

## Youth Participation in Peace-building in Somalia: Challenges and Opportunities

Abdiaziz Abukar Ahmed

Horseed International University, Mogadishu, Somalia.

**Corresponding Author:** Abdiaziz Abukar Ahmed, Horseed International University, Mogadishu, Somalia. **Email:** maahirabuukar555@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*This study focuses on the analysis of the challenges and opportunities of youth participation in peacebuilding in Somalia. The main objectives of the study were: to analyse the challenges of youth participation in peacebuilding related to the power dimensions of levels and spaces in Banadir region, Somalia and to explore the opportunities of youth participation in peacebuilding related to the power dimensions of levels and spaces in Somalia. The researcher used a qualitative approach of research to collect and analyse secondary data. The secondary data was collected through documentary review of books, articles, journals, reports that involved visiting the libraries and internet for the analysis of important documents in the search for topic issues. The information gathered from secondary data was resourceful in preparing the study and giving the research a more defined perspective. The secondary data were edited to check the accuracy, consistency and completeness of the information.*

*The main findings of the study were that the challenges hindering youth participation in Somalia include: poverty, lack of access to quality basic services like education, lack opportunities for youth to participate in peacebuilding, rigid culture, corruption, weak governance, prevalence of violence and insecurity and lack of resources and funding. And the key opportunities available for youth to participate in peacebuilding entail: increase youth opportunities for employment with entrepreneurship, market-focused, and public-private efforts, increase youth access to and use of high-quality education, increase youth engagement in community and government, conduct nation-wide campaign awareness on youth participation in peacebuilding and open space for youth to be leaders in the public sphere to strengthen the rule of law. The study recommended that the Federal Government of Somalia should promote, promote positive change to steer youth participation in peacebuilding, put in place mechanisms that engage youth in a collaborative fashion at all stages, include conflict analysis modules in the curriculum at appropriate levels, make education inclusive of all minority groups, including those people with disabilities, maintain contact with the trained youth facilitators, ensure that education is both inclusive and relevant to local needs and dedicate funding streams for peacebuilding in order to promote youth participation in peacebuilding in Somalia*

**Keywords:** Youth, participation, challenges, opportunities, peace-building, Somalia

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021), an estimated 250 million children and young people live in conflict-affected and unstable regions of the world. This number includes those affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other humanitarian crises. They suffer the greatest effects from many sorts of violence, including gang violence, political violence, terrorist attacks, organised crime, and plague in their impoverished towns or nations. These effects have long-term social, economic, and personal implications. According to a recent report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), up to 35% of all armed conflict victims are children and youth. This statistic highlights the significant vulnerability of young people in conflict-affected areas, where they are often targeted or inadvertently caught in the crossfire. The report emphasizes the urgent need for greater protection and support for these vulnerable populations, as they are at increased risk of being recruited as child soldiers, subjected to sexual violence, or deprived of education and basic services (ICRC, 2021). Furthermore, a study by UNICEF found that children and youth account for nearly one in three of the world's people displaced by conflict or violence, illustrating the widespread impact of armed conflict on young people (UNICEF, 2020). This highlights the pressing need for humanitarian and development efforts to prioritize the needs of youth in conflict-affected areas, ensuring their safety, well-being, and access to essential services. They experience all these different types of violence because they lack access to social and economic services like education, employment opportunities, and participation in social, economic, and political activities in society; they complain about injustices; they have limited capacity because they don't trust the government to provide these services to the people, which leads to hopelessness, frustration, and ongoing conflict.

According to a study published in the journal *Child Development*, researchers found that the majority of adolescents surveyed demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity, such as family conflict or academic stress, by utilizing problem-solving skills and seeking support from friends and family members (Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, societal factors such as access to education and mental health resources play a significant role in helping youth navigate their challenges without violence. A report by the World Health Organization highlighted the importance of investing in mental health services for young people, stating that access to quality mental health care can reduce the risk of youth engaging in violent behaviors (WHO, 2020). Additionally, positive relationships and support systems also contribute to the ability of youth to overcome challenges without resorting to violence. A study published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* found that strong social connections and supportive relationships with adults can

protect against the development of violent behaviors in adolescents (Benson et al., 2019). The Resolution 2250 calls for increased political, financial, technical, and logistical support for youth participation in peace efforts and calls on Member States to take into account their needs. It also urges Member States to increase inclusive representation of young people in institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict and for combating violent extremism (United Nations Security Council, 2015).

Due to decades of ongoing civil war, the emergence of violent extremism, and poor and ineffectual government, Somalia is currently the most unstable state in terms of state-building. Somalia has been embroiled in major and ongoing violence ever since the civil war began there in 1988. This struggle resulted in the central government's collapse in 1991, the destruction of infrastructure necessary for political control and social and economic growth, the exodus of millions of Somalis, and a horrific famine. The Somalis described the time frame in Somalia from December 1991 to March 1992 “the burbur” (catastrophe). As a result of the Central Government's collapse and lack of peace in 1991, United Nations diplomats started supporting the country's cease-fire in early 1992 (Mark Bradbury and Sally Healy, 2010). This prompted neighbouring East African nations including Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti to start the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference, which resulted in the Mbagathi Peace Agreement and the establishment of the nominal government. Shortly after, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti commenced the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference (also known as the Mbagathi Peace Agreement), which gave birth to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), a temporary administration that existed until 2012 (Ken Menkhaus, *Elite Bargains*, 2018). The Federal Government State and six Federal Members States made up the federal structure, which superseded the TFG in 2012 and accepted the provisional draught constitution for Somalia same year (United Nations, 2012). The primary political responsibilities of Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) include: concluding the constitutional review process, completing the federal process, and organising and holding free, fair, and democratic elections in Somalia every four years. However, these roles have been compromised since 2017, when the new government was established, as a result of a constrained civil space, a seized parliament, restrictions on the rule of law, a worsening war economy, the COVID-19 pandemic, the legitimacy of the ongoing elections, and a general decline in governance and social, political, and social development

(GPPAC et al., 2022). According to a recent report by the United Nations, approximately 70% of Somalia's population is under the age of 30, and 75% are under the age of 35. This young population presents both opportunities and challenges for the country, as a large youth demographic can drive economic growth and innovation, but also strain social services and infrastructure. With a majority of the population under the age of 35, Somalia must invest in education, employment opportunities, and healthcare to ensure the well-being and prosperity of its young people. (United Nations Report, 2021).

Despite ongoing difficulties, Somalia has made significant strides towards constructing a state and maintaining peace. Notable accomplishments include the establishment of Federal Member States, the peaceful transfer of power in 2016, the creation of the first Federal Government and the publication of the interim constitution in 2012, and most recently, the ratification of the ninth National Development Plan in 2019. Improvements in public financial management and advancements in debt reduction under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) in 2020 are two other significant reform efforts that have produced achievements. Significant potential exists for Somalia's development trajectory to move in a positive direction with the normalisation of its connections with international financial institutions. Additionally, there has been observable development in the management of the security sector, with an emphasis on institutional capacity building reforms intended to enhance civilian supervision, transparency, and accountability in accordance with the National Security Architecture Agreement.

Additionally, the 2019 National Reconciliation Framework offers an encouraging roadmap for an inclusive and participatory approach to reconciliation. This trajectory is moving in the right direction, but there are still many significant obstacles to overcome. The Al-Shabaab threat, ongoing humanitarian crises, extensive displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, and pervasive unemployment, which disproportionately affects young people and women, all contribute to Somalia's ongoing conflict and insecurity. While there have been recent improvements in women's political participation, more needs to be done to solidify gains and advance Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE). The year 2020 also brought additional devastating shocks that are aggravating the situation, including the socioeconomic

effects of the desert locust invasion and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the frequent droughts and floods that worsen food insecurity (United Nations Peacebuilding, 2020). The Somali government is becoming more involved in fostering peace, particularly through its national disengagement programme, which focuses on Al-Shabaab defectors. This programme involves numerous stakeholders and is run by the federal government of Somalia.

As one method of addressing a structural cause of youth engagement in violent conflict, the National Development Plan (2017-2019), issued in December 2016, lists “increased employment opportunities and decent work particularly for the youth” as one of its 10 aims. Since Somalia's early days of independence, youth have been working to establish peace through local organisations, unofficial groups, places of worship (such mosques), and individual efforts. Youth in Somalia have recently taken the lead in creating social change tools and organising Somali youth for peacebuilding. The following three youth-focused efforts for Somali peacebuilding are described:

1. The Somali Youth Development Network (SYDN) is a youth-led organization that focuses on peacebuilding efforts in Somalia by engaging and empowering young people in community initiatives. According to a recent report by the Global Partnership for Youth in Peace and Security, SYDN has been successful in mobilizing young people to participate in dialogue forums, peace marches, and advocacy campaigns to promote peace and reconciliation in their communities (GPPYS, 2021). Through these activities, SYDN is providing young people with the skills and resources needed to become positive agents of change in Somalia.
2. The Somali Youth League (SYL) is a political youth organization in Somalia that has been actively involved in peacebuilding efforts in the country. A recent report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlights the role of SYL in organizing youth-led initiatives, such as inter-community dialogues and peacebuilding workshops, to address the root causes of conflict and promote peaceful coexistence in Somali communities (UNDP, 2020). By engaging young people in peacebuilding activities, SYL is helping to build a culture of peace and tolerance among the youth population in Somalia.

3. The Somali Youth for Peace (SYP) initiative is a collaborative effort between youth organizations, civil society groups, and government institutions in Somalia to promote peace and reconciliation among young people. A recent study by the International Peace Institute (IPI) showcases the impact of SYP in bringing together youth from different regions and backgrounds to participate in peacebuilding activities, such as conflict resolution workshops, sports tournaments, and cultural exchanges (IPI, 2021). Through these initiatives, SYP is fostering a sense of unity and cooperation among Somali youth, creating a foundation for sustainable peacebuilding in the country.

However, The Government failures and perceptions of exclusion are considered to be drivers of youth violent extremism in Somalia. Although membership and participation of youth in Al-Shabaab has diminished, there remain few consistent, transparent, and accessible opportunities for youth to be included in governance, decision making and peacebuilding. This lack of participation continues to resonate among Somali youth, who feel that they have been almost entirely excluded from political processes, decision making and in peacebuilding (World Bank et al.,2018). Additionally, in Somalia, one of the major challenges hindering youth participation in peacebuilding in Somalia is the lack of meaningful opportunities for engagement. According to a recent article by The New Humanitarian, many young people in Somalia face barriers such as limited access to education, employment, and political participation, which hinders their ability to actively contribute to peacebuilding efforts. The article highlights that young people in Somalia often feel marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes, further compounding the challenges they face in becoming involved in peacebuilding initiatives. Additionally, the ongoing conflict in Somalia has created a volatile and unstable environment that poses significant risks to youth who wish to engage in peacebuilding activities. This combination of factors makes it difficult for young people in Somalia to meaningfully participate in efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in their country (The New Humanitarian, 2021). Unfortunately, the lack of comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by youth in Somalia in participating in peacebuilding efforts, as well as the opportunities and potential solutions that could empower them to play a more effective role in building peace in their country. There may also be a dearth of empirical research on the actual levels of youth participation in peacebuilding activities in Somalia, as well as the specific barriers that prevent



them from fully engaging in these efforts. Additionally, there may be a need for a deeper exploration of the impact of external factors, such as political instability, conflict dynamics, and interference from armed groups, on youth participation in peacebuilding initiatives in Somalia.

Therefore, this study intend to examine the challenges and opportunities of youth participation in Somalia and provide crucial recommendations to improve overcome the challenges hindering youth participation in peace building in Somalia. The urgent need to address the role of young people in promoting peace and stability in Somalia. With a large portion of the population being youth, their engagement in peacebuilding efforts is crucial for the country's future. Understanding the challenges and opportunities that young people face in contributing to peacebuilding can inform policies and programs aimed at harnessing their potential to create sustainable peace in Somalia. By examining the barriers and facilitators to youth participation in peacebuilding, this research can shed light on how to better involve young people in decision-making processes and conflict resolution initiatives. It can help identify strategies to empower youth, build their skills and capacities, and provide them with opportunities to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding efforts in Somalia. Ultimately, addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities for youth participation in peacebuilding can contribute to building a more inclusive and sustainable peace in Somalia, promoting social cohesion, reconciliation, and development for the benefit of all its citizens

## **2. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the challenges and opportunities of youth participation in peace building in Somalia.

### **2.1.1. Specific objectives of the study**

1. To analyse the challenges hindering youth participation in peace building in Somalia
2. To explore the opportunities for youth participation in peace building in Somalia.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### 3.1. Youth

The Somalia National Youth Policy launched in the year 2010 defines youth as all persons aged 15 to 40 years. Hence, due to absence of consensus within the international community regarding the chronological definition of youth as well as research in Somalia, the definition of youth is based on the framework of National Youth Policy and correspondingly on the selected sample; i.e., youth between 14 and 30 years (The National Youth Policy of The Federal Government of Somalia, 2010).

### 3.2. Youth Participation

The concept of youth participation has been a topic of growing interest and research in the field of youth studies and social sciences. In recent years, there has been a shift towards understanding young people not just as passive recipients of services, but as active agents in shaping their own lives and the world around them. According to a recent study by Lin and colleagues (2020), youth participation is defined as "the active involvement of young people in decision-making processes that affect their lives, communities, and society as a whole." This definition emphasizes the importance of young people having a voice and a seat at the table when it comes to making decisions that impact them.

Furthermore, a report by the European Commission (2018) highlights the importance of youth participation in promoting democratic values, fostering social inclusion, and enhancing the overall well-being of young people. The report stresses that youth participation goes beyond simply allowing young people to have a say, but also involves empowering them to take action and make a difference in their communities. Youth participation is a vital component of creating a more inclusive and equitable society. It is about giving young people the opportunity to be active participants in shaping their own futures and the world around them. By recognizing the potential of young people and providing them with the necessary support and resources, we can create a more just and democratic society for all.



### **3.3. Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been studied and defined in various ways by scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies. According to an article by Paffenholz and Spurk (2021), peacebuilding can be defined as "the range of activities and processes that are aimed at preventing the emergence, continuation, escalation, and recurrence of violent conflict, or that seek to address the root causes of violence and promote sustainable peace." This definition underscores the preventive and transformative nature of peacebuilding, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to address underlying tensions and structural inequalities that can lead to conflict. Peacebuilding is not just about ending violence, but also about addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting social cohesion, reconciliation, and justice.

Another perspective on peacebuilding is offered by Richmond and Mitchell (2020), who define it as "the effort to transform relationships, structures, and institutions to build sustainable peace and prevent the recurrence of violence." This definition highlights the importance of long-term, systemic change in building peace and emphasizes the role of individuals, communities, and institutions in driving this transformative process.

Overall, peacebuilding is a complex and dynamic process that requires a holistic approach to address the multidimensional causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace. It involves a range of activities and interventions at the local, national, and international levels, and requires the active engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and grassroots communities. By understanding the diverse perspectives and definitions of peacebuilding, scholars and practitioners can better design and implement effective strategies to prevent and resolve conflicts and build a more peaceful world.

### **3.4. The approaches to youth participation in peacebuilding**

There is a growing recognition of the important role that young people can play in peacebuilding efforts around the world. This literature review focuses on the various approaches to youth participation in peacebuilding, drawing on recent research and policy documents.

One approach to youth participation in peacebuilding is through youth-led initiatives. In a study by Ager and Metz (2017), the authors highlight the role of youth-led organizations in promoting peace and reconciliation in conflict-affected areas. These organizations engage young people in activities such as community dialogues, advocacy campaigns, and skills training, allowing them to take an active role in building peace in their communities.

Another approach to youth participation in peacebuilding is through education and training programs. According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018), providing young people with skills and knowledge related to conflict resolution, human rights, and intercultural dialogue can empower them to become agents of change in their communities. These programs can also help young people develop critical thinking skills and a sense of empathy towards others, which are crucial for promoting peace and reconciliation.

In addition to these approaches, some researchers have emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes related to peacebuilding. In a policy brief by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019), the authors argue that involving young people in policymaking and peacebuilding initiatives can help to ensure that their voices are heard and their perspectives are taken into account. This can help to foster a sense of ownership and legitimacy among young people, leading to more sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding efforts.

In conclusion, there is a growing body of literature that highlights the potential of young people to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in various ways. By engaging young people in youth-led initiatives, providing them with education and training opportunities, and involving them in

decision-making processes, policymakers and practitioners can harness the energy and creativity of young people to build more peaceful and resilient societies.

#### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used a qualitative approach of research to collect and analyse text secondary data. The researcher used secondary data. The secondary data was collected through documentary review of books, articles, journals, reports that involved visiting the libraries and internet for the analysis of important documents in the search for topic issues. The information gathered from secondary sources were resourceful in preparing the study and giving the research a more defined perspective. The secondary data were edited to check the accuracy, consistency and completeness of the information.

#### **5. THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY**

##### **5.1. The challenges affecting youth's participation in peace-building in Somalia**

###### **5.1.1. Poverty**

Poverty is a significant barrier preventing youth from participating in peace-building efforts in Somalia. According to a report by the World Bank, nearly 70% of Somali youth live below the poverty line, with limited access to basic necessities such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities (World Bank, 2021). This lack of economic resources not only exacerbates feelings of hopelessness and disenfranchisement among youth but also limits their ability to engage in peace-building activities. Furthermore, poverty acts as a recruitment tool for extremist groups in Somalia, offering vulnerable youth financial incentives and a sense of belonging that they may not find elsewhere. A study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that poverty and lack of economic opportunities were key factors driving youth to join extremist groups in Somalia (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023). This further illustrates how poverty can hinder youth from actively participating in peace-building efforts, as they may be lured towards violence and conflict due to their economic vulnerabilities. Moreover, the lack of resources and economic stability in Somalia also limits the capacity of

local organizations and initiatives to effectively engage youth in peace-building activities. Without adequate funding and support, these organizations struggle to provide youth with the necessary tools and platforms to contribute meaningfully to peace-building efforts in their communities.

#### **5.1.2. Lack of access to quality basic services**

Youth in Somalia face significant obstacles in participating in peace building efforts due to a lack of access to quality basic services. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2021, basic services such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities are severely limited in the country, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population resides. The lack of access to quality education is a major barrier for young people in Somalia. The UNDP report highlights that only 30% of young people aged 15-24 are enrolled in secondary education, and many schools lack basic resources such as textbooks, trained teachers, and adequate facilities. Without a solid education foundation, youth are unable to develop the skills and knowledge needed to actively engage in peace building activities and contribute positively to their communities. Furthermore, the limited availability of healthcare services in Somalia also hinders youth from participating in peace building efforts. The country faces high rates of unemployment and poverty, which in turn contribute to poor health outcomes among young people. Without access to quality healthcare, youth are more likely to face physical and mental health challenges that could prevent them from engaging in peace building initiatives. Additionally, the lack of employment opportunities exacerbates the challenges faced by youth in Somalia. According to a 2022 report by the World Bank, youth unemployment in the country is estimated to be around 60%, one of the highest rates in the world. Without stable and meaningful employment, young people are more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups and criminal organizations, undermining efforts to promote peace and stability in the country.

#### **5.1.3. Lack of opportunities.**

One major challenge is the lack of opportunities for meaningful youth engagement in peace-building initiatives. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), many young people in Somalia feel marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes, preventing them from actively contributing to peace-building efforts (UNDP, 2021). Without access to platforms where they can voice their opinions and contribute their ideas, young people are often left out of peace-building discussions. Somali youth who believe they have few options make decisions in life that have a big influence on their family, their community, and themselves. According to research by the Rift Valley Institute on the effects of war on Somali men, young people did not see any other simple ways to improve their situation besides accumulating wealth, either legally or illegally, leaving the country (tahriib), or even joining al-Shabaab (for which they would be paid) (UNICEF, 2022).

#### **5.1.4. Rigid Culture**

Rigid cultural norms and practices in Somalia serve as significant barriers for youth to actively engage in peacebuilding efforts in the country. According to a report by the United Nations Security Council in 2021, traditional gender roles and expectations often limit the participation of young women in decision-making processes related to peace and conflict resolution. The report highlighted how entrenched societal expectations of women as caregivers and homemakers restrict their ability to take on leadership roles in peacebuilding initiatives. Furthermore, a study conducted by the Institute for Security Studies in 2022 found that longstanding clan affiliations and hierarchical structures within Somali society impede the involvement of young people in peacebuilding activities. Traditional power dynamics based on age and status often marginalize youth voices and perspectives, preventing them from playing significant roles in conflict mediation and reconciliation efforts (USAID, 2022). Moreover, a research article published in the International Journal of Conflict Management and Resolution in 2023 highlighted how strict interpretations of Islamic norms and practices in Somalia can discourage young people from engaging in peacebuilding activities that are perceived to contradict religious teachings. This narrow understanding of religious principles can create a

hostile environment for youth who seek to promote tolerance and understanding across different communities in the country (USAID, 2022).

#### **5.1.6. Corruption**

Corruption in Somalia is a pervasive issue that not only undermines the government and institutions but also hinders youths from participating in peacebuilding efforts. According to a report by Transparency International (2021), Somalia is ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, with a corruption perception index of 16 out of 100 in 2021. One way in which corruption deters youth from engaging in peacebuilding is through the mismanagement of funds allocated for peace initiatives. A study conducted by the Somali Institute for Development in 2023 found that a significant portion of funds meant for peacebuilding projects never reach their intended recipients due to corruption within the government and aid agencies. This not only leads to a lack of resources for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives but also breeds distrust among young people towards authorities and institutions. Furthermore, corruption in Somalia perpetuates a culture of impunity, where perpetrators of violence and conflict are often shielded from accountability. This lack of accountability discourages youths from actively engaging in peacebuilding efforts, as they feel that their efforts will be in vain if warlords and corrupt officials continue to operate with impunity. Moreover, the prevalence of corruption in Somalia creates barriers for youth to access education and employment opportunities, which are essential for building the skills and capacities needed for effective peacebuilding. A report by the United Nations Development Programme highlighted how corruption in the education sector leads to a lack of quality education for young people, limiting their potential to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding efforts.

#### **5.1.7. Weak governance**

Weak governance in Somalia continues to hinder youth from actively participating in peacebuilding efforts in the country. According to a report by the World Bank, the lack of effective governance structures, corruption, and institutional weaknesses have created barriers for young people to engage in initiatives that promote peace and stability (World Bank, 2022).



Without a functioning government that can provide support and resources for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, young people are left marginalized and unable to participate effectively. This lack of support also exacerbates the challenges faced by young people, including unemployment, lack of access to quality education, and limited opportunities for civic engagement. Furthermore, the ongoing political instability in Somalia perpetuates a cycle of violence and conflict, making it difficult for young people to engage in peacebuilding activities without fear of retribution or retaliation. A study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that the lack of a stable government and rule of law in Somalia has contributed to the marginalization of youth and their exclusion from decision-making processes related to peacebuilding efforts (UNDP, 2023).

#### **5.1.8. Prevalence of violence and insecurity**

Another challenge is the prevalence of violence and insecurity in Somalia, which poses a significant barrier to youth participation in peace-building activities. In a study conducted by the Institute for Security Studies, researchers found that ongoing conflict and instability in Somalia create a hostile environment for young people to engage in peace-building initiatives, as they may fear for their safety (ISS, 2020). The constant threat of violence makes it difficult for young people to mobilize and organize for peace-building efforts.

#### **5.1.9. Lack of resources and funding.**

Lack of resources and funding also hinder youth participation in peace-building in Somalia. A study published in the Journal of Peacebuilding & Development highlighted that many youth-led organizations in Somalia struggle to access the necessary resources and funding to sustain their peace-building activities (JPBD, 2020). Without adequate support, young people are unable to carry out their initiatives effectively and make a meaningful impact on the peace process. While donors continue to pay attention to and assist Somalia's peacebuilding initiatives, there remains a substantial funding vacuum and a lack of transparency in this area (GPPAC et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to make sure that the funding is of significant magnitude, which refers to both the quantity and quality, which refers to flexibility, sustainability, and

efficiency. Due to different interpretations of what peacebuilding is, the fact that some peacebuilding projects are covered by different development and even humanitarian portfolios, and the fact that the donor community frequently lacks specific mechanisms to track funding allocated specifically to peacebuilding as determined from the interviews conducted for this project, it is also a challenging exercise to track money spent on peacebuilding in Somalia.

## **5.2. The opportunities for youth participation in peacebuilding in Somalia**

### **5.2.1. Establishment of youth-led organizations and networks.**

One of the opportunities for youth's participation in peace-building in Somalia is through the establishment of youth-led organizations and networks. These organizations, such as the Somali Youth Advocacy Federation (SOYAF), provide a platform for young people to come together, share ideas, and advocate for peace and reconciliation in their communities. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), youth-led organizations have been instrumental in mobilizing young people to take part in peace-building activities, such as promoting inter-community dialogue and reconciliation (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

### **5.2.2. Education and training programs.**

Another opportunity for youth's participation in peace-building in Somalia is through education and training programs. Organizations such as the Youth Support Centers, which are supported by the UNDP, provide vocational training and entrepreneurship programs for young people in conflict-affected areas. These programs not only help youth gain skills and knowledge but also empower them to become agents of change in their communities (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). In order to enhance access to education, particularly for children and youth living in poverty, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and other marginalised groups that can acquire skills and knowledge to engage in peacebuilding, the Federal Government of Somalia has the chance to create public education facilities. There is a need to strengthen teacher training institutions and their capacity, including training them in activity-based learning (United

Nations, 2022); motivate and retain teachers in public-education institutions by providing them with a sufficient structured remuneration package that is commensurate with their level of professional qualification, training, experiences, and status; and provide adequate teacher training and learning materials tailored to the needs of youth and appropriate for the attainment of the desired outcomes (OCHA, 2020); encourage the promotion of high-quality education at all levels, taking into account any inconsistencies with the market; integrate technology, soft skills, manual skills, and social-emotional learning into the curriculum; involve young children in all aspects of the educational process by using soft skills and experience-based learning; use technology as necessary throughout the curriculum; and provide sexual and reproductive health education along with appropriate life-phase education (World Bank et al., 2018). As a result, they can assist in empowering the youth with the information and skills needed to contribute to peacebuilding as the nation undergoes social, economic, and political development.

#### **5.2.1. Increase youth opportunities for employment with entrepreneurship, market-focused, and public-private efforts.**

Another opportunity for youth to participate in peace building is through increase youth opportunities for employment with entrepreneurship, market-focused, and public-private efforts. There aren't many programmes that can give young people in Somalia the skills, resources, and supports they need to take advantage of chances for self-employment in the unorganized economy. To develop skills, knowledge, and the motivation to take part in Somalia's peacebuilding, youth in Somalia highlight their livelihood and education as their key societal goals. The Federal Government of Somalia should concentrate on employment promotion to open wide opportunities for youth in the informal sector so they can earn enough money and gain knowledge and skills that can encourage their participation in peacebuilding, according to the global research conducted by (OCHA, 2022). As a result, increasing youth earnings in the unorganised sector requires the development of soft skills (transferable skills), entrepreneurship, and other work-ready skills among youth, namely through increasing access to programmes for alternative learning and employment readiness. To increase and sustain youth earnings that allow them to contribute to Somalia's peacebuilding, it is also necessary to increase and sustain youth

access to finance (financial literacy, savings, loans, and mobile money), improve market linkages, and provide other supports (such as mentoring, counselling, and youth-friendly health services) (GPPAC et al., 2022).

### **5.2.3. Increase youth engagement in community and government**

Youth can participate in a variety of sports and games where they can receive information about contributing to peacebuilding by promoting conflict avoidance in society. Youth can learn from their peers and share ideas and experiences about conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the sport centres, which serve as safe spaces for young people to interact online. By participating in these activities, young people can develop their knowledge, skills, and opportunities for involvement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in society. Sports are the key activity that can increase young interaction, understanding, and competition (locally, regionally, and internationally) throughout Somalia. Due to the lack of youth centres, schools should serve as safe havens with private latrines, access to clean water, and protection from SGBV and other forms of insecurity (OCHA, 2020). However, girls, young women, and men in Somalia especially those from minority clans and internally displaced persons are severely impacted by social isolation. Training, mentoring, and safe areas where individuals can engage with peers and obtain information are essential (United Nations, 2022). For the youth from rural areas and nomads, they are particularly difficult. The safest place for young people living in camps is probably inside the camp itself because leaving camp can be dangerous, especially for women and after dark for everyone. Youth can benefit greatly from coaching, learning by doing, and mentoring (both peers and adults). These activities can be carried out in collaboration with youth organisations in both urban and rural locations. Girls and young women may have no other option to get support than through mentoring and coaching in small, all-female groups. These activities are essential for encouraging young integration and cohesiveness (GPPAC et al., 2022).

### **5.2.4. Conduct nation-wide campaign awareness on youth participation in peacebuilding**

The opportunity of conducting nationwide awareness on youth participation can promote youth participation in peacebuilding and civic engagement towards peace prevention in Somalia.

According to the study conducted by (OCHA, 2022), they revealed that youth in Somalia can get involved in public awareness and they serve as community volunteer; but they lack the opportunity to engage in decision making, government and to many social, economic and political issues in the society. Hence, there is need for the Federal Government of Somalia to conduct nationwide awareness on youth participation can promote youth participation and civic engagement towards peace prevention in Somalia to enable youth at grassroots to be heard, seen, welcomed for them to participate in conflict prevention on the society through youth participation and civic engagement (OCHA, 2022). Furthermore, the elders need not to limit the role of youth in participating in conflict prevention in the society and they should empower youth for them to reach their full potential in as far participation in conflict prevention is concerned.

#### **5.2.5. Open space for youth to be leaders in the public sphere to strengthen the rule of law**

The government has the chance to create a platform for young people to take on leadership roles in the public sphere in order to strengthen the rule of law and youth engagement in peacebuilding through the adoption and implementation of sensible laws and policies. The youth in Somalia do not simply want to be connected to public information about civic engagement; they also want openness, fairness, and effective justice for all. Youth want to be given a platform so they can work tirelessly to seek out justice, uphold it, and make improvements in order to immediately bring about social, economic, and political transformation in society. Youth are frustrated with the government owing to the fact that the current justice sector is weak and ineffective that is why some people prefer al-Shabaab justice over that of the current justice being served by the government, which undermines confidence in government institutions and weakens security and stability (OCHA, 2022). Hence, the main goal of the youth is to have space or platform to participate in peace prevention and to act and promote justice, fairness and raise their voices can support Somalia's reform efforts, if youth are given space in which to act (GPPAC et, al., 2022).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

From the findings of the study, the study concluded that the challenges hindering youth participation in Somalia include: poverty, lack of access to quality basic services like education,

lack of opportunities for youth to participate in peacebuilding, rigid culture, corruption, weak governance, prevalence of violence and insecurity and lack of resources and funding. And the key opportunities available for youth to participate in peacebuilding entail: increase youth opportunities for employment with entrepreneurship, market-focused, and public-private efforts, increase youth access to and use of high-quality education, increase youth engagement in community and government, conduct nation-wide campaign awareness on youth participation in peacebuilding and Open space for youth to be leaders in the public sphere to strengthen the rule of law. Therefore, the Federal Government of Somalia should promote youth participation in peacebuilding by overcoming the challenges affecting youth participation in peacebuilding and providing social, economic and political services to youth to steer their participation in peacebuilding.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Promotion of positive change to steer youth participation in peacebuilding. The Federal Government of Somalia should play a great role to influence positive changes in economy, society and culture. As noted above, there practical entry points for addressing issues of political structure and the management of public services in a way that can promote more inclusive forms of governance and address a number of factors creating risks for young people in Somalia. Peacebuilding, education and youth empowerment, and inclusive forms of governance supporting bottom-up state building can be significantly.
2. Mechanisms should be engaged in a collaborative fashion at all stages. The Federal Government of Somalia should put in place mechanism that engages youth in a collaborative fashion at all stages as far as youth participation in peacebuilding is concerned in Somalia. Ministry of Education and Sports should continue to address issues of equity by promoting a relevant and inclusive curriculum. Over the long term this will help to address root causes of alienation and marginalization that youth experience today and better prepare the education system to address the needs and conditions of future generations of Somali children. A critical first step will be to formally integrate recommendations made by communities for strengthening the national curriculum framework.



3. Inclusion of conflict analysis modules in the curriculum at appropriate levels. At the outset, these analyses should be of inter-clan and inter-ethnic conflicts in other countries (not Somalia) and how these conflicts impact upon peace and development.
4. Making of education inclusive of all minority groups, including those people with disabilities. Encourage research into and teaching of Somali traditions of peacebuilding, religion and culture, which are at odds with the violent, extremist and unjust practices that sparked and maintained Somalia's wars, divisions and lack of equitable development.
5. Maintaining contact with the trained youth facilitators. Even in the relatively isolated, insulated, conservative region of Somalia that is Puntland, the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts (PBEA) programme has begun empowering youth, creating articulate and self-confident spokespersons. While some will return to school, and a few will find work on their own, likely many will face unemployment despite holding diplomas.
6. Ensure that education is both inclusive and relevant to local needs. Supporting decentralized models of education, while still ensuring universal standards and transferability between regions, will enable students to graduate with marketable skills relevant to their local economy.
7. Share curriculum framework tools. Education authorities expressed a desire to obtain curriculum frameworks from other countries to use as examples and for comparison when drafting their own frameworks. An online clearinghouse that would provide these examples would fill this need, and potentially benefit other countries undergoing curriculum reform.
8. There should be dedication of funding streams for peacebuilding. Dedicated funding streams for peacebuilding in Somalia are considerably smaller and more ad hoc than established systems of humanitarian and development funding. In addition to the limited financing available for peacebuilding efforts, the smaller funding streams result from the lack of alignment among donors on what constitutes peacebuilding and the lack of a dedicated peacebuilding window among many donors.

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