communities and society. They expect organizations such as the Congolese government and the UN to empower them to take on greater responsibilities and to promote youth-led social change initiatives. This expectation creates frustration vis-à-vis MONUSCO's interventions in Eastern DRC.

Under SCR 2348(2016), the mission's mandate focuses on two priorities: i) protection of civilians; and ii) support to the implementation of the 31 December political accord and the electoral process. The mission engages youth in various programmes pertaining to these priorities. Interventions include participation to local protection mechanisms such as local security committees, organization of youth dialogue fora, sensitization on peace messages or reinsertion and temporary employment programmes. Dialogue and sensitization programmes constitute the majority of MONUSCO activities with youth.

Youth interviewed for this report held unrealistic expectations regarding MONUSCO security functions. They tended to equate the persisting violence in Eastern DRC with MONUSCO's failure to "fulfil its role." They further expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of their government to ensure adequate protection to their own citizens. Youth also criticized what they perceived as an ad hoc engagement on the part of MONUSCO. "MONUSCO organises activities with youth only on UN day or on the international children day (...)."

The report finds that MONUSCO has implemented some successful approaches. For instance, the establishment of a 30% quota for youth participants in protection workshops and local committees ensures youth presence in key processes and enables them to directly voice their perspectives to local authorities and their international counterparts. It also provides them with concrete decision-making and negotiation experience. Another approach used during the annual youth forum organized by the Catholic Church in Goma with MONUSCO support consisted in enabling young participants to shape the agenda of the forum. Allowing them to vote on their preferred topics enhanced engagement during the forum and follow-up on recommendations.

The report suggests the following recommendations for MONUSCO and the UN country team to build upon the approaches already developed:

- MONUSCO should ensure youth involvement at all stages of its planning and decision-making processes to ensure youth ownership of political and protection initiatives.
- MONUSCO should work with other partners in Eastern DRC engaged with youth to better capture youth needs, perceptions and engagement including in UN programmes. Furthermore, MONUSCO should invest in impact studies and evaluations of initiatives with youth to understand better what works and what does not
- MONUSCO should consider strengthening its programme targeting youth engagement in the political process as well as empowering youth to engage and take an active role in peace advocacy efforts.
- MONUSCO should establish or enhance partnerships with other UN agencies and partners with mandates and resources to provide disincentives to violence and work on long term development.
- In addition to its public radio programmes, MONUSCO should consider expanding its social media outreach to youth. The objective should be to provide a space for youth to safely voice their views, share content and connect on issues that matter to them.

Introduction

Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) effectively changed the international discourse on youth, peace and security. Youth² -- defined as people between the age of 18-29 years old --in conflict environments were often portrayed as either passive victims or unpredictable actors who pose security threats.³ More recently, with the rise of terrorism, youth are also seen as the drivers of violent extremism and terrorism, endangering international peace. Youth have been portrayed as easy to manipulate, radicalise and seduce by politicians, extremists and warlords. The resolution recognizes that youth can be positive change agents in peacebuilding processes. It calls on Member States and the UN to protect young men and women during and after armed conflicts. The resolution also encourages youth participation in peace processes.

SCR 2250 (2015) is particularly important for peacekeeping operations. As conflict environments have changed drastically over the last decade, so have peacekeeping mandates. Multidimensional peacekeeping has become the norm with emphasises on protection of civilians, restoration of state authority, human rights or disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes (DDR). However, as outlined in Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016), inclusivity is central to sustaining peace “in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account.” Therefore, peace operations must enhance their capacities to engage a wider range of stakeholders in peace processes. This requirement is critical and at the same time more challenging for more mature missions, which are often confronted with intractable conflict situations.

This scenario applies to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The situation in the Democratic

² Youth used in this case study refer to girls, boys, women and men aged between 15 and 24 years old. There are a number of other interpretations of what age range defines youth, including national understandings that vary greatly from country to country, and a different range used in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 of 18 to 29 years old. The resolution recognises the difficulty to achieve a universal definition of youth and that age groups considered young will vary from context to context.

³ *Children's security in post-conflict peacebuilding*, David Nosworthy, Discussion paper presented to the Office of the UN SRCG for Children in Armed Conflict, DCAF, June 2007, p. 2

Republic of Congo (DRC), and especially in the Eastern region, has been characterised by conflicts and violence by armed groups and forces since the start of the first “Congo War” in 1996. Following two decades of conflicts, there are currently 3.8 million internally displaced persons, 468,000 Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries and 452,000 refugees in DRC from other countries. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 7.3 million people need humanitarian assistance in DRC (especially in the East). The poverty rate in DRC is around 64% and the country ranked 176 out of 187 on the Human Development Index in 2015.⁴ The government has been unable to provide effective security and protection, as well as basic social services to its population in many parts of the country.

This situation is now compounded by a national political crisis over the peaceful transfer of power. The mandate of President Joseph Kabila expired on 19 December 2016 without the organization of presidential and legislative elections. Attempts by the African Union and the Catholic Church to solve the political crisis resulted in a political agreement signed on 31 December 2016. The agreement called for elections in 2017 and the appointment of a unity government. However, its implementation has been constantly delayed which further eroded public trust in the political elite – opposition and majority alike – and fed growing unrest throughout the country. In the Kasai provinces, conflicts between local militia and security forces following a customary dispute uprooted 1.4 million people. Reports of mass graves and serious human rights violations attest to the level of atrocities committed by both parties.

The situation in the Kasai provinces, while very different from the one prevailing in Eastern DRC, further illustrates challenges to sustaining peace in the DRC. In particular, the high level of mistrust among local actors at national and sub-national and between local actors and international actors undermine any effort to build inclusive peace processes. Therefore, the challenge for peacebuilding actors is to identify and strengthen local capacities – including actors, structures and systems – that can positively affect political and peace dynamics at national and local levels in

⁴ World Bank, Country Profile Democratic Republic of Congo, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/Views/Reports/ReportWidgetCustom.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=COD

spite of downwards political and local conflict trends. With an estimated 21,223,140⁵ people between the ages of 15-29 years old, the youth in DRC remain largely an untapped resource and have the potential to yield such positive change. However, it is important for MONUSCO to better understand this heterogeneous group in order to leverage its capacities.

Therefore, the objective of this case study is to improve the understanding of MONUSCO's youth engagement strategies, practices and challenges and offer recommendations for enhanced engagement. MONUSCO was chosen as a case study for various reasons. First, young people in the DRC have been involved in numerous conflicts, as victims and as combatants (whether forcibly recruited or joining voluntarily). Second, the UN has had a longstanding presence in Eastern DRC, and as a result lessons can be learned from its experience. This case study, however, should not be considered an in-depth analysis, but rather a snap shot of the current situation. It should therefore be used to continue the discussion on UN peacekeeping's engagement with youth.

Methodology

The research for this case study was conducted in August and September 2017 in the DRC, in North Kivu province and Kinshasa. The information presented comes from the following sources:

1. A literature review, including of UN documents such as UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth Peace and Security; UNSCR 2348 (2017) establishing MONUSCO's current mandate; Practice Note on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding; the *Politique nationale de la jeunesse* of the DRC Government; international and local NGO reports, etc.
2. Telephone interviews with MONUSCO's Civil Affairs Section in Goma, Beni and Uvira and Child Protection Section in Kinshasa.

⁵ World Population Prospect 2017, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, DESA, <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery>

3. In-person interviews with MONUSCO's Civils Affairs Section, DDR/RR Section, Radio Okapi, Child Protection Section, Political Affairs Unit and the Head of Office in Goma, and with Civil Affairs Section in Kinshasa. In-person interviews with the Goma Youth Provincial Council, with the Catholic Diocese and with the Provincial Youth and Planning Divisions of North Kivu.

4. Four focus group discussions with youth: 15 girls from 15 to 18 years old; 15 boys from 15 to 18 years old; 15 young women from 19 to 24 years old; 15 young men from 19 to 24 years old; all conducted in Goma. The young participants were selected by the Children's Parliament, Catholic Diocese Maison des Jeunes, Goma Youth Provincial Council and the Provincial Youth Baraza. Some of these young participants were students at various levels of schooling.

The decision to separate girls/young women from boys/young men was taken to help participants express themselves freely and discuss topics that are sometimes gender-specific. It must be noted that youth involved in the discussions were all from Goma city. Life for young people in eastern DRC differs greatly between urban and rural areas. As such, they do not constitute a representative sample of youth in eastern DRC, so further investigation of urban and rural dynamics would help deepen the understanding of youth in Eastern DRC.

This case study is divided in four parts. The first section briefly presents the institutional framework around the involvement of youth in peace and security as developed by the international community under the auspices of the UN, as well as MONUSCO's mandate. The second section offers a brief overview of the situation of youth in Eastern DRC, the multiple challenges they face in regard to peace and security and their hopes for the future. The third section explores the initiatives currently undertaken by various sections and divisions of MONUSCO to engage youth in protection issues and conflict prevention and resolution processes. This is followed by some recommendations for an enhanced engagement of MONUSCO with youth.

Institutional Framework

UN Guidelines and Principles

Current guidelines aimed at involving young people in peace and security are included in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security and, to a lesser extent, in the *Practice Note on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding* (Practice Note) and the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*, which are non-binding, guiding documents.

UNSCR 2250 (2015) affirms the “important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts”, and redefines youth as positive agents and stakeholders in peacebuilding processes. UNSCR 2250 also affirms the need to support local youth initiatives on peacebuilding, conflict prevention and civic participation. The resolution reinforces the need to take young people into account when designing and implementing DDR programmes.

The Practice Note recognises young people as agents of change, as they are more future oriented, open to change, innovative and willing to take risks, therefore represent an opportunity for peacebuilding and democratisation processes.⁶ The Note is based on the premise that engaging youth and allowing them to take initiative contributes to making them feel part of society and prevents them from taking part in violence. This is especially crucial in contexts of prolonged conflict and violence, in which young people often suffer from social, political and economic exclusion and lack of opportunities to take their place in society. In those contexts, including in Eastern DRC, joining armed groups presents material and non-material advantages to young people that they may not find elsewhere, including economic benefits, protection and social status.

⁶ *Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note*, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding with support from PeaceNexus Foundation, p. 13

From these documents and others, a theory of change emerges in which young people are seen as active and positive actors for peace rather than spoilers, if appropriate opportunities for engagement are created. As youth are often a large part of the population in countries experiencing conflict, it is important to find ways to involve them in peacebuilding. In contexts of prolonged conflict, such as in Eastern DRC, economic and social structures have been damaged or destroyed and there exist few opportunities for employment; social services are limited or non-existent. Young people suffer more than adults from these constraints, as their lack of experience and education adds to the challenges of gaining employment. They are therefore a constituency that has great potential for violence. Channelling young people's energy and passion into positive social action is crucial to sustainable peace. As such, "the central aim of post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent a return to conflict, a key element of which must be ensuring that youth are occupied and usefully engaged in activities that contribute positively to society."⁷

MONUSCO's Mandate

The history of peacekeeping in the DRC dates back to the 1960-1964 period, with the establishment of ONUC (*Opération des Nations Unies au Congo*), arguably the first modern UN peacekeeping operation. The current UN presence in DRC started in 1999, with the establishment of MONUC (*Mission de l'Organisation de Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo*). MONUSCO has been in existence since 2013 and its mandate was renewed for the seventh time in March 2017 until 31 March 2018, with 16,215 troops authorised by the UN Security Council.

MONUSCO's current mandate is outlined in UNSCR 2348 (2017) and includes two strategic objectives:

- Protection of civilians
- Support to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and the electoral process⁸

⁷ *Children's security in post-conflict peacebuilding*, David Nosworthy, Discussion paper presented to the Office of the UN SRCG for Children in Armed Conflict, DCAF, June 2007, p. 16

⁸ UNSCR 2348, article 28

The resolution outlines non-military approaches to causes and drivers of armed violence in DRC. It also recognises the slow progress of the DDR process, especially on the aspect of reintegration, and the threat of recruitment of children by armed groups and “emphasises that MONUSCO’s activities should be conducted in such a manner as to build and sustain peace and facilitate progress towards sustainable peace and development”. In this respect, the resolution mandates MONUSCO to pursue a community violence reduction approach.

MONUSCO’s mandate does not make explicit reference to youth, and only refers to children in the context of DDR. However, all mission components interviewed for this case study recognise that youth are crucial actors in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes in DRC and therefore make efforts to support and participate in initiatives engaging youth.

MONUSCO’s Civil Affairs Section (CAS) is the largest civilian component, with staff deployed in 10 field offices. Its overall objective is to “strengthen social and civic conditions for peace at the local level.” It builds on the two strategic priorities outlined in the new resolution. As such, it contributes to the protection of civilians under threat of physical violence; supports and undertakes local mediation efforts to prevent the escalation of violence, including in the context of elections, and supports the creation of an environment conducive to peaceful elections at the local level, with a focus on civil society.

The mandate of the Political Affairs Division (PAD) includes democratisation and institutional reforms (including electoral issues), and conflict prevention and resolution (focusing mostly on eastern DRC). The Child Protection Section (CPS) works with youth directly in the context of the DDR programme, and on children and youth issues through documenting human rights violations, including recruitment by armed groups, and legal advocacy on children’s rights. Other MONUSCO sections interacting with youth include the DDR Section and the Public Affairs Section.

In addition, several UN agencies are working in DRC, implementing initiatives that involve youth such as UNICEF.

Role of the Government

The main responsibility for the protection of civilians and the provision of security and social services rests with the State. This remains an important challenge throughout the country but most acutely in the Eastern region, which has seen decades of violent conflict with limited government control over the territory and weak governance. In line with this lack of control, the provision of social services by the State remains very limited.

The DRC government's engagement with youth falls within the purview of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Leisure. The mandate of the Ministry does not per se focus on peacebuilding issues, but there are components that address the promotion of youth associations, youth development, and civic and peace education for young people.⁹ Stated priorities of the government include promoting youth participation in conflict prevention and management, mobilising youth for democratic development and civic education of young people on responsible citizenship.¹⁰

The National Youth Policy (*Politique nationale de la jeunesse*) was drafted in 2009. The Policy includes aspects of protection and participation. It recognises that young people are positive actors in national reconstruction and affirms the obligation for state actors to protect youth against threats to its health, education and integral development (article 42). Specific aspects relate to peace and security, for example:

Pillar 6: Youth, human rights, peace culture, democracy and civic education

Strategic Axis 1: Promotion and participation of youth in conflict prevention and management, peace culture and civic action

Pillar 13: Youth and gender – equity and elimination of violence

The Policy establishes the National Youth Council (*Conseil national de la jeunesse*), which is decentralised at the provincial, urban, territorial and local levels. The Councils promote the implementation of the Policy and democratic and participatory governance. In North Kivu, the Provincial Council organises activities on political

⁹ Internet site of the Ministry, Mandate section, http://minjsl.gouv.cd/mjssl_home/mjssl_mission/

¹⁰ Interview with North Kivu Provincial Planning Division, 6 September 2017

dialogue, civic education, peaceful elections and sensitisation on peace. At the provincial level, government authority on youth issues rests with the Provincial Youth Division of North Kivu. The Division is in charge of implementing the structures planned by the National Youth Policy and government initiatives, in collaboration with the Provincial Youth Council and other youth organisations.

The Division is poorly resourced. In 2017, the national budget established the ceiling for all paid civil servant posts in the Ministry of Youth and Sports to 3,718¹¹ nationwide. In addition, financial flows stemming from the national government to implement programmes for youth remain very low. The Division works in partnership with UNICEF and UNDP. The Division has been working with the Civil Affairs Unit as part of cross-border initiatives supported by the UN Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes towards the creation of a regional youth centre in Goma. However, the Division described the relationship with MONUSCO as limited.¹²

¹¹ Projet de loi de finances de l'exercice 2017, Ministère du Budget, May 2017

¹² Interview with the North Kivu Provincial Youth Division, 5 September 2017. In addition, the internet site of the Ministry lists UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF as international partners, but not MONUSCO.

Youth in Eastern DRC

Definitions of Youth

Participants in focus group discussions organised for this case study have defined youth identity as:

- A state of mind: being young means living in modern times and being able to adapt to new situations;¹³
- People who are not yet mature, but are more independent than children;¹⁴
- Individuals who are conscious of their own lives and are progressively becoming independent, including from their parents' responsibility;¹⁵
- Individuals who are often carefree, thinking they still have a lot of time in front of them, are inexperienced in many areas of life, in contrast with adults who are

more responsible and who have acquired life experience.¹⁶



Young people see themselves as still immature but also have the desire to acquire independence and responsibility. It is this tension, more than any age range, which constitutes youth and defines this stage of life as a transitory period.

The UN considers youth as being in the 15 to 24 age range for statistical purposes¹⁷ while SCR 2250 (2016) focuses on the 18-29 years old bracket. The Congolese government

¹³ Focus Group Discussion with girls aged between 15 and 18 years old, Goma, 1 September 2017

¹⁴ Focus Group Discussion with boys aged between 15 and 18 years old, Goma, 1 September 2017

¹⁵ Focus Group Discussions with young women between 19 and 24 years old, Goma, 4 September 2017

¹⁶ Focus Group Discussions with young men between 19 and 24 years old and with young women (same age group), Goma, 4 September 2017

¹⁷ Secretary General's Report to the UN General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

considers youth as between 15 and 35 years old.¹⁸ Young women and men who participated in focus group discussions conducted for this case study have defined youth as between 18 and 45 or 50 years old. This age range is surprising, making the definition seem to refer more to unattained social status than actual age. In this context, youth are no longer children but do not possess the material and social resources normally associated with adulthood.

This perception that people can stay “young” until later in life may be linked to conflict and violence, which have created a context in which opportunities to realise one’s full potential are few. As discussed in the Practice Note, exclusion and lack of opportunities can block or prolong young people’s transition to adulthood,¹⁹ leaving them in limbo and creating frustrations. Further research aimed at exploring whether perceptions of the age range that constitutes youth vary in other, more stable regions of the DRC, offering more opportunities for economic and social development would be beneficial and informative.

This age definition presents challenges when trying to perceive youth as a specific social group and when designing initiatives targeting youth. The broader the age range included in the definition, the more varied individuals’ needs, aspirations and concerns will be. However, the broad age definition clearly points to an expressed need to be supported through the transition to adulthood with empowerment.

Socio-economic markers

Statistics on “youth” as a distinct group are hard to obtain, as definitions of what youth constitutes vary, and some youth are also children. This makes it challenging to properly define youth as an age group in terms of social and economic markers. Furthermore, when available, data are not always disaggregated by provinces, making it even more difficult to capture youth realities in Eastern DRC.

¹⁸ Politique Nationale de la Jeunesse 2009, DRC Government

¹⁹ *Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note*, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding with support from PeaceNexus Foundation, p. 12

People under 25 years old form 65% of the Congolese population²⁰. In 2016, the ratio of enrolment in secondary school was only 44%, compared to 67% for primary school. However, literacy rates among youth are fairly high, with 91% for males and 77% for females. A 2012 survey report²¹ showed that while people aged 10 -24 years old



constitute 44.1% of the labour force, they only represent 18.5% of the active population. Young women and rural populations have higher

activity rates but enjoy much lower revenues. Gender considerations seriously affect youth socio-economic status. For instance, women marry earlier than men. Thirty-seven percent of women age 20-24 were married before age 18, compared to 6% of men in the same age group²². Furthermore, the median age at first birth is 19.9 years old among women aged 25-49 years old²³. This may lead to differing young men's and women's perceptions of adulthood and related responsibilities.

Impact of the conflict

Young people in Eastern DRC have suffered through years of physical, sexual, mental and emotional violence and marginalisation, and have been forcibly recruited in armed groups. They have also taken active part in the multiple conflicts over the last two decades, joining armed groups for a multiplicity of reasons from the attraction of economic gain to ethnic kinship and ideologies. It is estimated that there are 30,000

²⁰ *Youth Strategy Report DRC*, Search for Common Ground, 2015

²¹ Enquête sur l'emploi, le secteur informel et sur la consommation des ménages Ministère du Plan et du Suivi de la mise en œuvre de la révolution de la modernité, September 2014

²² Demographic and Health Survey 2013-2014, Democratic Republic of Congo

²³ Ibid

children associated with armed groups and forces in DRC²⁴, 30-40% of which are girls.²⁵ Some youth have taken an active role in trying to build peace and prevent outbreaks of violence. The impact of prolonged conflict on youth in DRC has been complex and deep-rooted, and young people today are facing significant challenges:

- Marginalisation, lack of employment, education and opportunities, poverty: these factors have limited young people's ability to get involved in social activities;²⁶
- Exposure to armed violence and all aspects of disruptions of family and community life due to displacements;
- Lack of State authority and centralisation of power: State authority is weak in eastern DRC, partly due to conflict, and decision-making processes are centralised in Kinshasa. This presents challenges for young people to get involved in democratisation processes at the local level;
- Exposure to sexual and gender based violence;
- Recruitment and re-recruitment by armed groups: young people "voluntarily" joining or re-joining due to lack of other opportunities and kidnappings of children and youth by armed groups;
- Manipulation of youth by politicians for political gains, including through violence around elections;
- Injustice and impunity that have led many young people to distrust the State and security forces;
- Ignorance by young people of their rights, thus limiting their ability to advocate for them;
- Lack of opportunities to take initiative and exclusion from social and political decision-making processes.²⁷

Of course, these challenges are not specific to young people and affect all sections of the population, and more acutely vulnerable groups. However, youth as a transitory phase in life, can be impaired by a lack of opportunities for development. When

²⁴ <http://www.child-soldier.org/child-soldiers-in-drc>

²⁵ UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/childalert/drc/childsoldiers.php>

²⁶ *Youth Strategy, DRC*, Search for Common Ground, 2015

²⁷ Idem

opportunities for psychological and social development are few, young people can get “stuck” in this transitory phase and feel like their entry into adulthood is delayed. This brings about frustrations and grievances that can lead some young people to engage in violence.

Perception of the Future of the DRC

When asked about the future, young participants in the focus group discussions expressed the following main concerns: the need for DRC to become more democratic, to recognise the role of youth in society, to improve living conditions, to ban tribalism and impunity, to promote good governance and access to social services, to involve young people in decision making and allocate sufficient resources to youth programmes, to improve security and end violence, to promote free education, and to provide employment opportunities to young people.

“The future of the country is uncertain. Young people have an important role to play because they are the future of the country. They must right now start investing themselves in learning how to manage the country.”²⁸

“The future of the DRC is dark: there are no prospects for positive change in sight. The regime in place does not want to organise elections and is hanging on to power. Young people must take their future into their own hands. For this, they must first study.”²⁹

Young men aged 19 to 24 years old expressed more optimistic views of the future:

“The future of DRC is promising. Young people must occupy decision making positions and to achieve this they must study and train through youth movements and associations, militate and become members of political parties.”³⁰

²⁸ Focus Group Discussion with girls between 15 and 18 years old, Goma, 1 September 2017

²⁹ Focus Group Discussion with boys between 15 and 18 years old, Goma, 1 September 2017

³⁰ Focus Group Discussion with young men between 19 and 24 years old, Goma, 4 September 2017

A constant theme seems to be that young people must work together to claim their place in society, and get involved in public life and government. There seems to be desire by young people to take their future in their hands and get recognised as positive and significant actors in peace and security. In general, young women and men from the 19 to 24 age group were more outspoken during focus group discussions and had a slightly more positive view of the future and of opportunities available to advance peace and security issues in DRC.

According to participants, those responsible for bringing about these changes are the government, the international community, opinion and community leaders, civil society, and more importantly, youth themselves, both individually and in associations. They mentioned the need for young people to take charge of their lives, as “young people must unite and avoid divisions based on tribal origins, encourage unity in diversity” and “must move from demanding employment to creating employment and changing mentalities.”

Youth Involvement in Projects and Initiatives

Young participants in focus groups discussions were asked to identify factors that motivated them to participate in projects and initiatives on governance, peace and security. The main points are:

- Young people want to defend their rights. Peace is everyone’s affair and young people pay a heavy price when peace is lacking;
- It is the duty of young people to get involved to defend peace and security in their communities; their future depends on their own actions;
- Membership in youth associations like the Provincial Youth Council motivates and facilitates young people to get involved in peace efforts;
- Young people want to promote their own development and take the future in their own hands; they are keen to participate in projects that they feel take into consideration their needs and points of view, promote diversity and peaceful cohabitation.

When asked about challenges to youth participation, they identified the following:

- Limited availability of safe spaces for young people to interact with one another;
- Decades of conflict and poor governance have led to a lack of trust in state institutions by youth. In addition, the exclusion of youth from the political sphere has made many young people reluctant to commit themselves to governance actions;
- Fear by youth of being threatened, arrested, intimidated, etc. by security forces because of perception that youth are violent by nature and are associated with armed groups;
- Marginalisation of communities due to poor physical access and weak local governance, especially in certain regions of North Kivu;
- Lack of coordination between youth actors and groups;
- Ethnic tensions and conflict; politicization of ethnicity; tribalism.

Young participants have described a range of projects and initiatives implemented by a variety of NGOs, UN agencies and MONUSCO. Examples of engagement in peace dialogue and political participation are described in Boxes 1 and 2.

Box 1: Youth and Peace -- Annual Youth Forum

The Goma Diocese organises each year, through the *Maison des Jeunes* de Goma, a four-day youth forum. In which themes for discussion are selected by young people through a vote. This initiative has received support from MONUSCO over the last two years. During this forum, youth from the DRC and other countries of the Great Lakes region debate ways of enhancing peace and security in the region. Over 20,000 youth participated in 2017. Provincial political and military authorities are involved in the debates, which allows young participants to interact with them.

National and international artists, UN experts, NGOs and others are involved in designing peace and demobilisation messages and participating in activities through various means such as singing. Sports activities include young participants from rival communities to foster cohesion and peaceful cohabitation.

Past forums have led to the disarmament and demobilisation of many youth following sensitisation campaigns on peace and cohesion, the establishment of youth cooperatives that facilitate the creation of businesses, the promotion of youth associations and collaboration between young people and the creation of community initiatives such as infrastructure projects involving youth. The forums offer an opportunity to MONUSCO to promote its mandate. MONUSCO collaborated with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes to organize discussions among youth from the sub-region to encourage cross-border initiatives.

Box 2: Youth and political participation – LUCHA Movement

Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA) is a movement created in Goma, in June 2012, as a response to the M23 rebellion, led by renegade Congolese soldiers and backed by Rwanda. The movement describes itself as “a non-violent, non-partisan citizen movement composed of young Congolese (DR Congo) from all walks of life, origins, religions ... who share the desire for a new, truly independent, democratic, peaceful and prosperous Congo, and who militate for his advent, through non-violent means”. The group has already demonstrated its mobilisation capacity on issues of access to basic services such as drinking water during the June 2014 “Goma Wants water” campaign, protection of civilians and more recently on political issues. The movement is actively mobilizing youth to ensure the departure of President Kabila since the expiration of his mandate in December 2016. LUCHA’s human rights and political stance has captured the attention of international and drawn increasing repression by the Congolese government. LUCHA was the 2016 recipient of Amnesty International’s Ambassador of Conscience Award and the movement has built a strong network with like-minded African movements in Senegal and Burkina Faso.

MONUSCO's Current Engagement Efforts with Youth in Eastern DRC

This section presents some examples of initiatives undertaken by MONUSCO in Eastern DRC. It is not meant to offer an exhaustive list but rather presents a sample. The section relies on information provided by MONUSCO for this case study and may present lacunas due to the short timeframe available to conduct the research.

Interventions on protection of civilians:

As part of its protection of civilians' strategy, MONUSCO supports various efforts by youth or with youth on protection issues. First, MONUSCO enables youth to **participate in local protection mechanisms and interact with local authorities**. For instance, CAS is implementing an ongoing initiative in partnership with UNPOL that supports national efforts to build the capacity of local protection and/or security committees chaired by civilian authorities to address and respond more effectively to communities' protection concerns in a well-coordinated and informed manner at



territorial and local levels. It further aims at improving the committees' relations and collaboration with the local population on protection issues amongst others through quarterly meetings and

sensitization campaigns. Youth are involved in the committees.³¹ Similarly, in Beni,

³¹ Information provided by the CAS Goma.

CAS field office has established in partnership with the Urban Youth Council various sensitisation activities with youth.³² CAS relies on the Council to select young participants based on gender balance and inclusion of marginalised groups. These activities include³³ the organization of dialogue sessions with youth groups to provide a platform to discuss issues affecting them and to improve the relationship with security forces, including reducing instances of popular justice.

Furthermore, MONUSCO carries out **reinsertion and temporary employment programmes**. The DDR/RR section funds 37 community projects through partners (including other sections of MONUSCO and the UN Country Team) as part of the Community Violence Reduction Programme (CVR) with the aim of preventing ex-combatants, including youth, from re-joining armed groups due to lack of employment and by providing them with reinsertion support into their communities. As part of these projects, temporary employment is offered to young people, combined with training on how to start and manage a small business. Youth participating in the projects are also encouraged through sensitisation to save parts of their earnings to invest in starting their business. Project beneficiaries are chosen by their communities according to criteria such as their level of vulnerability, and gender and ethnic balance. With regards to ex-combatants, beneficiaries are chosen through a lottery system; this was proposed by the beneficiaries themselves due to insufficient employment opportunities for all of them. Project beneficiaries become sensitisation agents who work to convince their peers to stay away from armed groups or to surrender and

BOX 3: MINUSCA CVR and Youth at Risk Programmes

Implemented jointly by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) and the UN Country Team, including Development Programme (UNDP) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), the programmes were designed to complement the formal DDR programme to “provide an occupation to vulnerable youth and high-risk youth that are not participating in the DDR programme” which includes so called “youth carrying conflict capacity”. The initiatives especially target youth at risk of recruitment by armed groups by providing the former with temporary employment and other income-generation opportunities. Participating youth are also sensitised on social cohesion, reconciliation and a culture of peace and human rights.

³² This practice is used by local militia (mai-mai) in the belief that it will protect the person being tattooed or scarred from bullet and knife wounds. The practice has gained popularity following large scale attacks and massacres recently committed by ADF/NALU armed group combined with negative rumours spread on the complicity of FARDC, PNC and MONUSCO in these attacks.

³³ Interview with MONUSCO Beni Civil Affairs Section, 31 August 2017

demobilise. The DDR programme focuses on voluntary surrender of children and young people from armed groups through sensitisation campaigns³⁴. It is interesting to note that a similar initiative is being implemented in selected locations of the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2015. The initiative is described under Box 3. CPS manages one vocational training centre in Nyanzale for demobilised children and community youth that contributes to reintegration and prevention of recruitment by armed groups.

However, the majority of MONUSCO's programmes consist of **sensitization campaigns**. The Child Protection Section in Goma implements several sensitisation activities around the prevention of recruitment and use of children and youth by armed groups. CPS established a community centre in Nyanzale in order to sensitise communities on conflict prevention and the impact of recruitment of children and youth in armed groups. Demobilised children and youth play an important role in the centre by sharing their personal experiences.³⁵ The centre is also intended to bring youth together to plan for and conduct livelihood activities in their communities.

CAS also organises sensitisation campaigns with youth on social cohesion and reduction of violence, in partnership with youth associations. For instance, CAS Goma conducted an inter-community dialogue initiative in a hotspot area integrating youth groups in the planning and evaluation phases of the activities. These activities consisted of focus group discussions which led to concrete recommendations, sport activities between youth of different communities to enhance social cohesion and follow up to support youth in implementing their own recommendations.

MONUSCO also facilitates **medical care and prison monitoring for children**. CPS assists children who escape from armed groups by facilitating their reception and transport by MONUSCO's military and by conducting a first interview. CPS then refers the children to UNICEF, who implements reintegration programmes in collaboration with partners. CPS also works in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide care and assistance to injured children and monitor

³⁴ Interview with MONUSCO DDR/RR Section, 31 August 2017, Goma

³⁵ Interview with MONUSCO Child Protection Section, 31 August 2017, Goma

children in detention. ICRC manages a hospital in Goma and visits detention centres to monitor conditions, and refers children to CPS when there are concerns on the age determination procedures.

Interventions on political participation:

PAD implements **training and sensitisation programmes** for young people members of political parties and supports annual youth meetings organised by the Catholic Diocese of Goma³⁶ (see Box 1 above). CAS's Lubumbashi field office supports and facilitates workshops dedicated to prevent and reduce the risks of violence related to the electoral process, in collaboration with civil society partners, in hotspot communes. The focus of the workshops is to raise awareness among groups in risk environments, and offer a forum for youth to express their views and interact with MONUSCO and local authorities. Similarly, Radio Okapi provides a platform enabling youth to express their political views. For example, groups targeted include university students. To mark this year's International Peace Day on 21 September, programmes were broadcasted around the theme "alternatives to MONUSCO's disengagement proposed by youth". Young people are also encouraged to gather and submit information to Radio Okapi, which is then verified and broadcasted if found accurate. Young people participating in radio programmes are selected by youth associations and not directly by Radio Okapi, for example the Provincial Youth Council. Radio Okapi has organised listeners' clubs (*Clubs des auditeurs des Radio Okapi*) to mobilise young people to disseminate peace messages.³⁷

Public information on peace and security:

Radio Okapi is MONUSCO's main public information tool. It is also an important vehicle for quality information and sensitisation on peace and security issues, as reflected by comments from the public on its Facebook page³⁸ and by interviews conducted for this case study. Youth in focus group discussions all noted the importance of the radio in their lives. They all mentioned that the radio is a convenient medium because it is cheap or free, and accessible around the country.

³⁶ Interview with MONUSCO Political Affairs Division, 31 August 2017, Goma

³⁷ Interview with MONUSCO Radio Okapi, 30 August 2017, Goma

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/radiookapi/>

Young participants rely on the radio to stay informed on a variety of topics that concern them, including the situation in the country, politics, social issues, the economy, as well as cultural and sports news.³⁹ Young people consider Radio Okapi as the best, and often only, means of accessing credible, timely and impartial information on peace and security, political and social events in the country. It is also the only radio station to broadcast without interruptions due to lack of infrastructure⁴⁰ and is not submitted to government oversight.⁴¹

In addition to the radio, youth interviewed for this case study all mentioned social media as an important source of information that facilitates interactions with other youth in DRC and around the world, and enables the youth to learn about others and share various opinions and points of view.⁴²

Emerging best practices

Setting participation quotas

Youth often represent 20-30% of the participants involved in Civil Affairs activities at the local level, comprising of dialogues, meetings and workshops on protection. This empowers youth in their advocacy to local authorities on protection concerns. MONUSCO often relies on youth organizations to identify individual participants. This practice can alleviate allegations of bias as well as boost the credibility of local organizations.

Engaging youth in identifying and designing interventions

MONUSCO's programmes that enable youth to identify activities, choose discussion topics or encourage their participation in monitoring activities are the most successful. These programmes are most likely to experience a continued youth engagement even after the completion of the activity or workshop.

Using appropriate communicating channels

³⁹ Focus Group Discussions conducted in Goma on 1 and 4 September 2017 with a total of 60 youth.

⁴⁰ For example, other stations often face challenges with electricity supply and frequently stop broadcasting.

⁴¹ Recently some radio stations have been taken off the air by the government in Kinshasa for what was perceived as anti-government views.

⁴² Focus Group Discussions conducted in Goma on 1 and 4 September 2017 with a total of 60 youth.

The success of Radio Okapi among the youth reflects the close fit with youth lifestyles and resources in Eastern DRC.

In summary, many of MONUSCO's youth initiatives revolve around sensitisation and dialogue on protection and reconciliation issues. While this is certainly useful, an evaluation of the results of these initiatives is needed to determine their impact. There is a deficit of interventions targeting political participation. In addition, many young participants have expressed the need for more tangible initiatives beyond dialogue and sensitisation. They were referring here to initiatives that would create employment and other opportunities to facilitate youth involvement in society. While employment is not part of MONUSCO's mandate, perhaps the Mission should build upon current protection interventions to broaden the scope of actors and issues they help youth engage with. MONUSCO could make more efforts to link sensitisation and dialogue initiatives to programmes implemented by other UN agencies or civil society that provide socio-economic opportunities.

Youth Perception of MONUSCO's Role and Interventions

Young people who participated in focus group discussions for this case study were aware of MONUSCO's mandate. They also accurately explained the mandate of various UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO and OHCHR.

However, there is a difference between being able to describe the mandate and understanding it. Several practitioners interviewed for this case study mentioned that young people often misunderstand MONUSCO's mandate and the constraints to its operations.⁴³ In addition, even when young people understand the mandate, they seem to have higher expectations.

Young participants in focus group discussions recognised the efforts of MONUSCO on peacebuilding and stabilisation as follows:⁴⁴

⁴³ Interviews with various units of MONUSCO in Goma, 29 August to 5 September 2017

⁴⁴ All quotes are translated from French.

“In our province [North Kivu], MONUSCO includes young people in some activities, but unfortunately not in the design stage. MONUSCO supported the organisation of youth forums, which allowed youth from various communities in North Kivu to discuss, understand how conflicts start and evolve, learn conflict prevention and resolution through negotiation, dialogue, mediation, communication and how to resist manipulation.”⁴⁵

It is important to understand that many of these youth have known violent conflict throughout their lives. Hence, there seem a general lack of trust in actors with responsibilities in security and protection of civilians. This comprises state institutions and forces, as well as MONUSCO, which are sometimes lumped together and seen as one global actor (the “authorities”). In addition, there is a certain confusion on who has the main responsibility for the protection of civilians, and the provision of social services, including security. Some participants have expressed their frustrations as follows:

“MONUSCO does not fulfil its role. We see it in Goma while people are getting killed in Beni and Lubero. MONUSCO has been around for a long time, but war is not over. MONUSCO encourages the creation of armed groups as a pretext to stay in DRC.”⁴⁶

“Unfortunately, MONUSCO does not have permanent programmes with youth. MONUSCO organises activities with youth only on UN international days or on the international children day, but when youth associations propose projects MONUSCO does not even answer us.”⁴⁷

“Young people also think that MONUSCO has been in Congo for a long time, but has not been able to contribute to sustainable and total peace or to get rid of armed groups that are everywhere in the province. From that, they wonder

⁴⁵ Focus Group Discussion with young men between 19 and 24 years old, Goma, 4 September 2017

⁴⁶ Focus Group Discussion with girls between 15 and 18 years old, Goma, 1 September 2017

⁴⁷ Focus Group Discussion with young women between 19 and 24 years old, Goma, 4 September 2017

about the international community's capacity to contribute to final resolution of the conflicts in DRC."⁴⁸

Young people expect MONUSCO to re-establish peace and security. Therefore, their perception of the lack of progress in this area is leading to some mistrust of MONUSCO.

Challenges in MONUSCO's Engagement with Youth

The field research conducted for this case study revealed a number of challenges in MONUSCO's interactions with young people in Eastern DRC. There are many external challenges, including continued insecurity, on-going conflict, access issues linked to difficult terrain and remoteness of communities, poverty and ethnic tensions among communities. While these challenges are immense, there are beyond the focus of this case study. They serve as a background to the engagement of MONUSCO with youth, and create the framework for this engagement. This section presents a summary of the main challenges directly impacting MONUSCO's engagement with young people in Eastern DRC.

- **Expectations management**

Youth in Eastern DRC have high, and often unrealistic, expectations, towards MONUSCO in terms of protection, security and resources to be devoted to youth initiatives. A certain misunderstanding of MONUSCO's mandate has been noted. Youth often seems to do not differentiate between the peacekeeping mission and UN agencies, funds and programmes.

In addition, as MONUSCO's mandate is renewed yearly, it can only support initiatives with less than a one year timeframe. However, because the UN has had a peacekeeping mission in DRC for almost 20 years, it is difficult for young people to understand why it is not able to support long term interventions. Recent cuts to peacekeeping budgets could create further frustrations regarding the sustainability of DDR or public information programmes.

⁴⁸ Focus Group Discussion with young men between 19 and 24 years old, Goma, 4 September 2017

These unrealistic expectations are compounded by lack of trust in the Congolese government. While the provision of security and the protection of civilians are the responsibility of the State, many young people in Eastern DRC mistrust the government and security forces, and therefore expect protection from MONUSCO. This has led to a perception among young people that MONUSCO is unable to foster sustainable peace and security.

- Evidence-based initiative development

MONUSCO has conducted very limited evaluation of what types of initiatives work with youth and have a real impact. Statistics on youth as a group are rare in the DRC, and there is little evidence of effectiveness of initiatives beyond anecdotal success stories. This is especially true of initiatives on sensitisation and public dialogue. In this context, it is difficult to determine what works and what does not, and what should be replicated or discontinued.

- Youth involvement

MONUSCO mainly conducts sensitization programmes which consider youth as users of already defined products or messages. Therefore, young people are not always involved in initiatives that concern them, especially in the design phase. This leads to a lack of ownership of initiatives by youth and sometimes to faulty designs that do not properly address the needs, aspirations and interests of young people.

- State authority

The DRC government's lack of effective control over large parts of the Eastern region, does not provide effective protection to civilians and basic services. In addition, governmental resources for youth programmes are scarce and social services in many areas are limited or non-existent. As MONUSCO's mandate is to support the government, this lack of State capacity reflects on the mission's capacity to work with youth as well as its public perception of performance.

Recommendations

1. MONUSCO should involve at all stages of its planning and decision-making processes to ensure youth ownership of political and protection initiatives. Particular attention should be paid in the designing and evaluations phases, not just the implementation period, so that actions directly engaging with young people benefit from their meaningful participation. This will foster ownership and sustainability.⁴⁹
2. MONUSCO should work with other partners in Eastern DRC engaged with youth to better capture youth needs, perceptions and engagement including in UN programmes. This could start by encouraging MONUSCO components and partners to systematically disaggregate data by gender and age whenever possible with a view of reporting more consistently on issues affecting and interventions targeting youth. This would help to make youth participation and needs more visible. Likewise, MONUSCO should explore the possibility of identifying specific youth responses in local perceptions surveys conducted with UNDP and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.
3. MONUSCO should consider strengthening its programme targeting youth engagement in the political process. In addition, MONUSCO should support youth peacebuilding efforts as well as empower youth to engage and take an active role in peace advocacy efforts. MONUSCO sections should consider replicating some of the current protection approaches to youth participation including the establishment of quotas for youth representation. In particular, increasing opportunities for youth engagement with state authorities would have a positive impact to combat stigmatisation, discrimination and arbitrary arrests that can lead to youth radicalisation and involvement in violence.

⁴⁹ *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*, Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding, UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, principle 6

4. MONUSCO should establish or enhance partnerships with other UN agencies and partners with mandates and resources to provide disincentives to violence and work on long term development. Such partnership could target agencies such as UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and UNFPA with expertise in market studies, reintegration programmes, employment, awareness raising and public mobilisation on relevant issues affecting young people.
5. In addition to its public radio programmes, MONUSCO should consider expanding its social media outreach to youth. The objective should be to provide a space for youth to voice their views, share content and connect on issues that matter to them.



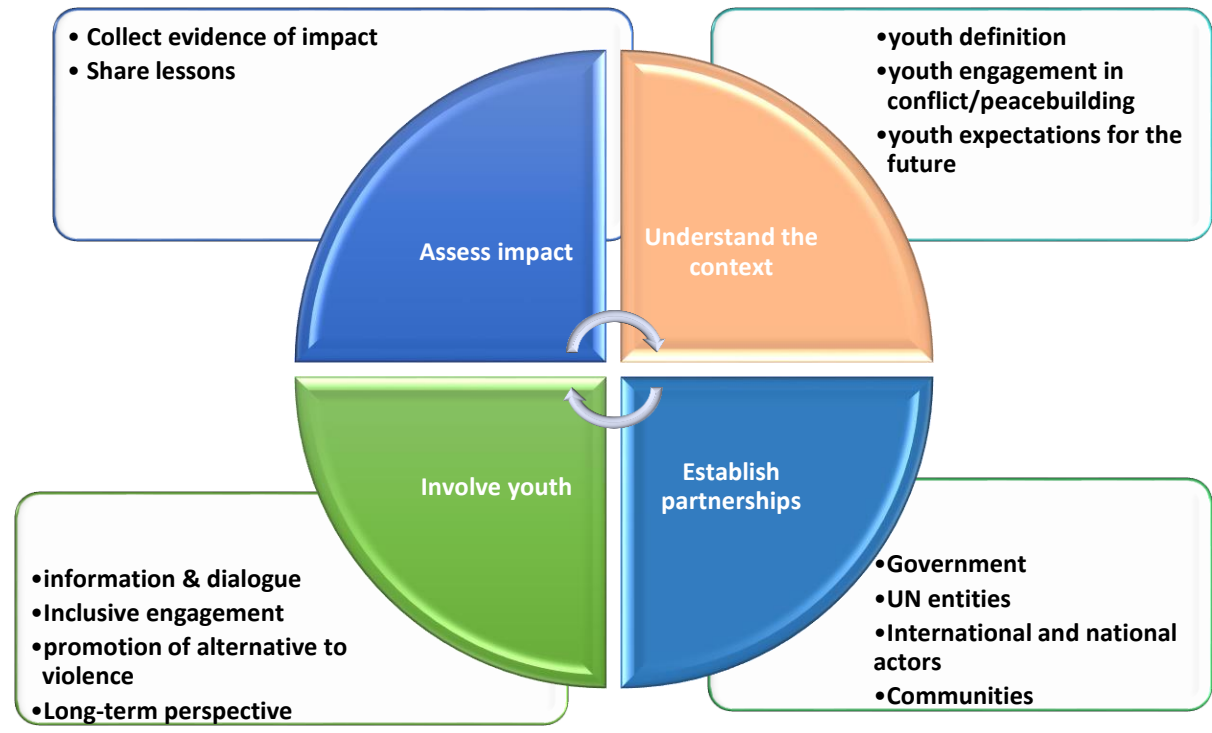
6. MONUSCO should also make more efforts in systematically following up on recommendations provided by young participants in dialogue sessions and consultation forums, to ensure that their participation is meaningful and valued. Response to demands in socio-economic areas could be done through the establishment of partnerships with UN and other development organisations.
7. MONUSCO should invest in impact studies and evaluations of initiatives with youth to understand better what works and what does not. As many MONUSCO initiatives revolve around sensitisation campaigns and public dialogue, impact

remains challenging to assess. MONUSCO should work with local partners and communities on assessing results, even if anecdotal, and feed this information in new initiatives and amend existing ones with lessons learned. This can be done using simple means such as surveys by SMS or through social media.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ As done by UNICEF Uganda, see *Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note*, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding with support from PeaceNexus Foundation, p. 40

Annex 1: Step-by-Step Engagement Matrix

This annex provides key considerations for planning, designing and assessing youth engagement interventions.



1. Understand the Context:

The situation of young people will vary from country to country, and often within a country, from region to region. Therefore, UN peacekeeping missions should take the time to understand the local context, including:

- *The definition of youth:* What is youth identity in the local context? What age groups constitute the local definition of youth? What is the government's definition, and does it differ from the UN definition? How are young people perceived by their elders? By local authorities? How do young people perceive youth and how do they differentiate themselves from adults and children? Are young women perceived differently from young men, and if yes, in what ways? Are certain types of youth perceived differently, for example disabled young

people or youth of a certain ethnic background or origin? What are other factors of discrimination?

- *Involvement of youth in the conflict:* Have young people been taking an active part in the conflict? Have they been forcibly recruited in armed forces and groups; have they joined voluntarily? Have young people suffered in specific ways from the impact of the conflict, including through killing and maiming, sexual violence and denial of services? Is the situation of young women different from that of young men, and how?
- *Involvement of young people in peacebuilding efforts:* Are young people already involved in peacebuilding efforts and initiatives? Have any of those initiatives yield results already? Are there youth groups or organisations that already work on peacebuilding issues? What are the forums for youth participations (youth/children parliaments, youth clubs, youth councils, etc.)? What is the culture of participation for youth in the society and in democratic processes? It is important to conduct a mapping exercise to understand what already exists and what initiatives look promising.
- *Youth expectations for the future:* What change would they like to see in their communities? In their country? What role do they see themselves in bringing about change? What role(s) do they assign to other institutions including their own state?

2. Establish Partnerships:

UN peacekeeping missions have a mandate to support national governments. As such, it is important to work within the national context and seek to complement efforts in line with government policy on young people, where it exists. It is also important to have an “all of UN” approach, in which the UN peacekeeping mission works in collaboration with UN agency country offices, the UN Country Team, regional instruments and offices, donors, NGOs and local communities, to ensure consistency and sustainability of efforts. UN peacekeeping missions can play a significant role as a convener and a facilitator to create forums in which all stakeholders are represented.

- *Work with government institutions:* Identify from the start the central government institutions and local authorities involved in youth issues, discuss their priorities, strategies and plans and establish partnerships. This could include, but is not limited to, ministries of youth affairs, education, health, employment, interior, justice, etc.; local youth councils (sometimes established under the umbrella of a national youth policy), youth advisors in security forces, local teachers' associations, etc.
- *Work with other UN institutions:* Ensure a coherent approach on youth issues from all sections and units of the UN peacekeeping mission, including Child Protection, Human Rights, Political Affairs, Public Affairs, Civil Affairs, Gender, DDR, etc. Establish partnerships with other UN institutions (UNCT, UN agencies operating in the country like UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, ILO and UNODC, regional institutions) to design and implement initiatives jointly, in respect of each component's mandate, expertise and resources.
- *Work with relevant international and national actors:* Coordinate with actors working on youth issues, such as international NGOs (Oxfam, World Vision, Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, International Committee of the Red Cross), national NGOs (Red Cross Society, etc.) and donors' development agencies (SIDA, JICA, USAID, DFID, etc.).
- *Work with local communities:* Involve local communities in conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, build on existing communities structures like local peace and security committees, town councils, etc. and include youth groups in those structures.

3. Involve Youth in the Design and Implementation of Initiatives:

To maximise ownership and sustainability of initiatives, UN peacekeeping missions should involve young people at all stages of initiatives, from the design phase, through the implementation and to the evaluation.

- *Outreach on mission mandate:* Ensure that young people are aware of the mandate of the peacekeeping mission, its activities and its limitations to ensure

that young people understand what the mission can and cannot do. This will help avoid frustrations in the future.

- *Promote information and dialogue:* Establish dialogue forums between the mission and young people, using media platforms (radio, social media). Provide, where possible, accurate and fact-based information on peace and security issues in the country in a format that young people can access; this will help counter extremist messages and propaganda. Encourage youth's interactions with other youth in the host country, the region and the world to promote dialogue and break isolation.
- *Ensure inclusivity in the involvement of youth:* Ensure that initiatives undertaken with youth are inclusive in terms of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, and involve vulnerable youth and youth at risk. Create, where possible, linkages with youth in the region and internationally to promote dialogue and networking, and break isolation.
- *Promote initiatives that provide young people with alternatives to violence:* UN peacekeeping missions that implement a Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme should ensure that enough focus is placed on reintegration activities that can keep young people from resorting to violence. Those who do not have a DDR programme should focus on prevention activities to promote non-violent means of expression by young people and employment opportunities that can keep them positively engaged in society. UN missions should involve young people in prevention mechanisms to raise their profile in their own communities as positive agents for change, including arms control programmes, initiatives on peaceful electoral processes and democratisation, protection against violence, etc.
- *Privilege long term initiatives when possible:* Peacebuilding is a long-term process, and initiatives with a longer timeframe offer better possibilities at a lasting impact.
- *Privilege meaningful involvement of youth:* Youth participation should be meaningful to ensure that it is not just window dressing and that their input is considered, integrated and implemented. Participation should be beneficial to initiatives as well as to young participants.

4. Conduct Impact Assessments and Evaluations of Initiatives:

It is crucial to understand what impact initiatives have on the establishment of sustainable peace, what works and what does not. This enables the design of better initiatives in the future.

- *Conduct impact assessments:* Once an initiative has been implemented, invest time and resources in an assessment, including young beneficiaries at every step. Devise means to collect evidence on impact of initiatives, for examples through quantitative evidence (how many young people have demobilised; how many young people have started a business; etc.) and perception surveys and focus group discussions (how many young people think this initiative has had an impact).
- *Share lessons learned and best practices:* Share results of initiatives with partners and beneficiaries, for example through community meetings. Share results with other UN institutions and other UN peacekeeping missions through mission-level reporting on engagement with youth (for example annually) and encourage inter-mission dialogue on best practices.