

“Promoting Relationships and Resilience to Violence through Youth-Centered Policies”

POLICY BRIEF 2



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Introduction

Uganda continues to be the leading country with the youngest population in the world. Over 77% of 42 million Ugandans are below the age of 35 years and more than 52% of them below 15 years. A critical challenge to this bulge is the creation of opportunities and provision of services to meet the growing needs of the youth, considering the country is low resourced and has a history of violence over Exclusion, Discrimination and Injustice (EDI) in accessing state power and resources. The youth are the majority of participants in the perpetration of such violence as members of insurgent groups, criminal gangs, militia groups or political activists, and these engage in violent battles with security agencies during demonstrations demanding for rights, justice and better services. Government has adopted various policy interventions to respond to challenges faced by the youth, including

The Equal Opportunities Commission Act, (2007), Uganda National Youth Policy (2015-2020), National Action Plan for Youth Empowerment (2016), the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) (2013), Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Program (2016), the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) (2015), the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) Act (2001), etc. Unfortunately, all these have already fallen short of many set targets, including the 2010/11 – 2014/15 National Development Plan (NDP) to raise the annual income per capita from \$500 to \$900 for every Ugandan. Despite all interventions, grievances and participation in violence among the youth continues to respond to discrimination during political processes, unemployment, biting poverty, poor access to services, and other forms of injustice and exclusion.

The Study:

Despite the escalation in use of violence to seek redress in EDI, today's youth are more frequently the victims of violence than perpetrators and majority of them do not participate in violence, although violent acts are more lethal due to the means by which it is committed by a few. The study on Why They Don't Fight (WTDF) focused on understanding those who do not fight while responding to EDI, to be able to generate policy recommendations that the state, civil society and other stakeholders can employ to reduce youth participation in violence in Uganda. The study attracted total of 687 respondents in interviews, focus group discussion, workshops and policy dialogues, of whom 54% and 46% were from Kampala and Jinja districts respectively. These included self-identified participants and non-participants in violence, and other youth representatives from members of parliament, district and sub-county local governments, civil society organizations, women associations, university and secondary schools, market vendors and boda-boda rider associations, cultural,

political and religious institutions, organizations and pressure groups.

Theoretically, the study employed social bond , relationship , and resilience theories to provide a framework within which the data was analyzed, and helped to generate explanation about the preference for non-violent responses to EDI, most especially among self-identified non-participants in violence (SINV). In some cases, the structure violence and social identity theories helped to understand how individuals of groups of youth define themselves under structural conditions that deny them rights, entitlements or opportunities for self-advancement.



Contextual challenges underlying policy responses to EDI

Enduring experiences of EDI in Uganda have bred serious consequences across their victims, but most importantly among the youth by undermining their life chances to develop meaningful livelihoods. These conditions impact on behaviors and actions crafted to find redress, including the use of violence, especially as vulnerabilities often shared across a group increase. In Uganda, the situation is compounded by the youth bulge occurring under adverse socio-economic conditions and a history of insurgencies, civil wars and coup d'états to change governments. These are some of the factors that produce increasing uncertainty, desperation and unrelenting pursuit of redress by some of the youth through violence.

The risk of youth participation in violence increases with increasing manifestations of physical, political, social and economic vulnerabilities characterized by EDI, often attributed to the state. Notwithstanding growing efforts in Uganda towards policies and programs to respond and redress youth-based grievances, existing response capacities and strategies remain inadequate.

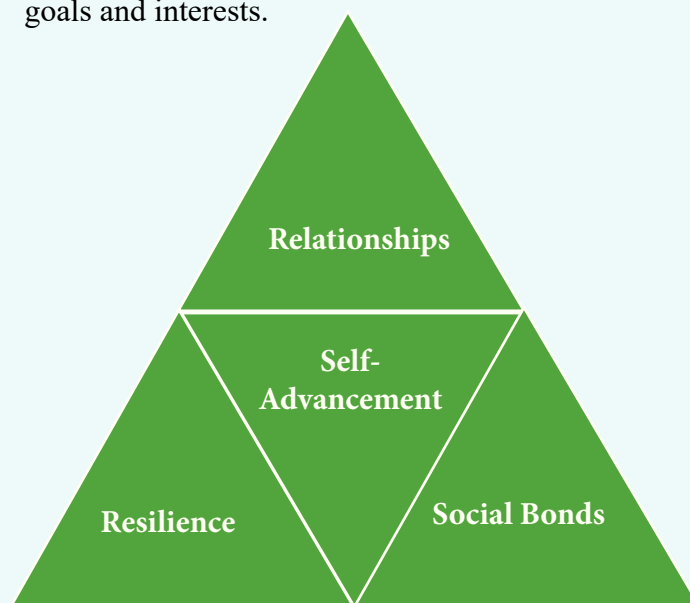
There is broad acknowledgement within government and the civil society about failure to systematically integrate youth-based approaches and partnerships towards socio-political and economic development and governance. Such efforts should be mutually reinforcing and broadly supportive of transforming conditions that account for EDI at community and national levels, as well as transforming perceptions, experiences and responses by those affected.

The national executive and legislature lack pro-active approaches, and development programs involving youth-based programs are often reactive and structured to respond to immediate demands and not long-term needs that also require RRSS as necessary conditions to effectively redress EDI. Therefore, critical gaps and challenges still exist with respect to governance (management and administration to implement relevant policies), early warning and early response (assessment and monitoring of risk factors and evaluation of response strategies and programs), capacity building (formal and information training and education), and EDI-related policy information management and sharing.

Study findings

As indicated below, resilience, relationships, social-bonding are responses that self-identified non-participants in violence (SNV) utilize under conditions of EDI to continue towards self-advancement (RRSS). Thus, despite adverse experiences, often attributed to the functioning of the state, these are some of the agency-based options that remain eminent among non-participants in violence in exploring and crafting pathways to overcome adverse events. The study determined that resilience is a necessary condition, not as an end in itself, but parthway to self-advancement especially for the individual or family, and is the overarching motivation for non-violent responses to EDI among SNV. This is contrary to views that non-violent people are just weak and afraid to act. Self-advancement is indicated among the youth by high self-esteem, demonstration of gratitude, respect for differences, social development, and ability to

compete peacefully and effectively to achieve their goals and interests.



Differences in culture, family traditions and personal abilities among respondents from Jinja and Kampala districts notwithstanding, resilience towards self-advancement was emphasized among SNV at 75%, while 62% of them qualified it in personal and family terms and not in terms of how such advancement relates to the country. To this extent, resilience, relationships and social bonds are tapped into by SNV as alternative pathways to remain focused to achieve self-advancement non-violently. Views and opinions from the study further indicated that under EDI, resilient youth find violence less preferable and attractive because of the cost it imposes on success, respect and achievement.

Understanding Resilience, Relationships and Social-bonding.

Relationships

This involves processes and conditions, protective factors and coping mechanisms employed to adapt to changes and stressful conditions caused by EDI to achieve positive outcomes. To this end, it is an asset that combines controllability, optimism, conflict resolution and problem solving to spur positive outcomes. Resilience also involves decision-making and self-regulation to appropriately respond to frustration and stress and to find constructive ways towards redress. While responding to EDI, proactive actions and setting clear expectations are some of the internal factors that drive self-regulation help during problem-solving by individuals and groups who choose not to fight. Education and existence of institutional or structural arrangements for dialogue and mediation are some of the external factors that also facilitate positive adaptation during adversity. In this way, as is commonly the case among SNV, resilience supports self-advancement when individuals or groups are not only able to effectively cope or positively adapt, but are also regulating their decisions and actions towards non-violence. Ultimately, these are competences and skills that can be cultivated among the youth through a range of policies, formal and informal programs to reduce participation in violence.

Resilience

These form at interpersonal, family, or communal levels bring into focus interests, power, identify and perceptions that influence their patterns of interaction to respond to EDI. Interventions to improve relationships among the youth should engage with these elements to ensure the youth positively identify each other, and also favorably estimate their relationships while responding to EDI. The diversity of factors that influence each relationship element deepens the complexity and the individuality with which the youth decide on their actions e.g. a disqualification from a job opportunity due to conflict of interest may become discrimination and a threat

to ones' identity, and may attract responses to protect it. Nonetheless, SNPV indicated strong relationships that breed interdependence, active participation and willingness to cooperate at individual, group and community levels to achieve interests. There was also voluntary sharing of knowledge and skills, support and reciprocity, fairness during interactions, recognition and respect for separateness in identity, and good communication, as useful indicators to look out for in relationships among the youth, in the place of hatefulness, hostility, apathy, and aggression that comes from perceptions of deprivation.

Social bonds

These occur in a social environment and can prevent youth from violating norms that are held as true and binding, to which they conform through attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. In this case, the thicker the social bonds are among the youth, the more they are likely to behave in accordance with cohesion standards set by the bond. SNV reflected strong attachment to family, peers and communities, commitment to social standards, values and norms e.g. respect for elders and neighbors, and institutions e.g. schools, cultural and religious, involvement in structured community and institutional activities e.g. sports and congregational prayers that cultivate self-regulation and discipline, and belief that all these are valid elements that work and are internalized as important for self-advancement. In this way, social bonds cultivated through family, religion, culture and gender facilitate adaptation, provide safety and restoration of a sense of belonging, self-esteem and security in the place of exclusion and discrimination. These elements discourage violation and deviation due to the heavy emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual investment to grow and cultivate them for the purpose of self-advancement, and can provide good policy goals and indicators to assess their achievement.

The Brief:

Youth participation in violence to respond to EDI is preventable through approaches that place them at the center (youth-centered) of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs, services and other activities to find redress. This brief seeks to integrate and operationalize youth-centeredness, particularly, in the review and implementation of the National Youth Policy (NYP) and development of the National Service Policy (NSP). The NSP is currently being developed by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, and some of its key elements can be informed by the following recommendations to become more youth-centered. The brief therefore articulates strategic policy goals to be met by the general policy recommendations, legislative and institutional framework, education and training, capacity, risk assessment, resource mobilization and community mobilization. The overall aim is to achieve a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to reviewing, development and implementation of the NSP and NYP as entry points towards collaborative efforts to institutionalize resilience and relationship building among the youth, and disseminate related information to reduce youth participation in violence to respond to EDI.

Strategic goals for the policy recommendations

- i. Early and ongoing involvement of the youth from formal and informal sectors in the planning framework and development of the NSP policy and implementation of related programming; with a particular focus on redressing conditions of advancing RRSS to guide youth responses conditions of EDI and related vulnerabilities.
- ii. Integrate resilience and relationship building principals and tailored tools, currently missing, as part of the NSP and NYP that government departments, the civil society, other political and socio-economic institutions and organizations can institutionalize and use as mechanisms to build RRSS across groups and communities and private sector.



iii. Motivate the development of a whole-of-society approach to create a youth-centered environment to guide building of resilient families, youth groups and local communities that constructively participate and interact, coordinate, innovate, make decisions and implement priority actions to redress EDI. Coordination in this case involves the transfer of skills, technical knowledge, resilience and relational-based practices from central government to local leaders and the youth within communities to enhance capacity for RRSS among them.

iv. Promote a culture of violence prevention among the youth as a necessary condition in achieving self-advancement, through programs and tools that enhance knowledge and building capacity for risk assessment, early warning and early response to threats of violence, while strengthening positive adaptation, coping, self-regulation, problem-solving and recovery from adversity among the youth.

General policy recommendations

- Clearly state the enhancement of resilience and relationships among the youth as a distinct objective of the NYP and NSP alongside others related to and focusing on programming and coordination of service delivery and productivity and employability of the youth.
- Expand formal and informal resilience and relationship training opportunities as part of skills development programs under NYP and NSP, including establishing at least 3 specialized vocational training and 3 counseling and rehabilitation centers in each district to help transform the youth population into a workforce to effectively reduce economic and social barriers to self-advancement. Currently this compares with only 3 government owned vocational training centers for the whole country and no youth counselling center.
- Include, among the strategies to implement the NYP, undertaking direct but youth-led and youth-based interventions to achieve the policy objectives to bolster their decision-making, problem-solving, fair competition, conflict resolution and collaborative competencies.
- Priority areas of the NYP related to improving livelihoods, skills development, access to services and resources, and participation in governance should prioritize and mainstream enhancing strategies and programs for resilience and relationship building among the youth.
- Include promoting self-advancement of the youth a key guiding principle of the NYP and NSP, and apply it to strengthen partnerships between government and other social, cultural and religious stakeholders to disseminate RRSS information, training, and encourage civic engagement of the youth.
- Support and strengthen district and community level management of sports, drama, music and youth-based wellness programs to also provide resilience and relationship building training to promote pro-social values among the youth, and to counter the use of drugs and criminal gangs.
- Sector ministries, departments and agencies of government adopt internal resilience and relationship building action plans and specific projects as part of enhancing youth participation in national and community service. The specific goal is to transfer, add and development skills among the youth to effectively work in formal and informal sectors guided by respect, tolerance and through prosocial behaviors towards the rights and wellbeing of others.
- The line ministry develops an advocacy and communication strategy in which government, civil society and the private sector collaborate under the National ICT Policy (2014) to undertake a mass-media campaign and develop IT tools using new media to provide counselling and public awareness towards RRSS. Implementation of this policy should also provide incentives for innovation and research among the youth that expand and improve resilience and relationship that favor national service, prevent participation in violence, and promote intrapreneurial skills.
- Government collaborates with civil society and faith-based organizations to train the youth participating in leadership at all levels of society and to promote civic responsibility among them as goals of the NYP and NSP, and as a basic motivation to remain resilience and maintain positive relationships among constituents. The scope of leadership in this case should cover political, economic/business, cultural and social aspects in in which the youth feature prominently e.g. local government youth councils, Universities, colleges, political party forums, religious congregations, cultural forums, CSOs etc. to contribute to policies that respond to and redress EDI in their communities.

- Incorporate relevant cultural traditional and indigenous practices and knowledge in the development and implementation of the NYP and NSP elements related to resilience, relationships and social bonding, and recognized traditional mechanisms tailored to communicate and influence the youth in local communities. For example, during

Ekisakaate and Entanda cultural mentorship programs in Buganda and Busoga Kingdoms respectively.

- Institute periodical review of the NYP and NSP with respect to social, political, economic and other conditions that may account for EDI and how it influences RRSS among the youth.

Priority Engagement Areas



Institutional and legislative frameworks

1. The NYP and NSP should contain a risk reduction mechanism for EDI considering that these remain an enduring feature of youth experiences in the country e.g. a multi sectoral platform to monitor, assess and develop practical response to changes in RRSS among the youth, with designated responsibilities at the national and local levels to facilitate coordination across sectors.

2. Integrate youth-centered EDI risk mitigation and reduction measures into district local government policies and programs, as appropriate, to proactively engage vulnerable youth to reduce and mitigate possible disruptions of resilience and relationship building efforts or escalation of grievances into violence.

3. Adopt, or modify where necessary, legislation or policy frameworks e.g. those outlined above, to support EDI risk reduction, and include youth-centered regulations and mechanisms that promote incentives for cooperation and collaboration during decision-making and problem-solving among the youth.

4. Resilience and relationship building among the youth should be a national strategy to reduce youth participation in violence and contents should include tools that local communities can adopt and employ to underpin all forms of interaction and engagement.

Platform for national and local level risk assessment and warning systems.

1. Develop a framework for Early Warning and Early Response to collect, analyze and disseminate information on perceptions, experiences and grievances over EDI, and related causes, drivers, indicators to help track influences among the youth, and to provide information to decision-makers and communities at risk that is appropriate resilience and relationship building.
2. The systems should be youth centered, providing timely and understandable to the youth themselves and other stakeholders, including cultural, religious, social and gender related information to support decision-making and societal-level programming to engage EDI and promote RRSS.
3. Develop youth-based indicators related to RRSS to help during programming under the NYP and NSP, and provide training to decision-makers in government, civil society and communities to be able to monitor and assess levels of vulnerability, impact and to make corrective interventions.

Capacity – Technical and Material.

1. Develop sustainable infrastructure to advance technological, technical and institutional capacities that are necessary for research, analysis, mapping and warning of EDI related vulnerabilities that impact and influence resilience and relationship among the youth.
2. Development comprehensive youth-centered information databases to facilitate access, exchange and dissemination of data for purposes of assessment, and providing early responses, and to be able to design and update RRSS programs at national and district levels.
3. Undertake youth-based resilience and relationship building training and build appropriate technical capacity for NYP and NSP related government departments, local government, the civil society and community leaders, to be able to effectively manage related information systems and programs, and report on short- and long-term changes in vulnerabilities and risks among the youth under their respective scope of work.
4. Strengthen youth networks that initiate young people into positive relationships, resilience and gainful work, and disseminate and influence programs that include the use of dialogue and cooperation among groups and communities to develop responses to EDI.

Education and training

1. Promote the inclusion of RRSS building knowledge and tools as EDI risk and violence reduction strategies in appropriate segments of curricula at all educational levels, and use formal and informal avenues and networks to reach youth with information i.e. the current primary and secondary education curriculum review by the Ministry of Education should precisely provide for modules on these competences and not assume that students develop them by learning mathematics or history.
2. Promote in-service training involving local government officials, education managers, political and civil society leaders etc. related to resilience and relationship building among the youth.
3. Promote district level and community-based training programs and initiatives in which the youth are encouraged to volunteer as part of building local capacities to enhance resilience and relationship, and mitigate the risks of violence associated with EDIs.
4. Ensure equal access to RRSS information and training for female youth and children, ensuring appropriate sensitivity and emphasizing gender and cultural elements that support RRSS, and reduce risks and vulnerabilities from EDI.

Resources mobilization

1. Human and material resources are critical to implement EWER, education and training, institutional and legislative frameworks, and development of resilience and relationship building capacities, including management of EDI risks reduction, violence mitigating actions, and other policies or regulations implemented by CSOs organizations.
2. Governments should take the lead through prioritized youth-focused funding allocations to mainstream and facilitate implementation of resilience and relationship building programs as part of the NSP and NYP, while also demonstrating the political will required to engage and transform conditions of EDI that influence youth participation in violence.



Community participation

Participation of communities in policy development and implementation is a traditional challenge in Uganda. NSP and NYP, and other formal and informal interventions to redress EDI and build resilience and relationships converge at the community level to impact on the youth. Community participation therefore opens opportunities to build youth-based local capacities, form local youth networks, volunteer groups, mobilize resources, and boosts roles and responsibilities of the youth in countering EDI, building and experiencing RRSS.

Key Messages

Uganda continues to be the leading country with the youngest population in the world, yet enduring experiences of EDI undermine their life chances to develop meaningful livelihoods.

The risk of youth participation in violence increases with increasing manifestations of physical, political, social and economic vulnerabilities and there is failure to systematically integrate youth-based approaches in development and governance.

Resilient youth are characterised by strong relationships and find violence less preferable to solve problems because of the cost it imposes on their advancement. Related policies should be youth-centered to promote and cultivate controllability, optimism, conflict resolution, problem-solving, decision-making and self-regulation competences and skills to help reduce participation in violence.