



Permanent Mission of Finland  
to the United Nations



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## **Investing in Youth-Led Organizations to Advance the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: A Data-Driven Approach**

Draft Concept Note for Side Event at ECOSOC Youth Forum 2019

*9 April 2019, 3:00 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.  
Conference Room E*

### **Agenda**

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| 3:00 p.m. | Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Representative from the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (tbc)</li><li>- Representative from the Government of Finland (tbc)</li></ul>  |
| 3:20 p.m. | Presentations by Youth-Led Organizations and the Youth Solidarity Fund independent evaluator <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ms. Abiodun Rufus Unegbu, Executive Director of the Leadership Initiative for Youth Empowerment (Nigeria)</li><li>- Mr. Youness Ben-Abbou, International Project Coordinator of Chantiers Sociaux Marocains (Morocco)</li><li>- Mr. Michael McGill, author of the independent evaluation report for the Youth Solidarity Fund</li></ul>  |
| 3:35 p.m. | Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Moderator: Ms. Cecile Mazzacurati, Head of Secretariat for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, United Nations Population Fund/Peacebuilding Support Office</li><li>- Mr. Solvi Karlsson, Program Manager – Children and Youth, Search for Common Ground</li><li>- Ms. Abiodun Rufus Unegbu, Executive Director of the Leadership Initiative for Youth Empowerment</li><li>- Mr. Youness Ben-Abbou, International Project Coordinator of Chantiers Sociaux Marocains</li><li>- Mr. Michael McGill, author of the independent evaluation report for the Youth Solidarity Fund</li></ul> |
| 4:10 p.m. | Q&A   |
| 4:30 p.m. | Closing   |

## **Background**

Youth-led civil society organizations provide a unique contribution towards preventing conflict and consolidating peace. These organizations have a deep understanding of local conditions and meaningful community relationships, allowing them to work with populations that may be difficult for others to access. Moreover, young people implement innovative solutions to challenges and are the most able to mobilize their peers.

The Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, mandated by Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) and recognized in Security Council Resolution 2419 (2018), recommended that an investment be made in young people, such that they are viewed as equal and essential partners for peace. This included the provision of flexible funding designed with the specific needs of youth-led organizations in mind, and that any funding support include capacity-building to increase their financial sustainability and the impact of their work. The Progress Study made use of data from the report on Mapping a Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth-Driven Peacebuilding (2017), produced by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground. The report developed a broad overview of youth-led organizations working in peace and security, including their activities, achievements, strengths and needs.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) has supported youth-led organizations that foster peaceful and inclusive societies since 2008 through the Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF). Seed funding and technical support are given to projects, led by and focused on young people, that demonstrate innovative and effective approaches to intercultural or interfaith dialogue. Recent editions have been supported by the Government of Finland. An independent evaluation report was produced in 2018, of ten youth-led organizations supported by YSF in 2016 and 2017, which includes lessons for similar youth-focused donor programmes.

## **Objective**

With participation of Member States, UN entities, technical experts as well as young people, the event will focus on the data-driven evidence for investing in youth-led organizations working in the field of peace and security. It will also be a broader call to reflect on the need for a results-based approach, and for entities to convene around monitoring and evaluation for youth engagement.

## ***Guiding questions for presentations and discussion***

1. How are youth and youth-led organizations engaging in the peace and security sector?
2. From the evidence collected, what are the specific needs of youth-led peacebuilding organizations? What are some lessons learned from the data collected?
3. How can donor programmes better support young people and youth-led organizations?
4. What are the challenges in collecting data and evidence to strengthen youth-led peacebuilding organizations?
5. How can different stakeholders work more closely together in order to collect further data on this topic? Can lessons learned in different sectors (e.g. women, peace and security) be used as best practice for youth-led peacebuilding?

## Biographies of Panelists



**Abiodun Rufus Unegbu** is a youth activist with over 15 years of experience in programmes for youth development. She is the Executive Director and co-founder of the civil society organization, Leadership Initiative for Youth Empowerment. She began working on peacebuilding issues in 2012 after the outbreak of religious violence in northern Nigeria. In 2016, with financial support from UNAOC's Youth Solidarity Fund, Abiodun implemented a project training young Muslims and Christians to serve as intercultural ambassadors, and complete internships in faith-based organizations

as well as organizing community activities to promote understanding and tolerance. The project reached 18,000 community members and created partnerships between 30 local organizations. Abiodun is a 2018 U.S. Embassy Nigeria Carrington Youth Fellow and a 2017 John Paul Usman Civic Leadership Award Recipient.

**Youness Ben-Abbou** is a filmmaker, socio-cultural youth worker and an international project coordinator at Chantiers Sociaux Marocains. The civil society organization received UNAOC's Youth Solidarity Fund in 2017, to implement a project that created a space for artistic expression and dialogue between Moroccans and migrant communities in five small cities in Morocco, thus breaking stereotypes and reducing xenophobic incidents. The project directly impacted 549 individuals, of which 417 were youth. Youness was a co-founder of the 20<sup>th</sup> February movement for social justice and human rights in Morocco. He is the founder of the Africa Unite collective which focuses on migrant rights and tackling racism. Currently, Youness is involved in creating a social art network and developing his filmmaking practice in Manchester.



**Sölvi Karlsson** is an expert on youth participation in peacebuilding and program manager at Search for Common Ground, the world's largest dedicated peacebuilding organization. The focus of his work is ensuring global policy frameworks on youth, peace and security lead to meaningful change for young people locally, nationally and internationally. Prior to joining Search for Common Ground, he co-led the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), the global umbrella organization for youth-led peacebuilding groups. Before that, he has been a youth activist, a youth worker and worked for a youth-

oriented funding agency. He has been intimately involved in many of the recent developments of the international youth, peace and security agenda, both before and after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015).

**Michael McGill** is an experienced scholar-practitioner passionate about linking, improving, and increasing support to child and youth peacebuilders and increasing young people's prosocial civic engagement and democratic participation, particularly in high-risk contexts. He served as a Global Lead Evaluator of a multi-country, multi-agency, multi-donor (3M) participatory evaluation of child and youth participation in peacebuilding ([www.sfcg.org/3m](http://www.sfcg.org/3m)). Data collection and analysis included 122 child, youth, and adult evaluators and 1,567 evaluation participants. The process included designing and facilitating evaluator training and analysis workshops, including children, and developing cross-sector partnerships in each country where the evaluation was conducted. Since 2000, Michael has been designing and implementing research in conflict-affected contexts, training youth researchers, and facilitating productive interagency and international partnerships.



**Cécile Mazzacurati** heads the joint United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) / Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) Secretariat on Youth, Peace and Security, originally established to support the development of the Security Council-mandated Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. Cécile is also the co-chair of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace & Security. Cécile has worked for over 15 years at the United Nations on youth and gender in peacebuilding and humanitarian settings. Earlier in her career, Cécile worked on women's rights, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS for different organizations including UNESCO and a Guatemalan human rights NGO. Cécile studied History at the

Ecole Normale Supérieure in France and holds a Masters degree in History from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.