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PROMOTING DECENT EMPLOYMENT FOR AFRICAN YOUTH AS A PEACEBUILDING STRATEGY

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by Valeria Izzi

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Table of Contents

Executive summary	IV
Introduction	1
1. Employment and violence - exploring the connection	3
1.1 Jobs and Peace - an analytical framework	3
1.2 Youth and the world of work in Africa	4
1.3 'New' forms of violence in Africa: a focus on violent extremism	9
1.4 Are unemployment and 'bad jobs' a cause of violent extremism in Africa?	12
1.5 Concluding remarks	13
2. Youth, peace and decent work: towards policy convergence?	14
2.1 Youth employment as a policy issue	14
2.2 Youth employment in the United Nations Peace and Security agenda	16
2.3 Youth employment in the prevention and countering of violent extremism	20
2.4 Conflict and peace in the Decent Work agenda	22
2.5 Concluding remarks	24
3. Using employment programmes for peace	25
3.1 Can programmes create employment?	25
3.2 Do employment programmes build peace?	28
3.3 Unpacking the notion of Employment for peacebuilding programmes	30
3.4 Use of Public Work Programmes for stability and social cohesion	32
3.5 'Do no harm': recognising the risk of programme capture	35
3.6 Who gets the good jobs? Dilemmas of targeting	35
3.7 Linking selection criteria to Theory of Change: the Public Health model	36
3.8 Concluding remarks	38
4. Where do we go from here? Considerations for research, policy and practice	39
4.1 What do we know?	39
4.1 Implications for future research	40
4.3 Implications for policy	42
4.4 Implication for programming	43
Bibliography	46
Annex 1. Reviewed UNPBF projects	54
Annex 2. Methodology	55

Executive summary

Youth employment programmes are a common tool in the international community's strategies for countries emerging from conflict or experiencing fragility and violence in different forms. Yet the evidence of their impact on peacebuilding is mixed at best.

Programmes have long been shaped by the notion of a causal link between youth unemployment and violence. **It is increasingly clear, however, that this relation is far more complex and context-specific. For most African youth, the main problem is not unemployment *per se*, but rather 'bad jobs' – jobs that are precarious, badly and irregularly paid, carried out under unsafe and exploitative conditions, mostly in the informal economy, offering little or nothing in terms of security and upwards mobility.** As a further complicating factor, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities are mediated by complex webs of personal ties or patronage networks.

In recent years, Africa has seen a sharp increase in violent extremism and terrorism. **The literature offers no conclusive answers as to the relevance of employment-related factors on radicalisation.** Violent extremism flourishes in deprived areas, where decent work opportunities are scarce; however, these macro-level conditions do not explain individuals' choice to participate (or not) in violence.

Until recently, issues related to youth employment were notably absent from policy discussions on peace and security – and the challenges of conflict and violence did not feature in policy discussions on employment promotion and quality of work. The emergence of violent extremism, and the gradual realisation that 'hard' security responses alone are inadequate to address this threat, played a key role in bringing these two policy strands together.

Today, employment creation for youth is a policy priority in global, regional and national policies. **While initially large cohorts of unemployed youth were mostly seen as a security threat, more recently policy narratives on youth have gained both nuance and optimism, alongside an increasing emphasis on acting 'with' youth rather than just 'for' youth.** This shift is shown by the United Nations Security Resolution on Youth, Peace, and Security (SCR 2250/2015) and the follow-up report *The Missing Peace*.

Employment for Peacebuilding programmes represent the logical consequence of this policy convergence. **The two objectives of these programmes (*employment* and *peacebuilding*) have long been assumed to be complementary and mutually reinforcing. However, recent experience has shown that conceptual tensions and practical trade-offs can emerge in the design, implementation and evaluation of these programmes.**

Experience also shows the **importance of distinguishing between *impact on programme participants* and *impact for society at large*.** Even if an intervention is successful in improving the situation of its participants, this may not necessarily translate into benefits for the whole of society, and non-participants may even suffer as a result.

Programmes do not happen in sterile lab conditions. **The selection of programme beneficiaries plays a crucial role in relation to the political economy of jobs, as it inevitably generates 'winners' and 'losers'. Who gets which jobs, and how, is just as important, from a peacebuilding perspective, than the overall quantity of jobs created.**

Key Recommendations

Recommendations for research

- Focus on **connecting the dots between 'employment literature' and 'violence literature'** through interdisciplinary research.
- **Invest in evidence synthesis** that can facilitate research uptake and use for policymaking and programming.
- **Engage with the 'programme ecosystem'**, examining how policy principles play out in the context of programmes, once translated into activities, indicators and targets.
- Take the long (and large) view, **going beyond the impact of programmes on participants and looking at their broader, longer-term impact on society at large.**

Recommendations for policy

- **Promote greater convergence between the Peace and Security policy agenda and the Decent Work policy agenda**, by tackling complex issues such as the role of informality and the political economy of employment generation.
- **Distinguish youth-specific issues** from broader socio-economic issues that affect youth.
- **Explore learning for other related areas of policy** (e.g. use of employment programmes to address illegal migration).

Recommendations for programming

- Recognise that peacebuilding is not a mere 'add-on' to traditional employment programmes: **Employment for Peacebuilding are a qualitatively different type of programmes and are not necessarily suitable for all circumstances.**
- **Ground programmes in an in-depth context analysis**, including an understanding of violence dynamics, actors and opportunities for peace; an analysis of the world of work; the weight of work-related factors in the history of violence.
- **Explore innovative approaches to Monitoring and Evaluation**, that explicitly look at peacebuilding impact and the impact of interventions beyond participants.
- **Commission longitudinal evaluations**, including assessment of impact a few years after the end of the programme.

Youth employment programmes have become a tool of choice in the international community's strategies for countries emerging from conflict or experiencing fragility and violence in different forms. While these interventions vary greatly in terms of focus, scope, target and timeframe, they all move from the common premises that unemployed young people are more at risk of participating in violence, and that providing them with access to jobs can strengthen their resilience and the promote peace.

Even in 'normal' situations, it is unclear to what extent discrete programmatic interventions have been, or can be, successful in creating jobs.¹ In addition to facing specific context-related challenges in post-conflict and fragile settings, Employment for Peacebuilding programmes raise the bar of impact by combining an employment goal (giving jobs to young people) and a peacebuilding goal (reducing the risk of violence and creating more peaceful societies). These two objectives have long been assumed to be compatible and mutually reinforcing. Yet, after more than two decades of investments in job creation and employability support for young people in post-conflict and other fragile settings, evidence of employment impact is mixed, while evidence of peacebuilding impact is scant at best (Mercy Corps, 2015; Brück et al., 2016).

To a large extent, the problem stems from a simplified understanding of the linkages between employment status and participation in violence – what Chris Cramer calls “narcolepsy-inducing rhetorical commonplaces” (Cramer, 2015: 6). Programmes have long been implicitly or explicitly shaped by the idea of idle and frustrated (male) youth diverting their potentially productive energy towards destructive ends, and by the related policy imperative to ‘keep them busy’ and out of trouble (Izzi, 2013).

Today, we should know better. The notion of a straightforward causal link between youth unemployment and violence has come under close scrutiny, and an emerging body of research has found no such correlation (Blattman, 2010; Cramer, 2010; Enria, 2018; Holmes et al., 2013; Idris, 2016; Walton, 2010). The conventional assumption of youth unemployment as a security threat is thus “no longer a valid starting point from which to justify youth employment programmes” (Oosterom, 2018: 12).

The implication here is not that jobs are irrelevant for peace, or that peacebuilding interventions should not concern themselves with work-related issues. Rather, it is increasingly evident that a narrow focus on individual-level employment status is reductive, and that there are other factors at play. Several studies have suggested, in particular, that the quality of jobs may be a more relevant variable compared to the mere employed/unemployed dichotomy (Barsoum, 2016; Mallet et al, 2016; Mallet et al., 2017).

This paper sets out to explore this hypothesis in relation to Africa, with a view to establishing whether a stronger emphasis on decent work in ‘youth employment for peacebuilding’ programmes can be reasonably expected to bear more impactful results than it has been the case so far.

The paper sets out to address two main research questions:

1. How does the quality of work play out in the employment/peacebuilding connection?
2. Can a focus on decent work strengthen the impact of youth employment programmes on peacebuilding?

The paper builds on the findings of the 2016 study *Jobs Aid Peace - A Review of the theory and practice of the impact of employment programmes on peace in fragile and conflict-affected countries*, jointly commissioned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, and the World Bank. With a more targeted geographic and demographic focus, this paper deepens the analysis of the specific challenges of the labour market in Africa, as well as the changing manifestations of violence in the continent.

¹ In development terms, a project refers to a specific set of activities to deliver a well-defined result. A programme is generally larger, delivered through a longer timeframe, and can consist of several projects managed and delivered under an overarching programmatic umbrella. In the paper, we adhere to this terminology, while recognising that the distinction between ‘programme’ and ‘project’ is not always clear cut.

The paper focuses on three dimensions: research, policy, and programming, and their complex and dynamic interrelations. In short, the paper asks: if the use of youth employment for peacebuilding has, so far, failed to show significant evidence of impact, is this due to a knowledge deficit, or to the way in which policy responses have been devised, or else to the design and implementation of programmes - or perhaps a combination of the three? How can the feedback loop between these three dimensions be strengthened to lead to more impactful results?

The paper is structured along three main sections, focusing respectively on a review of literature, policy, and programmes. Section 1 looks at the way in which the problems of unemployment, low work quality, and youth involvement in violence are understood and conceptualised in academic and grey literature, with a view to highlighting 'what we know', and where the knowledge gaps lie. Section 2 looks at the policy discourses around youth, employment and security, at the global and regional level, enquiring whether there is a convergence around key policy principles across different frameworks. Section 3 looks at programming, and in particular explores the concept and emerging experience of Employment for Peacebuilding Programmes. Finally, Section 4 draws some conclusions and identified implications for research, policy, and programming.

The paper is based on a desk review of academic and grey literature (Section 1), policy documents (Section 2) and programme documents (Section 3). Details on methodology and criteria for inclusions can be found in Annex 2.

1. Employment and violence - exploring the connection

This section starts with a review of the analytical frame of the 2016 report (section 1.1). It then places this analysis in the context of changing work dynamics in Africa. It focuses, in particular the evolving nature of informal employment, and the ways in which informality 'as we know it' is being impacted by new global trends (e.g. gig economy), and the blurring of borders between the formal and the informal sectors (section 1.2). Section 1.3 explores emerging forms of violence in Africa, looking in particular at terrorist violence inspired by extremist interpretation of Islam, and interrogates the relevance of employment-related explanations for these violent dynamics.

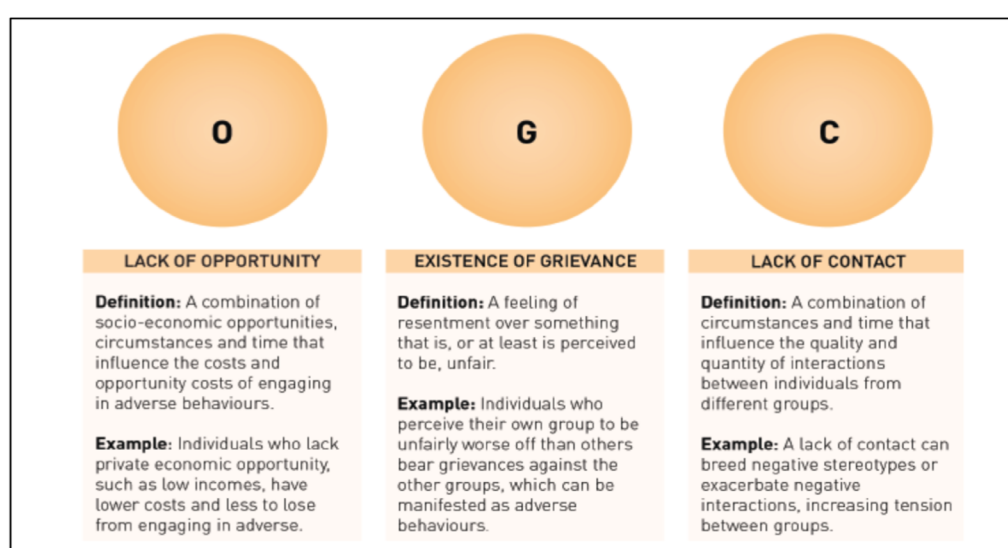
1.1 Jobs and Peace - an analytical framework

The 2016 report *Jobs Aid Peace* was the first systematic large-scale quantitative study of the linkages between UN employment programmes and peacebuilding. Combining an extensive literature review with a meta-analysis of over 400 programmes implemented by the four agencies in post-conflict and other fragile settings² during the course of a decade (2005-2015), the report confirms that there are major gaps in available evidence on the relationship between employment programmes and their peacebuilding impact (Brück et al., 2016).³

The study identifies three key transfer mechanisms in the way in which the relation between employment status and violence has been conceptualised, namely:

1. *Opportunity* - i.e. the idea that employment plays a crucial role in defining opportunity-cost consideration on whether or not to participate in violence;
2. *Grievance* - i.e. the idea that unemployment creates resentment (towards the government and/or other groups in society), which, in turn, can fuel violence;
3. *Contact* - i.e. the idea that the workplace can create a safe space where different groups can learn to communicate and trust each other.

Figure 1 - Transfer mechanisms (source: Brück et al., 2016: 17).



2 The study used a list of 46 countries defined as being conflict-affected (in terms of number of battle deaths since 2005) and/or fragile (by appearing in the World Bank's list of fragile scenarios at least once since 2005).

3 The report provided the evidence base for the interagency statement *Employment Programmes and Peace*, presented at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly. The study was also referenced in the *Progress Report The Missing Peace* (2018), submitted in response to UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security.

For each of these transfer mechanisms, the issue of quality of work is crucial. Simply put, while most jobs can generally be expected to provide some sort of income, not all jobs provide a sense of opportunity that goes beyond ensuring day-to-day survival, and not all jobs can appease personal and collective grievances: in fact, jobs occurring under insecure, precarious or exploitative conditions are likely to reinforce these grievances. Not all jobs enable inter-group contacts – and even when they do, the conditions under which these contacts happen can potentially exacerbate, rather than mitigate, negative stereotypes and tensions.

1.2 Youth and the world of work in Africa

Youth unemployment, exacerbated by the 2007-2008 financial crisis, has garnered considerable attention among policy actors, both as a problem in itself, and in view of its potential repercussions on peace and stability (Flynn et al., 2017; Oosterom, 2016). As the youngest region in the world, Africa has been at the centre of these concerns.⁴ Yet the notion of ‘youth unemployment’ fails to capture the true nature of labour market challenges in the continent. In fact, according to conventional labour market indicators, youth employment fares reasonably well, at least in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where a higher proportion of young people participates in the labour force than in any other region (Betcherman and Khan, 2015).

Data should be taken with more than a grain of salt, as the evidence base is uneven – strong for some countries, such as South Africa, but very thin for others, particularly Francophone countries. Despite this caveat, it can safely be affirmed that, because unemployment benefits and safety nets are non-existent or very limited at best, very few young people in most African countries can afford not to participate in the labour force at all (Betcherman and Khan, 2015; 2018). Thus, “[u]nemployment figures are highly misleading as low rates may be an indication of poverty rather than opportunity” (Gough et al. 2016: 351).

‘Unemployment’ in a Western sense is more relevant in African higher-income countries (such as South Africa and Botswana), as well as for the most educated youth (Betcherman and Khan, 2018; Fox et al., 2016; Irwin, 2018). For the rest of the population, the problem is mostly one of underemployment and ‘bad jobs’ – jobs that are precarious, badly and irregularly paid, carried out under unsafe and exploitative conditions, offering little or nothing in terms of security and upwards mobility.

Official data are equally misleading when it comes to the gender dimension of the labour market. In Africa, the difference between male and female labour force participation rates is the lowest in the world (Comblon et al., 2017; Irwin et al. 2018). However, most of the work women do is subsistence-based and confined to farming and household enterprises (Klugman, 2015). While Sub-Saharan Africa boasts the highest share of women entrepreneurs in the world, most African women face enormous constraints in growing their businesses beyond the nascent stages.⁵

1.2.1 The changing face of informality in Africa

Any meaningful discussion on work conditions in Africa needs to be framed within the context of prevalent informality. In most African countries, employment in the formal sector is a small share of all employment⁶ (and mostly concentrated in the public sector); it is overwhelmingly urban, and heavily gendered, with men much more likely than women to hold formal jobs (Sumberg et al. 2019).⁷ Africa is the only region in the world where self-employment is more common than formal employment (Klugman, 2015). With formal employment being the exception and informal work the norm, job insecurity (which is typically thought of as a temporary disruption) becomes a chronic condition for most young (and less young) Africans (Gough et al. 2016).

4 Countries in Africa are home to some of the world’s youngest populations, those ages 15 or below, including Niger (50 per cent); Angola, Chad, and Mali (48 per cent); and Uganda and Somalia (47 per cent). See 2019 World Population Data Sheet, <https://www.prb.org/worldpopdata/> (accessed January 12th, 2020).

5 Thirteen African countries do not have laws mandating non-discrimination in hiring practices based on gender and 23 do not have laws protecting employees from sexual harassment in the workplace (Klugman, 2015). Gough et al. (2016) discuss how women in Zambia are pressurised to providing sexual favour to obtain (and keep) employment. For a discussion of the barriers and opportunities facing young African women, see Themrise Khan’s contribution in this Evidence Synthesis Series (Khan, 2020).

6 In some African countries (e.g. Madagascar, Mali, Benin and Côte d’Ivoire) informal employment accounts for over 90 per cent of total employment (ILO, 2019: 13).

7 In Africa as a whole 89.7 per cent of employed women are in informal employment (ILO, 2019c: 13).

What is informality?

Informal employment is defined by the ILO as including all remunerative work (i.e. both self-employment and wage employment), that is not registered, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks, as well as non- remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise. Informal workers do not have secure employment contracts, worker's benefits, social protection or workers' representation.⁸

Informality is an elusive concept. Informal economies encompass a broad range of economic activities (from motorcycle taxis and street vendors to large-scale mining operations and informal manufacturing enterprises contributing to global supply chains) as well as the diverse nature of settings (from megacities to remote villages). Reflecting these difficulties is “the sheer number of adjectives that are regularly attached to the concept: hidden, parallel, clandestine, grey, underground, shadow, illicit, unregulated, subsistence, coping, non-monetised, alternative [...] and so on” (Schoof, 2015: 2). Recognising this diversity is important: “informal economy actors are in informal employment for different reasons and would need different policy measures” (ILO, 2019b: 3).

Moreover, the borders between the formal and informal economies are getting blurred. The very category of informality is coming under academic scrutiny, with scholars questioning whether the notion adequately captures the situation faced by most workers around the world. For one, many individuals have multiple jobs: even people with stable jobs in the formal sectors often moonlight in the informal sector to supplement their income.⁹ The distinction is thus best looked at in terms of a continuum, rather than a rigid dichotomy (Ferreira, 2016: 141).

Casualisation and precariousness are aspects of the youth employment challenge that are not sufficiently captured in the way in which ‘the problem is represented to be’¹⁰ in policy frameworks and programme documents. The predominant focus on unemployment conceals the pervasive problem of precarious work, which has long been the standard in the informal sector and is becoming the new norm in the formal private sector (Torvikey, 2018).¹¹ Whether they are active in the informal sector (the majority) or have a coveted job in the formal section (the minority) African youth face a deficit of ‘decent work’.

Informality is also changing. The global emergence of gig work platforms (such as Deliveroo and Uber) and microwork platforms (such as Amazon Turk) has further highlighted the challenges of upholding employment rights under non-traditional conditions (Briken and Taylor, 2018). As a recent Opinion piece in the NY Times puts it “[w]hat is clear is that the platform economy has further blurred the lines between who's employed versus underemployed, unemployed or out of the labor market” (Kim, 2020). Globalised value chains and labour markets rely on “the ‘value-adding symbiotic relationship’ between the informal and formal sectors”, as shown clearly by the phenomenon of informal employment in the formal sector (Schoof, 2015: 3), and by the fact that many workers engage in “a patchwork of income-generating activities” across the formal-informal divide (Hunt et al., 2019: 9).

8 ILO website: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/wages/minimum-wages/beneficiaries/WCMS_436492/lang--en/index.htm (accessed January 10th, 2020).

9 This is discussed, for example, by Gough et al. (2016) in relation to Zambia.

10 I credit Ghana Barsoum and her analysis of the youth labour market in Egypt for the application of Carol Bacchi's problem representation approach to the youth employment and peacebuilding analysis. See Barsoum (2015).

11 A useful distinction is offered by Theron (2010) between ‘informality from below’ (associated with self-employment in the informal sector) and ‘informality from above’ (referring to the involvement of labour contracts in the recruitment and management of labour on behalf of the formal private sector). Torvikey (2018) discusses how ‘informality from above’ is a strategy adopted by companies to cope with economic uncertainty and fluctuation in the business cycle. The author looks, in particular, at the case of Ghana, where casualisation of working conditions has become the new norm for both skilled and unskilled youth labour, in several sectors such as finance, mining, and telecommunications. Businesses use casualisation to avoid the stringent labour laws that protect permanent employees: thus, while employment regulation was originally designed to protect employees from exploitation, they ended up creating an incentive for firms to avoid awarding permanent or regular contracts. In similar terms, Houeland (2015) discusses casualisation of labour as an increasing trend in Nigeria's oil industry.

Gig economy and microwork

The **gig economy** refers to a labour market that is characterized by the prevalence of independent, temporary work that is conducted on a short-term or a task-by-task basis, and where payment is received upon the completion of these tasks (Mercy Corps, 2019: 10). Online gig work platforms are websites that facilitate contingent project-based work. The term is also used by some in a more extensive meaning, to indicate a wider set of insecure work arrangements (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019: 725).

Microwork entails dividing up a large job into many small manageable pieces of work and allocating them to a large number of workers using an Internet-based platform. Microwork is characterised by online forum participation, data input and image tagging, which are usually performed quickly and require no specialised skills. Usually, workers are paid small amounts of money for each task (Onkokame et al., 2018: 4).

In high-income countries, the gig economy is accused of reinforcing an erosion of workers' rights and social protection: "casualisation, zero hours contracts, the rapidly growing gig economy [...] are some of the concerns around which current debates turn. Many of these same developments are already seen in African labour markets, and the present trajectory would suggest they will only become more pervasive" (Sumberg, 2017). This narrative is challenged by platform companies in Africa, which argue that "they are trying to expand economic opportunities and improve on the poor labour conditions traditionally associated with informal and casual work." (Hunt et al. 2019: 11). While advocates of the gig economy focus on expanded choice, critics retort that this may be a 'conditioned choice': "workers typically perceive that platform work offers better options than they would have otherwise, though many would prefer the stability afforded by a more regular engagement" (Hunt et al., 2019: 9).

Globally and in Africa, exponential growth of the platform economy is foreseen in traditionally female-dominated sectors, such as cleaning and care work. The flexible nature of gig employment is often presented as an advantage in supporting women in balancing paid work with unpaid care work. However, it is easy to see how this can backfire, and end up adding more hours to an already stretched workday. Flexibility may end up being "a double-edged sword, especially where job control and earnings are low" (Hunt et al., 2019: 17). The gig economy can also reproduce the gendered divides that exist in traditional labour markets, in terms of constraints in accessing work, as well as lower pay.¹²

A crucial question is how these new global trends interplay with traditional forms of informality in Africa. Increases in access to the Internet have been saluted as potentially opening new opportunities for young Africans to compete internationally: it is suggested that Internet-based marketplaces could enable a kind of virtual migration, offering economic benefits akin to physical migration, without the latter's downsides. Several donors have expressed optimism regarding the potential of gig work to address youth unemployment in Africa, and have funded pilot initiatives in this sense (Onkokame et al., 2017).

There is so far little evidence on whether embracing online gig work as a national strategy can lead to long term positive economic impact on workers. Studies reveal the complex and sometimes problematic reality of the "new world of work" in Africa, with commonly observed challenges including oversupply,¹³ social isolation, and low security (Graham et al., 2017). What also emerges is the mirroring online of the patterns of inequality and labour exploitation that exist offline, potentially leading to "digital sweatshops" and a "race to the bottom" for salaries and working conditions (Onkokame et al., 2017).

¹² In Africa, women are, on average, 15 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone compared to men, and 41 per cent less likely to use the mobile internet. Even in African countries at the forefront of the gig economy, such as Kenya and South Africa, gender differences remain sizeable: 26 per cent of women use mobile data in Kenya compared with 43 per cent of men, while in South Africa, the figures are 54 per cent and 63 per cent respectively (Hunt et al. 2019).

¹³ A study by Mercy Corps on microwork in Kenya highlighted the feeling of disempowering that online workers felt as a result of the fierce competition they face from other workers in the Global South. The report notes that "[t]he large imbalance between the supply and demand of gig work and the high competition results in a race to the bottom" (Mercy Corps, 2019: 33).

To be sure, gig economy and microwork are still embryonic phenomena, involving a small percentage of workers globally,¹⁴ and a very tiny niche in Africa, concentrated in a handful of countries.¹⁵ Yet discussions on employment and peacebuilding would ignore these trends at their peril, as these new forms of work may well embody the shape of things to come, and highlight the challenge of upholding standards of decent work in rapidly changing circumstances. The gig economy can thus be understood as “a specific example of a wider, more general experience and process of precarity” (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019: 725).

1.2.2 Informality in conflict-affected, post-conflict and fragile settings

In a recent publication, the ILO notes that there is considerable overlapping between the portion of the world population engaged in informal economies, and those living in conflict and fragile settings – as well as severe work deficit associated with informality in conflict-affected situations:¹⁶

“Two billion people – more than 61 per cent of the world’s employed population – make their living in the informal economy and about 2 billion people currently live in fragile and conflict-affected situations. These “two billion people” could not be a coincidence. The informal economy thrives mostly in a context of high unemployment, underemployment, poverty, gender inequality and precarious work. The situation is aggravated in conflict-affected and fragile situations where a large part of the population has no alternative than operating in the informal economy for securing livelihoods” (ILO, 2019b).

Conflict and informality are both a cause and a consequence of each other, and can trigger a chronic vicious circle (ILO, 2019: 8). As conflict destroys people’s livelihoods, participation in the informal economy can serve as an important lifeline at the household level, and it can play a positive shock-absorbing and stabilising role at the macro level (Schoof, 2015: 4). Yet in such settings, the majority of activities in the informal economy tend to be small scale and only profitable enough to ensure subsistence. The borders between the ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ sectors are blurred, with the criminalised war economies (a ‘malignant form of economic informality’) casting their shadow well past the signing of peace agreements.¹⁷

A key implication is that conventional approaches to informal economies may not be suitable for fragile and post-conflict situations and may need to be recalibrated to fit these contexts. In particular, it is necessary to look beyond the purely economic dimension of informality, to “pay attention to the political and social undercurrents that sustain patterns of economic informality in fragile environments” and to “steer clear of a reductionist view that perceives the informal economy solely in terms of economic (dis)-incentives for compliance with formal rules and cost-benefit decisions of informal operators” (Schoof, 2015: 1, 6).

1.2.3 Navigating the political economy of employment

Controlling and distributing access to employment has long been recognised as a key feature of patrimonialism in Africa.¹⁸ While this has traditionally been studied mostly in relation to access to ‘good jobs’ in the formal sector, more recently there has been a renewed scholarly interest on informality as a site of critical analysis, globally and in Africa in particular (Banks et al., 2020). Drawing on the concept of ‘social navigation’,¹⁹ a number of recent studies focus on how young people are coping the context of their

14 According to the World Development Report 2019, “[i]t is difficult to estimate the size of the gig economy. [...] The best estimate is that less than 0.5 percent of the active labour force participates in the gig economy globally, with less than 0.3 percent in developing countries” (World Bank, 2019: 26). The report also notes that many gig workers also hold traditional jobs, using freelancing to supplement their income.

15 The degree of penetration of the platform economy in Africa varies extensively from country to country. South Africa has been the entry point into the continent for several leading international players such as Uber and Airbnb. Kenya is also at the forefront of developments in digitally mediated work: the country has been dubbed by the Economist as the “Silicon Savannah”, and Nairobi is rapidly emerging as a ‘freelance capital’ (Hunt et al. 2019: 20). In most other countries, the gig economy remains at a very nascent stage. Onkokame et al. (2017) examines the participation of African labourers on microwork platforms in seven African countries (Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa). The authors conclude that there is very limited uptake of online work- on average two per cent across the seven countries surveyed. (Onkokame et al., 2017).

16 The publication (ILO 2019b) aims to encourage further discussion by calling for more research and empirical evidence to support policy-making and project-level interventions so that what is effective or ineffective in the transition to formality for peace and resilience can be identified.

17 As the 2013 World Development Report (Jobs) notes, people work even during wars: however, jobs offer little pay and no security, and may involve illegal and dangerous activities (World Bank, 2013: 193).

18 See for example Beresford (2015) on patrimonial networks connected to the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa.

19 Henrick Vigh introduced the concept of social navigation in his analysis of youth in Guinea-Bissau, to depict the everyday process by which people in highly unstable environments need to continuously assess the situation and shift their actions accordingly (Vigh, 2006; Vigh 2009; quoted in Oosterom, 2019).

precarious livelihoods, and the way in which these objective conditions are subjectively reinterpreted, in an effort to re-assert agency.²⁰

The creative practice of drifting in and out of casual work, struggling to make ends meet - variedly termed 'hustling' (Munive, 2010; Thieme, 2012; Di Nunzio, 2012), 'straining' (Finn and Oldfield, 2015), 'ekeing out a living' (Honwana, 2012) - is often at the margins of the economy and legality.²¹ Emphasis on the experiential dimension of work insecurity and precariousness can help shed light on the factors that can draw young people towards violence or away from it.

Informal economies are not ungoverned spaces: they "manifest a considerable degree of governance, self-organisation and structure" (Schoof, 2015: 6). Depending on the context, this economy can be governed by informal rules that are rooted in identity-based and interest groups, kinship-based networks and complex webs of clientelistic relations or personal ties. State engagement is also complex, and "not [...] necessarily antagonistic in nature" (Schoof, 2015: 7) - rather, it can involve a variety of relations ranging from competition to accommodation, complementarity and even complicity (Schoof, 2015: 7). Politicians and public officials may use the informal economy as a resource - for example, by turning a blind eye on the informal economy in return for electoral support or material gain - and may have very little incentives to promote formalisation (Schoof 2015: 7; Joshi et al., 2014: 20-21).

A key limitation of current policy and programming approaches to youth employment creation in Africa is that they mostly ignore the social and political relationships in which young people are embedded and which shape their actual pathways to finding work (Flynn et al. 2017). It is imperative to better account how politics pervades local economies, and how political power brokers, and related networks of patronage, mediate access to jobs (Batmanglich and Enria, 2014; Flynn et al., 2017; Hansen 2010; Honwana, 2011). As Marjoke Oosterom notes:

"As young people are embedded in social and [...] political relationships, the ways in which they pursue opportunities for work will depend not only on their skills and demand for labour, but on their navigation of the political actors that shape the nature of the local labour market and economy" (Oosterom, 2016: 3).

The significant imbalance between supply and demand in most African formal labour markets provides much of 'the necessary oxygen' for patronage and political influence (Chari et al., 2017: 28-29). While patronage-based job access privileges some young people (providing a 'workaround' for the problem of insufficient job availability), it necessarily excludes others, creating frustration and resentment (Irwin et al. 2018).

Examples abound in the literature. Gough et al. (2016) discuss how "having good contacts" shape access to work in Zambia, restricting attempts for social mobility of lower-income youth.²² Similarly, a study conducted by the NGO International Alert in Uganda unveiled diffuse perceptions of unfairness in accessing resources and opportunities, with cases of patronage, cronyism or nepotism being extensively reported. Accessing employment seems to be dependent on what young informants, in a pun on the term 'know-how', call "technical know-who":

"Resources are given to people whose political ideology is similar to those who dispense the resources. For example, access to government programmes seems to exclude young people who are perceived as belonging to a different political affiliation. Politicians allegedly allocate more resources to areas where they have political advantage or links, but they allot very few resources to areas where they have little influence. This clientelism-based practice leads to skewed development and inequalities in income" (International Alert, 2014: 24).

20 Craig Jeffrey first drew attention to the improvisational and inventive methods of 'getting by' in the context of Uttar Pradesh, in India, analysing the practice of 'juga', a Hindi word that roughly translates into the capacity of fixing things by 'making do' with what is available. See Jeffrey (2010); Finn and Oldfield (2015).

21 For example, Gukurume (2018) and Pswarayi (2018) discuss how young people navigate precariousness in Zimbabwe, where the term 'kukiya kiya' denotes the multiple ways of 'making do' and 'getting by'. Young people regard 'kukiya kiya' as an alternative (though not ideal) form of employment, by which they can earn not only some money but also some form of social respect and avoid name-calling. In a similar vein, Di Nunzio (2012) describes survival strategies of young people in poor urban neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa as including a combination of street activities, which may involve some petty crime such as pickpocketing. Harris and Little (2019) interrogate how young people find hope in the context of informal settings in Lusaka.

22 See also Nordman and Pasquier-Doumer's (2015) on social networks in Burkina Faso; Chari et al. (2017) on Sierra Leone, Kenya and Nigeria.

Given the fact that access to formal 'good' employment is strongly politicised, self-employment is often the only option available to young people who don't have the 'right' contacts.²³ Yet being self-employed does not necessarily relieve from the need for connections. As a case in point, Gukurume (2018) discusses the high level of politicisation of the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector in the Zimbabwean capital of Harare, where the partisan allocation of resources such as market stalls has long been a part of the ruling party's political mobilisation strategy.²⁴ Zimbabwean youth "constantly calculate the potential implications of being associated with the particular 'side' along the fault lines that mark the political landscape" (Oosterom, 2019: 487).

Age and gender are "crucial determinants of entry into the associations that create personal networks of advantage" (Banks, 2016: 439), making it particularly hard for young women to access such networks:

"Patrimonialist networks in urban Nigeria, for example, marginalize women, young people and those from less advantaged backgrounds. In Guinea, too, exclusionist accumulation networks offer the only channels for social mobility among informal workers, with boundaries along the lines of gender, ethnicity and religion preventing outsiders from entry" (Banks, 2016: 439).

When the political context is characterised by (actual or latent) violence, navigation strategies have to adapt accordingly (Oosterom, 2016: 5-6). In post-conflict settings, networks of redistribution tend to be strongly intertwined with the legacy of the war economy (Cramer, 2006). In such contexts, patronage politics are even more likely to disproportionately affect youth, as networks of 'big men' have typically evolved out of conflict-time relationship between commander and junior ranks (Utas, 2012; Lindell and Utas, 2012). In her analysis of post-conflict Sierra Leone, Louisa Enria writes about the relation between "connectocracy" and employment, and the way in which "[e]xclusion from redistributive networks with powerful big people (*sababu*) determined young people's perceptions of themselves in relation to social hierarchies defined by socio-economic status" (Enria 2018: 113). The threat or use of violence is frequently used as "an effective instrument for denying people access to certain areas to start a business, or to exclude them from professional and economic networks" (Oosterom, 2016: 6).

1.3 'New' forms of violence in Africa: a focus on violent extremism

Most of the existing reflection on the linkage between employment and violence takes place in the context of civil conflict and fragility. Here, we attempt to broaden the picture to other forms of violence that have emerged in Africa in recent years, looking in particular at the case of extremism inspired by violent interpretations of Islam. The aim is to explore how employment-related issues emerge in the literature on radicalisation and violent extremism, as well as the extent to which employment-related interventions are part of preventive strategies and responses.

Africa has seen a sharp increase in Islamic violent extremism in recent years. This has happened both in places where Christian-Islamic tensions had long been openly or latently present (e.g. Kenya, Nigeria) as well in places where these tensions had been previously absent (e.g. Mozambique). The way in which radicalisation and violent extremism have been studied in Africa tend to focus on how local groups played into the global rivalry between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State,²⁵ and their relevance for the Global War on Terror, rather than what its local rationales and impact on the local population (Finn et al. 2016: 165). This Wester-centric approach has tended to overlook the huge variations in the forms and manifestations that Islamist violence²⁶ takes in Africa, and the way in which those interact with pre-existing forms of violence.²⁷

23 Nicola Banks quotes a young woman saying "You cannot have a job unless you are known to [employers] or have a relative in that company. Our poor education is a barrier too. There are no opportunities here except for making your own." (Banks, 2016: 433).

24 In a similar vein, Kate Meagher examines how in the context of northern Nigeria, the role of informal enterprise in limiting or exacerbating religious conflict is shaped by local specificities of informal organization, and particular economic activities tend to be dominated by specific religious or ethnic groups (Meagher, 2013).

25 Zenn (2020) documents the support given to the Nigerian group Boko Haram by Al-Qaeda in 2013-2015 and Boko Haram's subsequent shift of loyalty to ISIS – resulting, the facto, in Al-Qaeda 'helping' the consolidation of ISIS in Nigeria.

26 The term Islamist refers to groups which "proactively promote or enforce Islamic ideologies, laws, policies or customs in the state and/or society. Islamism encompasses a wide range of political, social and religious activity across diverse disciplines and traditions within Islam. Violent Islamist groups are distinguished from other Islamist groups by the use of violence in pursuit of their goals" (Dowd, 2015: 507).

27 In West Africa, for example, past 'conventional' rebel movements – such as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

The history and legacy of violence have been capitalised upon by Islamist militants in different ways (Dowd, 2015: 520). Purely religious explanations shed little light on why violent Islamist activity is higher in some countries (or areas within a country) and not others:

“If cultural facets inherent to Islam drive violence, it should be found across a range of countries with large Muslim majorities or substantial minorities. But it is absent in many such spaces, including much of Mali, where the population is approximately 90% Muslim and dispersed throughout the state, yet Islamist violence is concentrated in the far north of the country [...] As a consequence of the privileging of religious ideology and demography in explanations of Islamist violence, these approaches largely fail to interrogate the conditions in which proponents of violence gain traction among communities by assuming violent discourse, adherence, mobilisation and politicisation develop in political, economic and social vacuums”(Dowd, 2015: 509-510).

Several scholars have argued that “Islamist violence can be attributed to similar factors explaining other forms of conflict, namely the local political and economic conditions in which it emerges” and it is “shaped by governance practices of political and economic marginalisation” (Dowd, 2015: 506).

While the Sahel has been for years a battlefield between the two different philosophies of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, a new generation of leaders seem to signal a shift away from global dynamics and towards a more domestic agenda (Bassou, 2018). In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are several examples of extremist movements that are unaffiliated or, at most, have very tenuous links to global terrorist networks or religious ideologies,²⁸ and are instead strongly rooted in longstanding local grievances. A case in point is the surprising emergence of the terrorist group Ansar al-Sunna in the region of Cabo Delgado in Northern Mozambique, following the discovery of substantial amounts of natural gas in 2010. Although the Islamic State has claimed responsibility for some of the attacks undertaken by Ansar al-Sunna, the motive and structures of the group remain unclear, and many scholars see this new violence as a manifestation of injustice and frustrations by local youth excluded from the benefits of the newly discovered natural riches (Mueller and Vorrath, 2019; Vicente and Vinela, 2019).²⁹

Below we focus in some more detail on the two cases of violent extremism that have been extensively studied in the literature: al Shabaab in Kenya and Boko Haram in Nigeria. The two cases differ in several important respects. Muslims make up only about 14 per cent of the population in Kenya, while Nigeria’s population is more evenly split with approximately 40 per cent of Muslims (Dowd, 2015: 508). Moreover, al Shabaab has been, at least initially, presented by the Kenyan government as an ‘external’ force, while Boko Haram is undeniably home-grown in Nigeria. Yet in other respects the two cases have similarities – in particular, both countries have experienced Islamist violence in a relatively limited part of their territories (Kenya’s counties of Garissa and Wajir, near the border with Somalia; and the areas around Mombasa and Kwale in the former Coastal province; and Nigeria’s northern states of Borno, Kano and Yobe) – which are also areas with extremely high levels of unemployment³⁰ (Dowd, 2015: 508).

Both Al-Shaabab and Boko Haram are compelling examples of the way in which new forms of violence build on longstanding local dynamics of conflict and widely-held perceptions of social exclusion. It is clearly beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive account of the complex reasons for the emergence of these two movements: here, we want to reflect primarily on whether employment factors can be seen as playing a role in promoting their appeal to local youth.

and Sierra Leone’s United Revolutionary Front (RUF) – were mostly understood in the context of a local political economy of neopatrimonialism. Yet in the case ‘new’ forms of violence – Muslim extremist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria – this frame of analysis was abandoned in favour of a narrative that focuses on religion and external links to global networks (Suleiman, 2020: 119). These movements have been studied “not primarily in the context of the local conditions within which they thrive, but in the global setting in which they survive” (Suleiman, 2020: 1120).

28 For a discussion of the problematic nature and shortcomings of the concept of ‘religious’ terrorism, see Gunning and Jackson (2012).

29 Another example of largely unaffiliated groups is given by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on the Ugandan-Congolese Borderland – which has been dubbed the ‘Isolated Islamists’ (Weeraratne and Recker, 2018). The ADF seems to comprise of several disparate factions with varied grievances and agendas, operating in an area that has less than 10 per cent Muslim population and has very little history of radicalism. See Titeca and Vlassenroot (2012) and Scorgie (2011).

30 In both cases, violence in these areas accounted for over 70 per cent of the total violent activities carried out by the two groups.

1.3.1 Al Shabaab in Kenya

Violence perpetrated in the name of religion has been a recurring phenomenon in Kenya for the last two decades.³¹ Christianity and Islam have long provided “a language, and a space, for political commentary and activism” (Deacon et al., 2017: 148). In recent years, high-profile acts of religious violence have received increasing attention from Western governments, intergovernmental organizations, and international media. The Somalia-based terrorist and insurgent group al-Shabaab (literally, ‘the youth movement’) is the driving force behind most high-profile attacks.³² Al Shabaab has harnessed pre-existing experiences of violence and marginalisation to mobilise recruits, actively drawing on pre-existing cleavages of conflict – such as the issue of land ownership.³³ Thus “not only has Islamist violence occurred in sites of previous violence, but the very language and targeting of Islamist violence cannot be divorced from domestic politics and historical violence” (Dowd, 2015: 521).

The Kenyan government’s approach to stemming domestic recruitment to al-Shabaab has reflected the larger Global War on Terror policy framework. While official narratives have long upheld the idea that al-Shabaab is an outside actor, many recent analyses have highlighted how recruiters prey on disillusioned members of communities, particularly – but not exclusively – Muslim youth, frustrated by negative stereotypes, limited access to resources and opportunities, and very little hope of education and good jobs (Bardubeen and Goldsmith, 2018; Hellsten, 2016)

A study of community perceptions of extremism in Kenya finds that unemployment and poverty were consistently assigned significant importance:

“Respondents widely cited large cash incentives as a primary method used by al-Shabaab recruiters and explained that these recruiters would specifically target the unemployed or those already involved in criminal activity” (Villa-Vincencio et al., 2016: ix).³⁴

Other studies emphasized the effect of weapons and cash on self-esteem (Mkutu and Opondo, 2019). Overall, it is safe to say that al-Shabaab has capitalised on the high unemployment rate in the coastal region by luring people with promises of jobs, money and livelihood opportunities (Ndung’u and Salifu, 2017) – although this does not explain why some individuals choose to join the violence while others, faced with the same conditions, do not.

1.3.2 Boko Haram in Nigeria

Boko Haram³⁵ started in 2002 in north-eastern Nigeria, as a religious community offering education and basic services, drawing followers from disaffected segments of society. Following years of confrontation with the Nigerian military, the movement became progressively radicalised, carrying out increasingly high-profile acts of violence.³⁶ By 2015, Boko Haram had been responsible for a death toll estimated at

31 The first major event was the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi by Al-Qaeda, which left over 200 individuals dead (Njenga, Nyamai, and Kigamwa 2004).

32 Al Shabaab justifies its actions based on the presence of the Kenyan Armed Forces as part of the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia. By framing this military presence as equivalent to an invasion by a Christian army, Al-Shabaab seeks to encourage Muslims in Kenya and abroad to take up arms against the Kenyan state (Rink and Sharma, 2016). Recent acts of terrorism by Al Shabaab in Kenya include the attack to the Westgate Mall in Nairobi in September 2013 and the mass murder of 148 university students and teachers at Garissa University in April 2015.

33 For example, Al Shabaab carried out an attack on Mpeketoni, home to Christian landowners considered non-indigenous to the region, and “a symbol of politicised ethnicity” (Dowd, 2015: 521).

34 Ndung’u and Salifu (2017) reach similar conclusions regarding community perceptions of the reason why young people join al-Shabaab in Kenya. Women from Majengo and Mombasa blamed poverty and unemployment in their communities for the radicalisation of their children. They noted that “al-Shabaab is taking advantage of this poverty by promising young people jobs, money and ‘free stuff’” (Ndung’u and Salifu, 2017: 32).

35 The name Boko Haram is a combination of the Hausa word ‘boko’ meaning ‘Western education’ and the Arabic word ‘Haram’ which means ‘forbidden’. Boko Haram has therefore been commonly translated as ‘Western education is sacrilege’ or ‘Western education is a sin’. The group’s self-given name is Jamaat Ahlas-Sunnah Liddawahwal-Jihadin Arabic, which literally means the “[Sunni Muslim] Group for Preaching and Jihad.” (Zenn, 2020). In mid-2015, Boko Haram renamed itself Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqīyyah, or “Islamic State’s West Africa Province” (Suleiman, 2020). The name Boko Haram is used in this paper for the sake of convenience.

36 The extrajudicial killing of Boko Haram’s leader Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, which was recorded and posted on YouTube, is commonly seen a turning point for the movement. Boko Haram moved into the international spotlight in August 2011 with a suicide bomb attack on the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, which killed 25 people. Subsequent high-profile attacks included the bombings of churches on Christmas Day 2011, and the kidnapping of 276 female students in the town of Chibok in April 2014, which spurred the global advocacy movement ‘Bring Back Our Girls’, supported by celebrities and world leaders. For

20,000, eventually overtaking the Islamic State as the deadliest terrorist group in the world; it controlled a portion of Nigerian territory equivalent to the size of Belgium, and “had reduced Nigeria’s military might to a geopolitical paradox” (Suleiman, 2020: 122).

Boko Haram’s expressed objective is the establishment of a Caliphate in Northern Nigeria – an objective that both recalls the Sokoto caliphate of Usman dan Fodio of the early 1800s³⁷, and it is rhetorically pitched to the narrative of the global jihadist project embodied by Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (Suleiman, 2020: 122). Many Boko Haram members trained with groups such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Yet the extent to which Boko Haram is linked to regional and global terrorist networks is a matter of speculation. According to Kate Meagher,

“the lack of any clear political program reinforces the sense of Boko Haram as a violent reaction to the internal ills of elite corruption and the economic marginalization of the impoverished Muslim majority” (Meagher, 2013: 171).

How does employment come into the picture? There is no consensus in the literature. As in the case of al-Shabaab in Kenya, community-based studies on the causes of Boko Haram point to unemployment as one of the key factors behind individuals’ decision to join (Ewi and Salifu, 2017). Anti-terrorism responses of the Nigerian state may have reinforced these factors: for example, the banning of motorcycle taxis in several northern Nigerian cities since 2011, owing to their use in Boko Haram activities, has eliminated a key source of livelihoods for the unemployed, without offering any economic alternatives (Meagher, 2013: 172).

Research carried out by the NGO Mercy Corps confirmed that Boko Haram members do not share one demographic profile. Former members interviewed came from diverse backgrounds, had different education levels, and generated from the ranks of both the employed and the unemployed. Irrespective of these individual-level differences, however, broad frustrations with the government created initial community acceptance of Boko Haram, helping the movement to gain a foothold in communities (McCulloch and Schomerus, 2017).³⁸

1.4 Are unemployment and ‘bad jobs’ a cause of violent extremism in Africa?

In sum, the literature offers no conclusive answers as to the relevance of employment-related factors on radicalisation. Typically, “grievances regarding economic and political exclusion are [...] higher than average in areas [...] affected by Islamist violence, providing both a motivation and an opportunity for collective opposition” (Dowd, 2015: 519). While work-related factors do appear as an important contextual factor, they do not explain individual choices of radicalisation or resilience. Employment status does not appear to distinguish recruits from non-recruits: radicalised youth may come from areas where (good) jobs are scarce, but are not more affected than their peers living in the same context. Ideological, historical, and socio-economic factors cross-pollinate and become difficult to tell apart.

In analyses of the causes and driving factors of violent extremism, unemployment is often cited among the ‘push’ factors – along with related aspects of social marginalisation, poorly governed areas, government repression, government corruption, police harassment, and historical injustices. There is no clear division between ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors – for example, the allure of financial incentives (a pull factor) is at least partly dependent upon poverty and unemployment (push factors) (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014: 4).

Geographically, violent extremism flourishes in areas that are relatively deprived, including in terms of access to employment. To use the two examples above, youth unemployment rates in Kenya’s Muslim-dominated Coast and North Eastern provinces (where al-Shabaab’s recruitment is most active) are 40-50 per cent higher than the national average, and most pockets of poverty and deprivation are concentrated there (Bardubeen and Golsmith, 2018). Likewise, in Nigeria, high levels of inequity in human development indicators between northern and southern states accentuate educational barriers to employment (42

a comprehensive overview of the history of Boko Haram, from its origins in the early 2000s to this day, see Suleiman (2020).
37 The narrative of Boko Haram has many references to colonialism and its role in ending the Sokoto caliphate (Suleiman, 2020: 122).
38 A 2017 report by the International Crisis Group notes that the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter of Boko Haram, is growing in power and influence in north-eastern Nigeria. According to the International Crisis Group, this increasing influence is due to the fact that ISWAP plays a role in service delivery, creates a favourable environment for business, acting as an employer and - reinstating an old Boko Haram policy - reportedly extending micro-loans to local youth (ICG, 2017).

per cent of adults in the north had no education compared to 13 per cent in the south) (Enfield, 2019). While this does not explain the individuals' decisions to participate (or not) in violence, it does allow us to safely identify unemployment among the factors that create an 'enabling environment' for radicalisation, violent extremism and ultimately terrorism.³⁹

Interestingly, a study of eight Arab countries, of which three in North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia), concludes that while it seems to be true that unemployment on its own does not impact radicalization in *general*, unemployment *among the educated* leads to a greater probability of radicalization, as educated youth feel frustrated over their failure to secure jobs commensurate to their education status. This points to the need to consider relative deprivation as a key factor, alongside absolute deprivation (Bhatia and Ghanem, 2017).⁴⁰

Even if the link between unemployment and recruitment by violent groups is made, the direction of causality is not straightforward. While initially lack of employment opportunity may be the independent variable, leading to violent extremism, the presence of violent extremism may further decrease employment and livelihoods opportunities (as in the case of the motorcycle taxi ban in Northern Nigeria, mentioned above), thus creating a vicious cycle. As always, correlation does not equate causation: both variables (lack of employment opportunities and violent extremism) may derive from the same root causes (e.g. structural patterns of religious and ethnic discrimination) rather being linked by mutual causality. The idea of a simple linear relationship between causes (e.g. unemployment) and effects (i.e. violent extremism), "gives way to a reality of tipping points, disproportionate feedback loops, interaction effects between multiple variables, and other complexities" (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014: 6).

Having identified employment-related factors as contextual 'push' factor creates problems for responses. It gives relatively little guidance on where to focus interventions: "such push factors are common to many global regions, whereas [Violent Extremism] remains comparatively rare" (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014: 6). Relatedly, intervening on structural factors requires large scale interventions - beyond the budget and time-scale of most employment programmes. In other words, "there are few 'quick wins' achievable on the push side" (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014: 6).

1.5 Concluding remarks

This section has dealt with two distinct topics: the conditions faced by young job seekers in Africa (section 1.2) and the emergence of new forms of violence in the continent, in the form of Islamic terrorism (section 1.3). These two themes are rarely analysed together: in fact, there is virtually no overlapping between the literature analysed in these two sub-sections. Here I argue that a closer connection between these spheres of is needed, in order to reflect on their connections and possible causality nexuses, and, crucially, to shape policy and programmatic responses.

The next section turns on analysing how this complex set of interconnected issues is filtered into policy frameworks, and which perspectives influence the policy discourse around youth, employment and security.

³⁹ As the above-mentioned case of Northern Mozambique shows, a sense of injustice can also spur from the fact that regions with an abundance of natural resources do not benefit from these riches - and all the good jobs are going to outsiders (Muller and Vorath, 2019).

⁴⁰ A recent paper by Hannes Weber highlights the limitation of the literature on youth bulges in the way in which it analyses the ratio between level of education and employment status. The author finds that youth bulges become a greater threat to peace and stability when the average education level of the group rises above primary education. The argument is that a "demographic bottleneck" is created when the population of newly educated people grows faster than the availability of relevant jobs, thus creating a surplus of educated, unemployment people, or individuals forced to take jobs they are overly qualified for (Weber, 2019, quoted in Anderson, 2019). On the importance of considering relative deprivation, see also Taspinar (2009).

2. Youth, peace and decent work: towards policy convergence?

Up to two decades ago, issues related to youth employment were notably absent from discussions on peace and security – and until even more recently, the challenges of conflict and violence did not feature in discussions on employment promotion and quality of work. The emergence of violent extremism – and the gradual realisation that ‘hard’ security responses alone are inadequate to address this threat – played an important role in bringing these two policy strands together. This section examines how policy agendas are gradually, and tentatively, coming towards a convergence over the interplay between employment and violence – and between the two overarching imperatives of promoting peace and decent work.

2.1 Youth employment as a policy issue

One of the most notable policy developments since the turn of the millennium has been the identification of ‘youth’ as a policy issue in its own right.⁴¹ Youth unemployment, and related security concerns, played a crucial role in this regard. The UN Millennium Declaration (2000) resolved to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work” (UN, 2000). This commitment led to the creation of the Youth Employment Network (YEN), a global partnership that seeks to share best practice on youth employment.⁴²

In 2018, the United Nations adopted Youth 2030 (‘Working with and for young people’), which is intended to act as an umbrella framework to guide the UN across its three pillars: Peace and Security, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development. The strategy seeks to strengthen the UN’s capacity to engage young people and benefit from their views, insights and ideas, and to ensure that UN’s work on youth issues is pursued in a coordinated, coherent and holistic manner. An explicit priority of Youth 2030 is to “support young people’s greater access to decent work and productive employment” (UN, 2018b).⁴³

2.1.1 Youth policies in Africa

At the regional level, the African Union (AU) has a number of initiatives to promote youth employment. The most comprehensive AU policy framework on youth is the African Youth Charter, adopted in 2006.⁴⁴ Building on previous instruments, such as the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Youth Charter sees Africa’s youthful population as its “greatest resource”, through which the continent can “surmount the difficulties that lie ahead” (Preamble).⁴⁵

41 A clear sign of the UN ‘youth turn’ was the appointment in 2013 of the first-ever United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, in the person of Ahmad Alhendawi from Jordan. At the age of 28, Alhendawi was the youngest senior official in the history of the United Nations at that time. He was succeeded by the current Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake from Sri Lanka, appointed in 2017 at age 27.

42 The YEN is a partnership between the United Nations and The World Bank, managed by a permanent secretariat hosted by ILO in Geneva. It has a specific focus on Africa, with regional offices in Dakar, Senegal and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

43 The strategy is supported by Generation Unlimited (or ‘Gen-U’), a global multi-stakeholder partnership initiated by the UN Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) to ensure that every young person is in education, learning, training or employment by 2030.

44 The African Youth Charter entered into force in 2009, following the required fifteen ratifications. In 2010, it was adopted by the African Union as the legal and political framework to mainstream youth development.

45 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was adopted by the predecessor of the AU, the Organisation of African Unity.

46 The charter consists of three sections: i) The preamble highlighting the role and importance of Africa’s youthful population; ii) the ‘Rights and Duties of Youth in Member States’ in twenty-eight broad articles dealing with issues affecting youth, the role of AU member states and the youth’s role in social, political, economic affairs of the continent; and iii) deals with the technical aspects of signing, ratification, adherence and amendments. For an analysis, see Mpungose and Monyae (2018).

With regard to employment (Article 15), the Charter states the right of every young person to gainful employment, protection from exploitation, hazardous working conditions, and discrimination.⁴⁷ It also calls for macroeconomic policies that focus on job creation for youth, and for measure to regulate the informal economy (“where the majority of youth works”) to prevent unfair labour practices. The importance of education, vocational training and support to youth entrepreneurship is also stressed.⁴⁸

Following the entry into force of the African Youth Charter, a Youth Decade Plan of Action (*Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*) was adopted, covering the period 2009-2018. ‘Unemployment’ and ‘underemployment’ are listed among the ills that “the majority of African youth continue to face” – alongside lack of skills and of relevant education, lack of access to capital, and flawed health services (AU, 2011). The Plan calls for “evidence based scale-up of good practices in sustainable youth development programmes and activities specifically in youth employability” (AU, 2011).⁴⁹ Overall, the Plan continues to adopt a view of youth ‘unemployment’ being a problem due to low skills and employability of young people, and offers no guidance of how to navigate complex questions of quality of work in contexts of prevalent informality (AU, 2011).

A number of declarations by the Heads of State and Government in the African Union have included commitments on youth employment. In its Ouagadougou Declaration, the AU sets an overall regional framework for employment promotion by all AU member states, with an emphasis on youth and women. The Ouagadougou+10 Declaration (2015) reiterated the importance of placing employment at the centre of development strategies, committing African leaders to “eliminating youth unemployment and empowering young men and women”. Agenda 2063, the vision for the continent launched by the African Union in 2013, calls for mainstreaming youth in the development process, and for investments in youth and women (AU Commission, 2015).

The AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in Youth was adopted in 2017 with the aim of reducing by at least a quarter the proportion of unemployed youth between 2013 and 2024. The roadmap identifies key actions to this end, including access to credit facilities, financial services, and funding; engagement with private sector partnerships to expand internships, apprenticeships and on-the-job training opportunities for women and youth; building youth entrepreneurial skills; reduce the challenges of starting and doing business in Africa; and invest in sectors with high job-multiplier effects.

Commitments to youth employment also exist at the sub-regional level. For example, the Youth Employment Action Plan was adopted by the Economic Commission Of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2012, with a view to increasing job opportunities for young people in the region through the creation of national action plans focusing on education, technical and vocational training, the development of the private sector, labour market information systems, and intra-regional mobility. Similarly, the Youth Employment Promotion Policy Framework (YEPPF), adopted by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2016, aims at curbing unemployment through regional harmonisation of employment and labour standards in the region. Specific objectives of the YEPPF include promoting labour-intensive industries in hiring young people; supporting the development of entrepreneurship capabilities and opportunities among youth; incentivising the private sector to develop youth’s skills through on-the-job training programmes, mentoring, internships and apprenticeships (Pharatlhathe and Byiers, 2019).

At the national level, many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have adopted youth policies, as well as including objectives on youth employment promotion in their mainstream policies (Schwebel et al., 2019, 48).⁵⁰ The example of Kenya is discussed in the text box below.

⁴⁷ These equal opportunities and protection measures are further stressed in Article 23, focusing on Girls and Young Women.

⁴⁸ Issues related to peace and security are addressed in Article 17, which calls on member states to strengthen the capacity of young people and youth organisations in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution – for example, through intercultural learning and civic education; and to institute mechanisms to promote a culture of peace and tolerance among young people and discourage participation in violence, terrorism, xenophobia and racial discrimination. Member states are also called upon to involve youth in reconstruction efforts, and promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of young victims of armed conflict.

⁴⁹ While the Plan does not go into detail in terms of how this can be achieved in practice, it does set a number of ‘indicators of success’ that are employment-related, including: the number of countries with policies that have a ‘youth quota’ for employment in government agencies and private sector; the periodic percentage increase of qualified and skilled youth; the number of young people that receive on-the-job training; and the reduction in youth unemployment. One indicator looks at the “Proportion of youth entrepreneurs in the formal versus informal economy”, although it is not clear whether the objective is to increase the proportion of the former vis-à-vis the latter. At no other point in the Plan is informality mentioned.

⁵⁰ For an overview of Youth Policies around the world, see youthpolicy.org.

What is youth?

As a policy category, 'youth' is very broad and very loose. It is generally recognised that youth is not simply an age group - rather, it is a socially-constructed transition phase that has less to do with age than with status and behaviour. Age-based definitions are necessarily imperfect proxies to capture the complexity of this transition - yet, from the perspective of policy-making and related interventions, they are hard to do without. Most cross-country comparisons use the official, but not binding, definition of youth given by the UN General Assembly, i.e. the population falling in the age cohort between 15 and 24. The UNSCR 2205 (2015) moves this age bracket upwards, bringing it to 18-29. The African Youth Charter defines youth in more expansive terms, as individuals aged 15-35 - a classification reaffirmed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in its 2008 Youth Policy, as well as by most African governments.

Table 1 - Definitions of youth in global, regional and national policies. (Compiled by the author from various sources)

Policy level	Policy document (year)	Youth age bracket
Global	SG report to the GA (A/36/215) (1981)	15-24
	UNSCR 2205 (2015)	18-29
Regional/ sub-regional	AU African Youth Charter (2006)	15-35
	ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2009)	15-35
	SADC Strategic Framework and Programme of Action on Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (2008)	18-24
National	Burkina Faso (2008)	15-35
	Botswana (2010)	15-35
	Democratic Republic of Congo (2009)	15-35
	Ethiopia (2004)	15-29
	Gabon (2012)	15-35
	Gambia (2009)	15-30
	Gambia (2010)	15-35
	Liberia (2012)	15-35
	Madagascar (2004)	14-35
	Malawi (2013)	10-35
	Mauritius (2010)	14-29
	Nigeria (2009)	18-35
	Rwanda (2005)	14-35
	Sierra Leone (2012)	15-35
	Swaziland (Eswatini) (2009)	15-35
	Togo (2007)	15-35
	Uganda (2002)	12-30
	Zambia (2006)	18-35
	Zimbabwe (2013)	15-35

2.2 Youth employment in the United Nations Peace and Security agenda

Up to the turn of the millennium, neither 'youth' nor 'employment' had featured to any degree of significance in the UN debates and policies on peace and security. The terrorist attacks against the United States of September 11th, 2001 marked a turning point in this regard. A few weeks after the attacks, the UN Secretary-General's Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict was the first major UN security

National Youth Policy in Kenya

The Kenyan government has been advancing and implementing several policy frameworks and programmes to tackle the challenges confronting the Kenyan youth (Hope, 2012). The first National Youth Policy was adopted in 2006, with the aim of enabling youth to play their role in society and in the development of the country. The policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the youth, and obligations of the actors who play a role in young people's lives (family, the state, and the private sector). It suggests interventions, mechanisms and frameworks to address challenges facing youth. Youth employment is an issue of focus, alongside education, health, sport and recreation, and participation and empowerment. Several 'priority groups' are identified within the overall youth category; however, the definition of priority groups is so broad - including youth with disability, street youth, youth living with HIV and AIDS, females, and unemployed and out-of-school young people - that it ends up having limited conceptual and practical utility (Republic of Kenya, 2006).⁵¹

The Youth Policy led to the launch of key youth-focused programmes, including the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), launched in February 2007, and the Kazi Kwa Vijana ('Work for Youth') programme launched in March 2009.

In 2018, an updated policy was adopted, in view of new developments such as a new Constitution in 2010. The 2018 policy reflects an increasing concern with violence (a consequence of the involvement of youth in political violence in the aftermath of the 2008 elections, as well as the rising threat of recruitment by Al-Shabaab), and establishes a clear link between youth unemployment and terrorism:

"Youth unemployment is very high in Kenya and with a little chance of getting education or sustainable and decent jobs, the youth and especially those in the urban informal settlements are an easy prey for terrorist activities. The youth are main target by the extremist organizations and local militia hence have become vulnerable to the offers promised to them." (Republic of Kenya, 2018: 32).

The policy also stressed the problem of low quality of work:

"Vulnerable employment among the employed youth: Most employed youth are in vulnerable employment which is characterized by informal working arrangements associated with low productivity, inadequate earnings and difficult working conditions. Although a large share of the youth are engaged in some economic activities (about 49 percent in 2009 and 41.7 percent in 2015/16), most are involved in informal activities. About 84 percent of the employed youth aged 15 to 34 years were in informal employment" (Republic of Kenya, 2018: 4).

The case of Kenya shows clearly the difficulty in defining youth for policy purposes, even within the same country: the 2006 National Youth Policy considers youth as people between the ages of 15 and 30. The 2010 Constitution considers 'youth' adopts an 'older' definition (18-35), and the 2018 update youth policy adopts a 18-34 definition.

document to dedicate a full paragraph to the risk of "young people with limited education and few employment opportunities", and little hope for the future, providing "fertile recruiting ground for parties to a conflict" - particularly in countries with "a 'youth bulge', a population comprised of large number of youth compared to other age groups" (UN, 2001: 29).

Three years later, the Report by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change ('A more secure world: our shared responsibility') pointed to youth unemployment as both a cause of violence and a consequence of failed post-conflict peacebuilding, potentially leading to further violence. The report compellingly quoted a woman who, during the Panel's consultation with civil society organizations in Africa, wondered: "how have we let what should be our greatest asset, youth, become a threat to our security?" (UN, 2004: 26). The same report also noted the imperative of "reducing poverty and unemployment" as part of a comprehensive strategy to address terrorism (UN, 2004: 46).

⁵¹ The policy argues that 'the youth in Kenya find themselves at a crossroads between the Western culture and the remnants of traditional culture. Kenya, therefore, faces the challenge of preserving our culture to be passed on to future generations' (Paragraph 8.6) (Bialostocka 2019).

Subsequent reports of the UN Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict called for “early employment generation as a priority” (UN, 2009: §58) and pointed to the importance of jobs as a visible ‘peace dividend’ (UN, 2009: §18), crucial to “build confidence in the peace process” (UN, 2010: §42). Conversely, high levels of youth unemployment are identified as a key cause of instability and relapse into conflict (UN 2012: §3).

In these early documents, youth is largely seen through a security lens. An often-quoted 2005 report by the United Nations Office for West Africa, (Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa) famously characterizes youth unemployment as a “ticking bomb” for the region, and pointed to job creation as “a key tool for conflict prevention” (UNOWA, 2005: 8). Consistently with this premise, these policy documents often conflate the category of youth with that of former combatants.

2.2.1 UNSCR 2250 (2015)

More recently, policy narratives on youth have gained both nuance and optimism - alongside an increasing emphasis on acting ‘with’ youth rather than just ‘for’ youth. United Nations Security Resolution on Youth, Peace, and Security (SCR 2250), passed in December 2015, embodies the shift from the image of youth as perpetrators of violence to that of youth as peacebuilders and agents of positive social change.⁵² The resolution thus represents a significant shift in how the international community talks about young people in relation to conflict and peace. UNSCR also encourages UN member states to take young people into account at all levels and phases of peace processes (Anderson, 2019).⁵³

There are many parallels between the adoption of UNSCR 2250 on youth and the previous adoption of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. Both resolutions have their origins in extensive lobbying by civil society, and they both embody an important discursive shift: women and youth - who had traditionally been seen as primarily ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ of violence, respectively - were now reframed as critical agents in peacebuilding.

Resolution 2250 has been saluted by many as “nothing short of historic” (SFCG, 2016), a “game changer [...] a first of its kind effort at acknowledging young people’s positive role in mitigating violent conflict”, “the only global policy framework that endorses the ground-breaking, and often risky work that young peace builders are doing in conflict regions around the world” and “the strongest and most comprehensive instrument to ensure young people’s inclusion and meaningful participation in issues of peace and security” (Pappan et al., 2016).⁵⁴

UNSCR 2250 stresses the importance of “youth employment opportunities and vocational training” as well as “youth entrepreneurship” among the policy measures that would enable youth to “positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts” (§11). It should be noted, however, that most of the substantive focus on employment is in relation to the disengagement and reintegration of former combatants, where the need for “evidence-based [...] youth employment opportunities” is stressed (§17).⁵⁵

⁵² Resolution 2250 was part of a set of international policies and conferences on youth and security, that are “closely networked and mutually referential”, including: the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in February 2015; the European Youth Against Violent Extremism conference in June 2015; the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in August 2015; the Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism in September 2015; and the Arab Human Development Report 2016, which focused on the role of youth in the Arab region (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2017).

⁵³ Adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, UNSCR 2250 is intended to influence member states in policy creation.

⁵⁴ As a visible sign of this change, on April 23rd, 2018, the UN Security Council convened its first open debate on Youth, Peace and Security: in the past, youth had been seen as a topic to be discussed by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), but not by the Security Council, the body in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security. UN Security Council Resolution 2419 (2018), adopted on June 6th, was the second UNSCR resolution by the United Nations Security Council on youth, peace and security and was unanimously adopted. It recognizes the positive role young people can play in negotiating and implementing peace agreements and conflict prevention. The resolution urges stakeholders to take young people’s views into account and facilitate their equal and full participation in peace and decisionmaking processes at all levels.

⁵⁵ The shift of ‘youth issues’ into the domain of international peace and security has, however, also raised concerns. Mayssoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock present UNSCR 2250 as a clear sign of the ‘global securitization of youth’. This, the authors argue, is a new spin on the historical cycles and counter-cycles of representing youth as a ‘problem’ or a ‘solution’: “for every stereotypical representation of youth as problem and pathology there exists an inverse idealization of youth as a possibility and panacea” (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2017: 855).

2.2.2 The Missing Peace - Report of the Secretary-General

The much-awaited progress study *The Missing Peace*, mandated by SCR 2250 and released in March 2018, provided a welcome debunking of common myths and assumptions about youth, offering a cautionary tale about the counterproductive impact of policy panic around youth bulges, and reframing youth as a diverse, and sometimes divided, “microcosm of wider society”, rather than a homogenous category (UN, 2018a: 4). The report addresses the long-standing gender bias in depictions of youth, recognizing the fundamentally gendered nature of youth as a transition phase, and warning against reliance of stereotypes of “young men as violent predators or potential spoilers of peace” and “young women [...] as passive victims at best, or invisible at worst” (UN, 2018a: 5).

In relation to employment, the report deplores the fact that “[i]n large part, peace and security programming and policies continue to be driven by a widely presumed causal relationship between youth unemployment and violence”, while in fact “there is little reliable evidence for a correlation, let alone causation” between the two (UN, 2018a: 13). Other important factors need to enter the equation - including the way in which violent conflict may be explained by “experiences of horizontal inequality and identity-based factors” (UN, 2018a: 13). While job creation in post-conflict is undoubtedly important, it should not be viewed as a silver bullet: a key message of the report is the need to go beyond jobs, seeing employment as only one piece of the puzzle in solving young people’s exclusion.

While the report does not explicitly adopt a Decent Work lens, it does draw attention to the plight of young people working in informal economies:

“Globally, three out of four young people are employed in the informal economy. While many young people are employed in licit informal economies, a large number are employed in illicit and war-based sub-economies, which have an enduring influence on youth that can persist long after the violence ends. This is especially the case when armed or criminal groups are able to provide better social services, employment and opportunities, supplanting formal governance structures and fuelling resentment as a result of unmet promises” (UN, 2018: 13).

The report also points to the danger of interventions “aimed at promoting young people’s economic inclusion”, if these “focus on giving them a marginal or temporary stake in the formal economy, ignoring the detrimental impact and limitations of broader social issues. [...] Employment interventions [...] often offer non-skilled and casual employment, ignoring young people’s desires for meaningful jobs with a living wage and access to social protection. [...] The vast majority of employment interventions are limited by the underlying assumption that changes in individual behaviour will produce positive outcomes for development and peace at the community level” (UN, 2018: 13-14).

Youth as agents of peace in Somalia

Youth as Agents of Peace: Somalia, published in 2018, is the first joint country study conducted by the United Nations and the World Bank aimed at translating into practice the principles of the UNSC Resolution 2250. The premise of the study is that, while most of the emphasis goes on youth involvement in violence and terrorism, the potential of youth as a peace factor is more rarely a subject of analysis.

The report is based on extensive consultations with young people in Somalia. Most respondents shared an understanding of peace that went beyond just reducing or eliminating violence, and encompassed strong, reliable, effective, and accountable institutions that provide services and opportunities for all. Interestingly, many young people saw their ‘peacebuilding role’ as being employed and productive members of society. Conversely, many young people saw their participation in peacebuilding activities as a way of gaining experience that can then be used to access potential job opportunities.

The importance of employment and fair conditions of work was stressed by many respondents.

Unjust treatment by employers was identified as a key problem, particularly by young people belong to minority clans, youth without political connections, and young women. Respondents mentioned several reasons they think the existing employment programmes were inadequate, including limited resources, lack of awareness by the youth, and activities not being designed with youth participation in mind.

2.3 Youth employment in the prevention and countering of violent extremism

One key obstacle in envisaging policy and programmatic responses to violent extremism is the vagueness of the phenomenon, and, relatedly, the ambiguity of the key terms used to define it. By their very own nature, words like ‘radicalisation’ and ‘violent extremism’ identify a relative position on a continuum of opinions and behaviours:

“Depending on the context, the line that defines an extremist/radical opinion or behavior from a moderate/legitimate opinion or behavior can be drawn at different points in the continuum. Moreover, structural and circumstantial factors (such as the agendas of governments and security agencies) influence the definition of those terms in different circumstances and for different institutions, potentially creating conflicting classifications. Ultimately, radicalization and extremism remain ambiguous and contested concepts and sources of confusion, to the point that some scholars even deny that radicalization exists” (Vergani et al., 2018: 2).

What is radicalisation?

Broadly speaking, ‘radicalisation’ refers to the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs, which depart significantly from socially accepted ones (Hardy, 2018). As radicalisation is defined in relation to the values of mainstream society, the term is necessarily relative: what may be considered radical in one society may be considered normal, and even desirable, in another. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) argues that radicalisation can actually be a force for beneficial change - for instance, the causes of abolition of slavery or universal suffrage were considered ‘radical’ at the time, “as they stood in opposition to the prevailing views in their societies.” (OSCE, 2014: 21). According to this view, radicalisation only becomes a threat to society if an individual comes to “accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action. This may eventually, but not necessarily, lead this person to advocate, act in support of, or engage in terrorism” (OSCE, 2014: 21). The lack of definitions makes these concepts “floating and ambiguous, resulting in the question: what are we actually going to prevent, and how?” (Mattson et al., 2016: 257).⁵⁶

While all of those who have engaged in terrorism have at some point been radicalised, only a minority of people who have been radicalised have gone on to engage in acts of terrorism. Common metaphors describing radicalisation describe it as a ‘pyramid’ or a ‘staircase’ of a building (Moghaddam, 2005), where most people live on the ground floor, and only a few of them ascend to the higher floors (Christmann, 2012). In spite of the recognised utility of these images, scholars are increasingly moving away from linear models (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010), as stages are not necessarily sequential, stages can be skipped, or people may move ‘up’ and ‘down’ among the various levels. One of the most consistent findings in the research is that involvement in violent radicalisation is a group phenomenon, with social relationships and networks playing a key role in pathways to radicalisation.

Research has shown that there is no single profile or a potential terrorist recruit,⁵⁷ and no discernible pathway to radicalisation. ‘Becoming radicalised’ is a highly complex process, which differs from person to person. Explanations often rely on a nucleus of ‘push factors’ (e.g. deprivation, inequality, state repression) and ‘pull’ factors (e.g. consumption of propaganda, search for adventure, group dynamics and peer pressure) but the way in which these interact, and their relative weight, is highly variable, and dependent on ‘personal’ factors that are hard to pin down (e.g. individual psychological vulnerability, mental health conditions, personal trauma). The process of radicalisation can be accelerated by so-called ‘catalysing factors’ and ‘trigger events’ (McCullough and Schomerus, 2017). Violent extremism can be best conceptualised as “a kaleidoscope of factors, creating infinite individual combinations” (Ranstorp, 2016: 3).

⁵⁶ At the time of writing, the Prevent programme (which represents a distinct strand of the overall UK counter-terrorism strategy) is at the centre of contentious discussions in the UK, for having included the non-violent climate emergency campaign group Extinction Rebellion in the list of extremism ideologies that warrant surveillance and reporting, alongside groups that explicitly advocate violence and terrorism (Dodd and Grierson, 2020). Prevent regards radicalisation as part of an overall “conveyor belt to terrorism”, and thus “attempts to control the future by acting in the present” (Qarashi, 2018: 1). On the Prevent programme, see Vidino and Brandon (2012).

⁵⁷ While many studies have been concerned with detecting a particular set of defining psychological and/or social characteristics that could differentiate a potential terrorist from the general population, these attempts have been largely unsuccessful: most people that commit acts of terrorism appear to have been notable only for their normality and ordinariness (Christmann, 2012: 21; Vergani et al., 2018).

The inter-connectedness between push, pull and personal factors poses a challenge for policy responses: for example, unemployment can be seen as a ‘push’ or ‘personal’ factor – depending on whether the level of analysis is at a macro or micro level, and it can also be seen as an enabling condition for pull factors (e.g. the attractiveness of recruitment by terrorist networks as ‘employers’ may be higher for unemployed youth).⁵⁸ (Vergani et al., 2018).

Most policy discussions focus on the appropriate ‘stage’ for intervention – in other words, whether interventions should focus on identifying people with radicalised beliefs (the early stages, or lower floors if using the above metaphors) through more wide-ranging interventions, or focus the (necessarily limited) resources on those that are more likely to climb to the upper floors, thus stopping them short of committing violence.

The terms Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) refer to using non-coercive means that seek to address the drivers and/or root causes of violent extremism (De Leede et al., 2017). PVE and CVE are often used interchangeably, and are at times conflated in the acronym P/CVE: while there are conceptual differences between the two, they both reflect a departure from the emphasis on ‘hard power’ counter-terrorism measures initially advanced under the rubric of the Global War on Terror, emphasizing instead ‘soft power’ or non-coercive tools designed to apply preventively, to dissuade individuals and groups from mobilising towards violence.⁵⁹

Gender in the Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism

The discussion on radicalisation and violent extremism has an important gender dimension. Initially, the emphasis of both analysis and responses was on male recruits; the attention on women has been spurred by young women in European countries choosing to leave and join the Islamic State (Moaveni, 2019). Gender scholars have noted that P/CVE strategies draw on essentialised ideas – or ‘gender myths’ (Cornwall et al. 2007) – which are, paradoxically, very similar to those upheld by the forces they aim to fight. In many programmes, women are seen as ‘assets’ to fight extremism, often relegated to the role of wives and mothers that can be instrumental to ‘deradicalise’ the men in their lives (Giscard d’Estaing, 2017; De Leede et al., 2017). There is still very little understanding of the motivation and pathways of female recruits, and the different roles that women play in relation to violent extremism.

2.3.1 UN Plan of Action on the Prevention of Violent Extremism

In December 2015, the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) adopted a Plan of Action on the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVA), encouraging all member states to develop their own PVE strategies (Romaniuk and Durner, 2018). This includes a section on ‘empowering youth’, including by reclaiming the space of global connectivity (which is “already being exploited by violent extremists”) by “helping to amplify the voices of young people already promoting the values of mutual respect and peace to their peers” (UN, 2015: 22).

With an interesting change in terminology, the Plan of Action calls for ‘employment facilitation’ (rather than ‘employment creation’), with emphasis on “fostering an entrepreneurial culture and offering entrepreneurship education, facilitating employment searches and job-matching, enacting regulations to promote the development of micro and small enterprises, easing access to finance and microcredit and increasing the range of support services such as marketing and distribution, so as to unleash the full economic potential of youth” (UNSG, 2015: 19).

⁵⁸ It is important to stress that this is not necessarily the case in all situations: in some cases, employed young people appear more likely to be involved in violence, in order to protect their employment. For example, a study by Mercy Corps finds that, while low levels of employment were found to be a contributing factor to radicalisation among both young and old in research in Tunisia, Morocco and Libya, but in Mali, the link between unemployment and radicalisation was not so clear: here those who joined radical groups were as likely to join to earn an income as to protect their current income (McCullough and Schomerus, 2017).

⁵⁹ Currently, P/CVE responses run the gamut from increasing education, cultural outreach, and counter-messaging, to prevent radicalisation at the individual and community levels. They are aimed mostly at the individual level, to increase resilience, strengthening and validating identity, promote values of citizenships and non-violence. Some focus at the community level, to increase the engagement and resilience of communities. For an in-depth review of various models, see Stephens et al. (2019).

The process leading to the adoption of the Plan of Action included the Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism (New York, September 2015), which produced the Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism. The agenda moves from the premise that “the appeal of violent extremism is growing around the world” and “a sense of disengagement and marginalisation, despite the inter-connected world we live in, leaves young people vulnerable to recruitment wherever they are”. To counter this, the Youth Action Agenda calls for the production, sharing and amplification of new narratives, stories about peace and positive role models. Employment gets a mention as businesses are called upon to partner with youth to “create sustainable, accessible, and equal opportunity employment, education, and training opportunities for young people”, using “new technologies, where appropriate, to expand the reach of such programs”.

2.3.2 The African Union’s counter-terrorism framework

The Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1999 defines terrorist acts as encompassing threats to life, physical integrity, freedom or damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage with an express intention to force a government or an institution to act in a certain way usually deemed favourable to the perpetrators of such acts (Ramdeen, 2017).

With the transition of the OAU into the African Union in 2002, the counter-terrorism framework was refined and expanded. The AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, adopted in 2002, adopted measures to address Africa’s security challenges, in areas such as police and border control, legislative and judicial measures, financing of terrorism and exchange of information.⁶⁰ The AU’s Dakar Declaration Against Terrorism, adopted two years later, takes cognisance of the links between terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organised crime, money laundering and the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

As stated in the 2014 Report of the African Union Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa:

“Over the past decade, the threat of terrorism in Africa has assumed greater proportions. Regions that previously did not perceive the seriousness of the threat, or were considered to be immune from terrorism, have been targeted by terrorists [...] The terrorist threat in Africa has been shaped by activities in North, West, East and Central Africa, mainly led by the following terrorist organizations: Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for the Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) in North and West Africa, Boko Haram and Ansaru in Nigeria and Cameroon, Al-Shabaab in East Africa and the LRA in Central Africa” (AU, 2014: 1).

The report establishes a strong link between high rates of youth unemployment and the appeal of terrorist groups:

“lack of employment and opportunities for youth create a breeding ground for alienation and radicalization and, most importantly, render these segments of the population vulnerable to terrorist and criminal groups that offer them money and provide them with a sense of belonging” (AU, 2014: 6).

Therefore, the report continues, in order to “counter radicalization and violent extremism and to reduce vulnerability to extremism ideology [...] particular attention needs to be paid to the education and employment of the youth” (AU, 2014: 19).

2.4 Conflict and peace in the Decent Work agenda

The ILO Decent Work Agenda, launched in 1999, defines ‘decent work’ as work that is paid and protected according to minimum legal and moral standards of economic security and social dignity for workers and their dependents. The agenda has four pillars: employment promotion; social protection; social dialogue; and rights at work (MacNaughton and Frey, 2018).

⁶⁰As part of the implementation of the Plan of Action, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was established in 2004 in Algiers to serve as a structure for centralizing information, studies and analyses on terrorism and terrorist groups and to develop Counter-Terrorism capacity building programmes. In October 2010, an AU appointed a Special Representative for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, who serves concurrently as the Director of the ACSRT. At the time of writing, the Special Representative is Lieutenant Colonel Larry Gbevlo-Lartey of Ghana.

The absence of reference to decent work was widely seen as a key limit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). By contrast, Decent work is one of seventeen Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 8 calls for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all, and sets up specific targets to this end.

Just as the Peace and Security agenda has been increasingly incorporating issues related to youth employment, there has also been growing attention on the challenges and potential of Decent Work in situations of fragility, conflict and disaster. The ILO Guide Employment and Decent Work in Situations of Fragility, Conflict and Disaster highlights the implications for young people,⁶¹ as the “hardest hit by crises and ... least likely to find work”. In turn, prolonged periods of unemployment can “lead to young people becoming idle, frustrated and resorting to subsistence work in the informal sector or criminal activities to generate income” - which in turn can make them “vulnerable to recruitment into armed forces, militias or gangs” (ILO, 2016: 28).

ILO Recommendation No. 205 (R205) on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience (2017) provides a normative framework focusing on world of work-related measures to prevent and respond to crises and fragility. The recommendation calls for Members to

“provide income generation opportunities, stable employment and decent work for young women and men, including through: (a) integrated training, employment and labour market programmes that address the specific situations of young persons entering the world of work; and (b) specific youth employment components in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes that incorporate psychosocial counselling and other interventions to address anti-social behaviour and violence, with a view to reintegration into civilian life”.⁶²

Recommendation 205 directly informs the ILO Flagship Programme on Job, Peace and Resilience, discussed below in Section 3.

2.4.1 Policy debates of informality

In development circles, one can see a sort of cyclicity in the way in which informal economies have been viewed. In the 1960s and 1970s, the informal economy had a bad name, and high levels of informality were considered as a burden to development. The prediction, informed by modernisation theory, was that informality would decrease, and eventually disappear, as a result of economic growth (Ferreira, 2016: 140). The ideological climate of the 1980s changed this perspective, and informal economies came to be seen as an entrepreneurial response to stifling state bureaucracies. The 1990s saw the pendulum swing back to a more pessimistic perspective, which framed informal economies as the cause and consequence of bad governance, collapsing states and intractable civil wars. At present, a more optimistic view of the informal economy is ascending again, focusing on unleashing its development potential. The Bank's 2013 edition of its annual World Development Report argues that “informal jobs can also be transformational” (Schoof, 2015: 4).

The 2019 World Development Report (WDR, The Changing Nature of Work) recognizes the problems inherent in the persistence of informality - or, at least, of ‘traditional’ informality, the one that “predates the new millennium wave of technological change” (World Bank, 2019: 26). It notes that, despite improvements in the regulatory environment, informality persists in most emerging economies - remaining at over 70 per cent in Africa.⁶³ Therefore, “[a]ddressing informality and the absence of social protection for workers continues to be the most pressing concern” in most countries (World Bank, 2019: 8). At the same time, the WDR notes that “recent technological developments are blurring the divide between formal and informal works” and current labour laws and protection systems may need to be reconsidered accordingly (World Bank, 2019: 26-27).⁶⁴

61 The ILO Guide uses the standard UN definition of youth as individuals aged 15-24.

62 The Recommendation was adopted following a two-year process of tripartite consultations, and it replaces Recommendation No.71 on Employment (Transition from War to Peace) of 1944. It is accompanied by a [Resolution](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/r205/lang-en/index.htm) inviting governments, employers and workers to give full effect to the new standard. See <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/r205/lang-en/index.htm> (accessed March 6th, 2020).

63 The WDR notes that, for example, in Tanzania or Morocco, only one worker out of five is in the formal sector (World Bank, 2019: 26).

64 For a critical reading of the WDR2019 report, see Meagher (2019b). Some scholars have noted with concern that this policy comeback of informality (and the enthusiastic embracement of its new forms, such as the gig economy) has proceeded in parallel with the reframing of the youth workforce as an ‘untapped resource’, a ‘demographic dividend’ to be ‘capitalised upon’, similarly to what happened in East Asia in the late twentieth century (Betcherman and Khan, 2015). Young people are discursively

A key focus of reflection of the ILO in recent years has been how to promote formalisation as part of decent work in situations of conflict and fragility. The guiding principles to facilitate the formalisation of the informal economy are provided in ILO Recommendation No. 204 (R204 adopted in 2017 at the same time as R205). R204 advocates an integrated approach to achieving three related objectives: facilitate the transitions from informal to the formal economy; promoting the creation, preservation and sustainability of decent jobs in the formal economy; and preventing the informalisation of formal economy jobs.⁶⁵

The ILO publication *Promoting Transition to Formality for Peace and Resilience* (ILO, 2019b) acknowledges and specifically addressed the challenges of implementing R204 in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. It moves from the premise that “[w]hile the strong presence of informality in conflict and post-conflict situations is commonly known, transition to formality and peacebuilding, and their potential reciprocity, are rarely explicitly addressed in research on the subject or during project design” (ILO, 2019: 1). It thus aims to encourage further discussion and research on how transition to formality in post-conflict and fragile settings can be sustained in a way that adheres to ‘do no harm’ principles and supports peace and resilience (ILO, 2019: 1).

2.5 Concluding remarks

This brief policy overview highlights the increasing convergence among different policy agendas around youth employment and peacebuilding. Each agenda is giving increasing consideration to issues that have traditionally been outside its remit: the Peace and Security agenda is considering the value of work for peace, and increasingly moving away from an exclusive focus on ‘being employed’ and towards a recognition of the importance of quality of work; while the Decent Work agenda is recognising the particular challenges that emerge in fragile and post-conflict countries, the need to adapt conventional approaches in order to address the specific conditions and challenges of these contexts. Important differences remain, however, among different policy strands, as well as different policy levels (global, regional, national).

Overall, youth-related policies have seen an ‘optimism shift’: rather than a ‘security threat’ or a ‘ticking bomb’, large youth populations are now seen as an untapped opportunity for development and a potential force for peacebuilding. There is also an increasing recognition that employment is not a dichotomic condition and that the quality of work is an important determinant of development and peace outcomes. However, as discussed in this section, the notion of youth unemployment as a security threat continues to feature prominently in policy frameworks, particularly with regard to the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism.

The next section moves from policies to programmes, looking at how policy principles are translated into programmatic interventions, how they influence key questions around the type of work provided (which jobs?) and the targeting criteria of the programmes (jobs for whom?), and the extent to which principles of decent work are embedded in the design of Employment for Peacebuilding Programmes.

recast as entrepreneurial ‘job creators’ rather than hapless ‘job seekers’, with the role of the government being reframed as an ‘enabler’ rather than a ‘provider’ (Dolan and Rajak, 2016; Sukarieh, and Tannock, 2008; 2014; 2018). There are worries that this double discursive shift may lead governments and donors to put less focus on structural interventions for decent work (Mallet, 2017: 5), in turn increasing the vulnerability of youth and their “adverse incorporation” into the economic system (Meagher, 2016).

⁶⁵To realise the objectives of R204, the ILO integrated strategy on transition to formality comprises seven key areas of policy action, namely (i) inclusive growth strategies; (ii) an appropriate regulatory environment; (iii) organization, representation and dialogue; (iv) equality; (v) entrepreneurship and skills development; (vi) extension of social protection; and (vii) local development strategies.

3. Using employment programmes for peace

This section starts by summarising the current state of learning on what works (or does not work) in creating employment for youth in Africa, and its implications for peacebuilding impact. While there is still scarce evidence about ‘what works’ in creating employment (Betcherman and Khan, 2015), a consensus has emerged in terms of common challenges and mistakes to avoid. Challenges are greater in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries, where programmes also face a greater risk of ‘doing harm’.

Particular attention is given to the use of employment-intensive public works as a stabilisation strategy. The reason for this focus is twofold: firstly, a rich body of analysis exists on the use of public works in Africa, including in post-conflict and fragile countries; and secondly, concerns and trade-offs regarding ‘quality of work’ have emerged with particular urgency in the context of these interventions.

The analysis then turns to the specific type of employment programmes that are aimed at promoting peacebuilding – i.e. Employment for Peacebuilding programmes. These programmes still face the same challenges discussed above (difficulty in creating employment through programmes; additional contextual challenges; risk of doing harm), but in this case, employment creation represents a means to an end, rather than just an end in itself. The two objectives (employment and peacebuilding) have long been assumed to be complementary and mutually reinforcing – however, recent experience has shown that conceptual tensions and practical trade-offs can emerge in the design, implementation and evaluation of these programmes.

3.1 Can programmes create employment?

Historically government and donors have tried to act in supporting youth employment in various ways. A common classification distinguishes between:

- Programmes acting on **the demand side** – by creating jobs directly (e.g. labour-intensive public works, discussed below) or facilitating job creation by other actors (for example, by providing wage subsidies or an enabling environment for firms to hire young people).
- Programmes acting on **the supply side** – by promoting workers employability, mostly through vocational training, but also through other forms such as mentoring and coaching.
- Programmes that **match the demand and supply side** – typically through employment services such as job search assistance.

In addition to these interventions that specifically aim at promoting work in the wage sector, many donor-funded interventions aim at encouraging and supporting youth **self-employment and entrepreneurship** – for example, through business training or by providing microcredit.⁶⁶

3.1.1 Overcoming supply-side bias

It is now recognised that donor-funded interventions have long suffered from a supply-side bias, focusing mostly on young people themselves, by enhancing their skills and overall employability. Skills development is the most common type of youth employment intervention in Africa: offered outside the formal education system, these programmes range from classroom-based technical and vocational training (including soft- and life-skills training) to mentoring, coaching, workplace training and apprenticeship schemes (Betcherman and Khan, 2018; 2015; Ismail and Mujuru, 2020).

A number of studies have tempered the enthusiasm for supply-side interventions – or what Robert MacDonald calls “the myth of the skill economy” (MacDonald, 2011): the underlying assumption – that

⁶⁶ Microcredit is a popular instrument in much of the developing world for providing access to financing for the self-employed and small entrepreneurs (Betcherman and Khan, 2018). Traditional microfinance interventions often bypass youth, who are considered more ‘high risk’ and need more support. Microfinance for youth requires careful packaging of training and financial services (Nagarajan, 2005).

jobs would be available for young people with enhanced skills – has been put in serious doubt (Blattman and Ralston, 2015; Fox and Kaul, 2017; Blattman and Dercon, 2016; Oosterom 2018; Sumberg et al. 2019). There is a growing recognition that structural problems of the labour markets, rather than individual shortcomings, are the key obstacle that prevents young people from finding jobs.⁶⁷ Most studies conclude by recommending integrated approaches, working concurrently on the demand and supply side (Datta et al., 2018; Kluve, 2017; Quak and Flynn, 2020).

The focus on the supply side is, in many ways, logical, as it promises “quicker results on smaller budgets”, while the demand side “is more difficult to address and requires more systemic, longer-term approaches” (Flynn et al., 2017: 7). Yet over-focusing on the supply side can lead to a fragmentation of donor interventions, which come to be informed by a ‘do something’ approach rather than a long-term policy vision. Apparently positive results of supply-side interventions can also be misleading, as, instead of creating new jobs, they may simply “move some youth to the front of the employment queue at the expense of others” (Oosterom, 2018: 1).

Recent interventions aim to overcome this supply-side bias by acting concomitantly on the demand and supply side of the labour market, based on a more integrated intervention model (as shown by the example of **Work in Progress!** below).

3.1.2 From job seekers to job creators: promoting youth entrepreneurship

Promotion of youth entrepreneurship is an approach that garners much enthusiasm among policy-makers and donors. Programmes in this category aim to support young people in starting a business or improving the performance of an existing household or micro-enterprise (Betcherman and Khan 2015; 2018).

While, on the surface, interventions supporting entrepreneurship appear to overcome the limitations of supply-side interventions while avoiding the challenges of structural change on the demand side,⁶⁸ they do not actually resolve the problem of low demand for young people’s labour:

“Rather than seeking payments from employers (wages), young entrepreneurs must instead strive to sell their labour to the consuming public directly, in the form of goods and services. However, the structural constraints of African markets resurface as the public’s constrained purchasing power, which in turn severely limits what young people can achieve as entrepreneurs” (Mader, 2018: 5).

African markets, constrained by low purchasing power, are easily saturated by new businesses – a problem compounded by lack of innovation and thus lack of variety in business offer.⁶⁹ The expectation that young entrepreneurs will seamlessly transition from being ‘job seekers’ to being ‘job creators’ people is often based on a misconception on how informal economy enterprises work. Most informal small businesses remain small, do not create additional jobs, and often fail within a matter of years⁷⁰ (Mader, 2018).⁷¹

Youth entrepreneurship-oriented approaches are often driven by the observation that most young people in the Global South are already ‘living as entrepreneurs’, demonstrating remarkable self-help spirit (Mader, 2018). Because African youth are “naturally innovative”, this narrative goes, being self-employed is their preferred choice. This point of view, however, risks conflating growth-oriented entrepreneurship with entrepreneurial survival activities and the general youth experiences of ‘hustling’ (discussed in Section 2). James Sumberg and Stephen Hunt note that this discursive construction reflects “a strong element of essentialistic thinking”: first, it separates ‘youth’ from the rest of the population, and second, it attributes to this sub-set of the population specific “characteristics, qualities, motivations and abilities” that they possess by virtue of the fact of being ‘young’ (Sumberg and Hunt, 2019: 131).

67 Chesters and Wyn (2019) write that for many young people, “using their educational qualifications to find security in work is a bit like ‘chasing rainbows’”.

68 MacDonald and Giazitzoglu (2019), looking at the UK, note the recurring emphasis on and celebration of youth’s entrepreneurial spirit in times of unemployment and growing job insecurity.

69 As a Tanzania young man (quoted in Banks, 2016: 11) summarises, “If one person is seen to be successful selling bananas, another will start up next to them”.

70 This rate of failure is by no means unique to Africa: in the United States, according to data from the Bureau of Labour Statistics, 20 per cent of small businesses fail in their first year, and about 50 per cent of small businesses fail after five years in business. See Dautovic (2019).

71 In fact, Africa shows a dearth of mid-size enterprises (Quak and Flynn, 2020).

The idea that African young people prefer to be self-employed is commonly held, but not supported by evidence. In fact, self-employment is often the only option opened to them either because salaried jobs do not exist in their context or because they don't have the 'right' connections to access them.⁷² Young people in Africa often engage in small businesses "as a stopgap", while continuing to seek waged work (Mader, 2018: 5).

There is an often-ignored tension between the current policy and implementation focus on self-employment and entrepreneurship, on the one hand, and the ability of employment in the informal economy to meet the SDG commitment to 'decent work for all', on the other (Sumberg et al. 2019).

3.1.3 Youth employment in conflict-affected and fragile settings

In conflict-affected and fragile settings, the same challenges highlighted above apply, but they are further compounded by the context. Low-quality infrastructures, high transaction costs, limit access to markets, and low purchasing power of local populations are just some of the challenges faced by programming in these contexts. Economies are ill-equipped to absorb new workers, irrespective of their level of skills (Maclay and Ozerdem, 2010, 349). In short, limited economic opportunities for young people are linked more to the overall challenges of the economy in post-conflict and fragile economies than to the specificity of their age (Peters et al., 2010, 75; UN et al., 2010, 4-5).

As discussed in Section 1, informality is a common reality in these contexts, and often takes malignant forms that are strongly connected with the legacy of conflict and continuing dynamics of violence, as war economies and criminal networks continue to cast their shadow well after the signing of a peace agreement.

Work in Progress! In Egypt, Somalia and Nigeria

Work in Progress! is a four-year⁷³ programme that aims to enable young people from diverse backgrounds to generate sustainable living wages and create optimism about their future in three countries: Nigeria (Lagos and Edo State); Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria) and Somalia (self-governing region of Somaliland). The programme is the result of a collaboration between OxfamNovib (the Netherlands) the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Butterfly Works, and Venture Capital for Africa (VC4A) - along with various local partners in the three countries.

Financed through the Local Employment for African Development (LEAD) programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Work in Progress! was initially designed with the stated aim of reducing illegal migration, by providing young people (the segment of the population most likely to migrate) with opportunities for income or the possibility to set up or grow their own business. It soon became clear, however, that it was virtually impossible to translate this aspirational goal (reducing illegal migration) into concrete indicators and targets. For one thing, it is extremely difficult to systematically 'track' former participants one or two years down the line: their failure to respond to follow-up contacts is not necessarily a sign that they have left the country. Besides, plans to migrate (particularly through non-official channels) are typically (and understandably) kept secret and shared only with close family. More broadly, the reasons leading to the decision to migrate are varied and multifaceted, and cannot be reduced simply to employment status. Based on these considerations, the requirement to demonstrate success in reducing illegal migration was therefore dropped early on in the life of the programme.

Work in Progress! is based on a holistic intervention model, working simultaneously on the 'demand' and 'supply' side of the employment equation, and on influencing the environment of young people looking for a job and young entrepreneurs. The project is based on three pathways: pathway 1) soft employability training, digital design training; pathway 2) support to start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), and pathway 3) improvement of the enabling environment for youth employment and entrepreneurship through changes in policies, laws, practices, attitudes and beliefs. Central to the programme is the recognition that, while working to improve young people's skills, self-confidence and motivation is important, progress depends crucially on systemic change at the level of government, the private sector, and society at large. While this model is similar for the three countries, the way in which these pathways play out and the relative weight put on each on them depends on the specific context.

Modalities of targeting participants also vary according to the programme's components and country context: for example, training on soft employability skills is aimed at educated youth and is advertised in Universities, high schools and youth centres, while training on digital design is primarily targeted at disadvantaged young people living in slums, and more direct engagement of programme staff is needed in order to reach out to potential participants.⁷⁴

72 Contrary to the widespread assumption that young people see entrepreneurship as their preferred choice, Ghada Barsoum discussed how in Egypt they want to work in the public sector: "youth in Egypt want to work in the public service. These new entrants to the labour market also note that they would accept a lesser pay at the public sector than at the private sector", as it provides more social status and respect (Barsoum, 2015: 205). Similarly, Richard Mallet and Teddy Atim note that self-employment is often a constrained choice, "grounded less in any sort of inherent aspiration to become an entrepreneur, and more in the young people's negative experiences of employment" and the dearth of available opportunities for decent salaried work (Mallet and Atim, 2014: 32-33).

73 Initially funded for three years (2016-2018), the programme was then extended for a fourth year, ending on 31 December 2019. The project will continue its second phase for another 4 years (2020-2023). The total budget for the period 2016-2019 was 10.4 million euros.

74 For more on Work in Progress! please visit the programme's website: <https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/donors-partners/about-oxfam/projects-and-programs/workinprogress>.

3.2 Do employment programmes build peace?

A significant proportion of programmes examined in the 2016 *Jobs Aid Peace* report claimed a peacebuilding purpose of some type – varying from short-term stabilisation to longer-term promotion of social cohesion. When it comes to their contents and activities, most of these programmes did not notably differ from ‘regular’ employment programmes. However, programmes with an explicit peacebuilding aim were more likely to identify youth as a target group, although the definition of what constitutes ‘youth’ varies considerably across programmes (Brück et al., 2016: 50).

In the programme documents reviewed for that study, youth unemployment is frequently referred to as a ‘security problem’, confirming a strongly held assumption that providing employment for young people is instrumental in turning them from a conflict risk to a factor of peace consolidation (Brück et al., 2016: 50). Some programmes also include specific peacebuilding activities, alongside employment promotion – for example, youth socialisation activities (e.g. theatre plays, movie screenings, sports tournaments) or debates on citizenship, non-violence and other peace-related themes, particularly targeted to youth. Even when stating a peacebuilding purpose, programme documents remain remarkably vague in elaborating how planned (employment) activities were expected to lead to expected (peacebuilding) results: few of them included an explicit, evidence-based and contextually-relevant Theory of Change.⁷⁵

The analytical framework put forward in the 2016 report distinguishes between *employment impact* and *peacebuilding impact*. In other words, the fact that a programme is successful in creating jobs (or, more in general, improving the employability of its participants) does not, in itself, guarantee positive results on stability and peace. The latter will only occur if the assumptions about transfer mechanisms⁷⁶ hold true in the particular context, and if the intervention is designed and implemented in a way that allows such theorised mechanism to be actualised in practice. The peacebuilding impact may directly derive from the employment impact (in a very simple scenario: through participation in the programme, individual gain employment and therefore they opt against participating in violence), but it may also potentially happen through other channels (for example, participation in the programme may, in itself, change individuals’ perceptions, even though it does not translate into better employment conditions).⁷⁷

The 2016 report further distinguishes between impact on *programme participants* and *impact for society at large*. Even the largest and best-resourced employment programme is bound to reach only a very limited portion of the potentially eligible youth population in a given context. So, even if an intervention is successful in improving the situation of its participants, this may not necessarily translate into benefits for the whole of society. Non-participants may even suffer as a result, either because of negative spill-over effects from the programme, or because their non-participation reinforces pre-existing grievances. These negative externalities may ultimately offset whatever positive impact the programme has on participants.

Combined, the above considerations allow to construct a simple framework for assessing impact:

Table 2 – Different levels of impact (adapted from Brück et al., 2016)

	On programme participants	Beyond programme participants
Employment impact	[A] Are participants better off as a result of participation in the programme, in terms of their employment prospects ⁷⁸ ?	[B] Did the programme result in a positive impact on the employment situation in general?
Peacebuilding impact	[C] Did the programme reduce participants’ involvement in violence, and/or strengthen their contribution to peace?	[D] Did the programme make society as a whole more peaceful?

⁷⁵ Theory of Change is an increasingly used approach for the design, planning and evaluation of development interventions (see Stein and Valters, 2012; Vogel, 2012). At its most basic, Theory of Change can be understood as an explanation of how the activities undertaken by an intervention are expected to contribute to a chain of results culminating in the intended impact(s). The approach helps to unpack and critically examine assumptions about how change is expected to happen in a particular context at a particular time.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that the three transfer mechanisms listed above are not, necessarily, an exhaustive list: programmes may well identify other ways in which employment results are expected to translate into peacebuilding impact.

⁷⁷ This is referred to in the 2016 report as ‘programme channel’. For example, programmes that ‘keep young people busy’ through training or internship at a time of crisis or potential upheaval, such as elections, may (in principle) achieve a peacebuilding impact (at least in a short-term, ‘stabilisation’ sense) even without necessarily increasing participants’ employment prospects. For example, Darkwah (2013) finds that training programmes in Ghana have had the function of ‘keeping hope alive’, even when they do not immediately result in actual jobs for youth.

⁷⁸ ‘Employment prospects’ should be understood here not merely in terms of having a job, but also, importantly, in terms of the quality of that job, and its potential to provide for a better life for the individual workers and their dependents.

The report found that peacebuilding impact is notably lacking as a Monitoring and Evaluation focus of reviewed programmes. As a result, the majority of evaluations focus on the upper left corner of the table [A], assuming, rather than demonstrating, a corresponding peacebuilding impact for society at large [D].

Even with regard to the employment impact on participants [A], final reports and evaluations limit themselves at the level of outputs, rather than assessing the impact on employment status and perspectives of participants: for example, they may note the number of participants who graduated from a training programme, but do not attempt to assess whether participants are better off as a result. When an impact on beneficiaries is found, this assessment is generally carried out without recourse to any type of counterfactual. Only a minority of reviewed evaluation attempted to assess the employment impact of the programme beyond its own participants [B].

Peacebuilding results, when mentioned at all, tend to be hypothesised rather than stated as a firm finding. Some evaluation reports even include a disclaimer about not being in a position to assess peace-related results, noting, in particular, the small scale of interventions vis-à-vis the magnitude of the problem – and, by implication, the necessarily limited results that even a successful intervention can be expected to bring about. While this objection makes logical sense, it does stand in stark contrast with the ambitious ex-ante peacebuilding statements contained in programme documents.

Programme documents sometimes talk of ‘catalytic’ or ‘multiplier’ effects that the intervention is expected to have beyond their limited pool of participants [D]. The assumption is that the programme will somehow put in motion a virtuous process leading to positive macro-level change. This multiplier effect is intended to happen by ‘signalling’ to communities and society at large (beyond direct beneficiaries) that change is possible, that there are reasons for hope, and, in post-conflict contexts in particular, that peace dividends are forthcoming.⁷⁹ Yet there is little or no analysis, at the evaluation stage, of how such intended catalytic mechanisms have worked out in practice.

The lack of systematic consideration of unintended negative effects represents a key finding of the 2016 report. If one moves from the assumption that access to jobs is crucial for peacebuilding, it follows that programmes that aim to create jobs also have a strong potential for ‘doing harm’. Yet such unintended negative impacts can easily be overlooked, unless an awareness of this risk is explicitly incorporated in Monitoring and Evaluation design.

Programme example: Youth Opportunity Program in Uganda

The Ugandan government's Youth Opportunity Program (YOP), launched in 2005 as part of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, was designed to address the persistent youth unemployment programme prevalent in post-conflict Northern Uganda, seen as a source of negative economic and security issues. The programme provided start-up grants for young people to transition to self-employment, with the explicit objective to reduce antisocial behaviour and conflict (Blattman et al., 2013; International Alert, 2013).

Specific objectives of the YOP were:

- to provide the youth with specific vocational skills and toolkits to enable them to earn incomes and improve their livelihood;
- to contribute towards community reconciliation and conflict management; and
- to build capacity of NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs) and vocational training institutes (VTIs) to respond to the needs of the youth (International Alert, 2013).

The programme was aimed at young people aged 16-35, who were encouraged to self-organise into groups, identify an area of interest for skill development, and apply for funding. Successfully approved proposals would receive a cash transfer.

A randomised control trial study showed that the YOP had an impressive economic impact, for both men and women, thus showing that employment programmes can support labour market outcomes even in contexts of crisis. However, these economic gains were not matched by positive outcomes in term of stability (Blattman et al. 2013).

A follow-up study on the same programme re-assesses these positive results a few years later, and found that “these start-up grants acted more as a kick-start than a lift out of poverty” (Blattman et al. 2018: 1), with the differences between grantees and control group largely levelling off in the medium term.

⁷⁹ For example, the pilot programme Labor-intensive employment for youth and women in the lead-up to and immediate post-electoral period in Guinea-Bissau (financed by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and implemented by UNDP in the period 2013-2014) provided short-term opportunities for youth and women in the lead-up to and immediate aftermath of the elections, through rehabilitation of high-visibility socio-economic infrastructures. While only a small number of people were to be directly involved, the high visibility of the interventions was meant to have a catalytic effect and expand its peacebuilding benefits beyond direct participants. The main peacebuilding impact was supposed to operate through the ‘signalling’ of the programme to the larger population. For a discussion of the meaning of ‘catalytic effect’ for interventions funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, see Scharbatke-Church et al. (2010).

Programme example: Lessons from a programme for Palestinian job-seekers in Lebanon

The programme *Empowerment of youth at risk through job creation programme in areas of tensions* was funded through the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)'s Immediate Response Facility and implemented jointly by ILO, UNICEF and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from 2011 to 2013. It focused specifically on job creation and empowerment of Palestinian youth in Lebanon, a group seen as particularly at risk for violent mobilisation.

The programme design relied heavily on the 'contact transfer mechanism', and had the explicit aim of reinforcing positive interaction and creating common ground between Palestinian and Lebanese communities. Employment generation was seen as "a way to build trust between the Palestinian and Lebanese communities and consolidate peace" (Zakkar, 2013: 20). As stated in the programme document,

"[p]lacement and referral of Palestinian job seekers to training [...] and employment can prove to be a useful tool to build trust between the Lebanese and Palestinian communities. [...] The project will favor an increased interaction between the two communities enabling them to identify common grounds and understand each other's perspectives. Ultimately, it will contribute to reducing the existing animosities between the two groups" (United Nations PBF, 2011: 4).

However, programme evaluations (both midterm and final) suggest that, rather than a lack of interaction, the crucial problem was the disadvantaged position of Palestinian job-seekers vis-à-vis Lebanese employers, including frequent cases of exploitation:

"The Jobseekers who attended the focus group identified that one of the main reasons for engaging with [the programme] is the perception that [...] they would be somewhat better protected against exploitation by Lebanese employers. Several identified how on previous occasions they had not received payment for previous work done or had been abused in one way or another. The reality that some Lebanese employers appear to be exploiting Palestinians is clearly a source of tension between the two communities which should be addressed in order to promote [peacebuilding] objectives of engendering better relations between them". (Moran, 2013: 58-59)

A key finding of the final evaluation was that the project's Theory of Change was based on a misleading reading of the context:

"The project assumed that the placement and referral of Palestinian job seekers in training and employment would automatically contribute to conflict resolution and dialogue between Palestinian refugees and the Lebanese community. There was not enough emphasis on decent working conditions and social inclusion" (Zakkar, 2013: 8)

In other words, the programme had adopted the view that 'giving more jobs to Palestinians' and 'giving them more exposure to Lebanese' would build peace. This did not consider that the Palestinians already had experience with Lebanese employers through exploitative working conditions, which left beneficiaries in a condition of vulnerability, and did not "create the conditions which would deter youth from eventually becoming [...] engaged in violence". (Zakkar, 2013: 22).

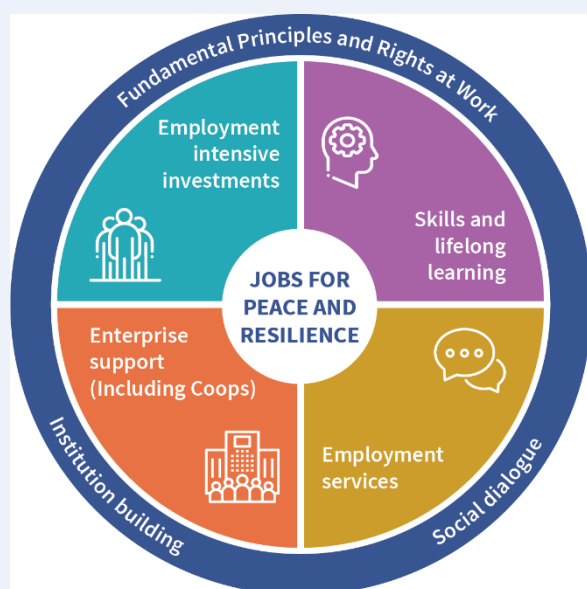
3.3 Unpacking the notion of Employment for peacebuilding programmes

Employment for Peacebuilding programmes are understood here as programmes where "a peacebuilding focus (and effort to address one or more drivers of conflict) is intentional and embedded in the design and objectives (outcomes/objectives and outputs with specific indicators) of a programme that also seeks to address specific employment issues" (ILO, 2019: 9). What defines these programmes is a complementary interaction between the employment and the peacebuilding objectives. Importantly, the mere addition of peacebuilding activities to an otherwise unchanged employment programme does not turn it into an Employment for Peacebuilding programme.

The ILO 2019 Guide on How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes distinguishes Employment for Peacebuilding Programmes from 'conflict-sensitive employment programmes', i.e. programmes that adhere to the principles of conflict-sensitive development - seeking to ensure that design, implementation and outcomes do not undermine peace or exacerbate conflict ('do no harm') and contribute to peace where possible (within the given priorities).⁸⁰ While all programmes should aim to be conflict-sensitive, incorporating a peacebuilding lens is a specific choice, which has important implications for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

⁸⁰The handbook provides detailed guidance on how to include specific peacebuilding objectives in the design, monitoring and evaluation of employment promotion programmes in fragile settings. It lists specific outputs, outcome statements and indicators that enable the tailoring of programmes to peacebuilding objectives. The handbook also offers tools, such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions and participant surveys, which aim to change the way the ILO measures its outcomes in Jobs for Peace and Resilience programmes. (ILO, 2019a).

ILO Jobs for Peace and Resilience



A key example of Employment for Peacebuilding programme is the flagship ILO programme Jobs for Peace and Resilience (JPR). Guided by Recommendation 205, the ILO's Jobs for Peace and Resilience flagship programme combines various ILO approaches to create jobs, reinforce skills and promote the private sector and local economic development as ways to contribute to more peaceful and resilient societies. Through its modular, local resource-based approach, the JPR focuses on the following key objectives:

- Providing direct and immediate job creation and longer term income security through employment-intensive investments;
- Improving employability through skills development;
- Generating decent and productive employment through entrepreneurship, enterprise and cooperative support;
- Bridging labour supply and demand through employment services.

Considering that weak governance, lack of dialogue and rights violations can slow down or impede crisis recovery and peace processes, the JPR also places a strong focus on institution building, social dialogue and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). The JPR contributes to the Decent Work Agenda by pursuing interrelated and mutually reinforcing strategies through a downstream-upstream approach, where delivering quick and tangible benefits in terms of job creation, skills development, employment services and enabling business environment promotes inclusive and effective labour market governance, which is essential for sustaining peace and resilience in fragile situations.

Since 2016, JPR programmes are being implemented in the following African countries: CAR, Comoros, DRC, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone, the Sahel region, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zambia.

Programme example: ILO's 'Jobs for Peace and Resilience' programme in the Central African Republic

In the Central African Republic (CAR), recurring armed conflicts have weakened public and private institutions and led to the weakening of social and economic infrastructures. The labour market is characterised by predominant informality and the absence of social protection mechanism. Young people are greatly affected by unemployment, under-employment and bad working conditions.

To address this challenge, the government, supported by the international community, has elaborated the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (in French: *Plan National de Relèvement et de Consolidation de la Paix* - 2017-2021). The connection between decent work and peacebuilding is featured prominently in the Plan:

"Economic recovery will support employment creation and will open prospects for marginalised youth who would otherwise engage in banditry or join armed groups. In so doing, youth will help to mitigate violence, support the peace process and become an agent of positive and transformative change in society" (CAR, 2016: 53⁸¹).

In this context, the ILO has been implementing, since 2018, a project aimed at promoting peace and generating decent and productive employment (*Promotion de la paix et création d'emplois décents et productifs*), within the framework of the Jobs for Peace and Resilience flagship programme. The underlying Theory of Change stems from the idea that unemployment, lack of decent work and social and economic exclusion reinforce the sense of social injustice, and constitute one of the risk factors for conflict.

The programme aims to reduce the risks of conflict and consolidate peace, particularly in high risk zones, through two mechanisms: in the short term, by providing employment for marginalised youth through labour-intensive public works; and in the longer term, by addressing conflict factors through the promotion of social dialogue and a right-based approach. The programme intervenes at *the institutional level*, through the reinforcement of labour market institutions and support to the creation and strengthening of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME); and at *the operational level*, by reinforcing the capacity of communities to generate employment opportunities in spite of crisis.

81 Original in French; translated by the author.

It is worth reiterating that ‘what works’ for employment creation and ‘what works’ for peacebuilding are two distinct, if often confused, questions. It is possible (and frequent) for a programme to generate employment without having a peacebuilding impact; and it is also possible, at least in principle, for a programme to promote peacebuilding without having a net or sustained employment effect. However, because the assumption of most programmes continues to be that the peacebuilding impact will be generated through a better employment status for participants, the question of how successful employment programmes have fared ‘in employment terms’ cannot be avoided.

3.4 Use of Public Work Programmes for stability and social cohesion

Labour-intensive public works programmes (PWP) are common social protection tools in low-income settings.⁸² In essence, these programmes require that beneficiaries work in order to receive a cash payment (the ‘cash for work’ model) or in-kind transfer (e.g. food vouchers). The model is attractive to both governments and donors since it combines protective and productive roles while avoiding welfare dependency and labour market distortions often associated with other support programmes (Sakketa and von Braun, 2019). These programmes have a potential double dividend, resulting in temporary jobs that provide wage income to participant, and in the creation of infrastructures and other public goods. Improving longer-term employability is typically only a secondary objective (Betcherman and Khan 2015; Gehrke and Hartwig 2018).

PWPs have been widely promoted as tools to protect poor households in the face of large shocks, such as natural disasters, slack agricultural seasons. More recently, PWPs are getting attention in fragile states as tools to quickly restart local economic activities and rebuild infrastructures destroyed by the conflict (creating an immediate, visible ‘peace dividend’ for local communities), while at the same time targeting the employment of high-risk groups (such as former combatants) thus supporting short-term stabilisation (Gehrke and Hartwig, 2018).

Most countries in Africa have experience with PWPs, either as an ongoing element of the social protection system (e.g., South Africa, Ethiopia⁸³, Senegal) or as a temporary intervention to mitigate the effects of a shock like the food, fuel, and financial crises. For example, the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone both introduced cash-for-work PWPs as a response to the 2007-2008 food prices crisis, with support from the World Bank.⁸⁴ The post-conflict status of the two countries created even greater urgency for a crisis response, as food scarcity was feared as a potential trigger for a relapse into violence (Andrews et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2012).

Typical examples of activities undertaken during PWPs include road construction and maintenance, irrigation, reforestation, and soil conservation (Sakketa and von Braun, 2019).⁸⁵ Because they have multiple purposes, PWPs almost inevitably raise trade-offs. Many PW programmes take a community-centred approach in project selection, which often leads to a wide variety of different activities being undertaken at a relatively small scale. Also, programmes tend to have explicit targets regarding the labour intensity of the activities being undertaken, again posing trade-offs: selected projects may not be the most useful, but rather those that provide the most workdays. Given the low level of mechanisation, ensuring adequate quality standards can also be a challenge (Gehrke and Hartwig, 2018).

82 Public works programmes have a long history. The origins of the concept are often traced back to pre-revolutionary France, where the poor could receive donations as a compensation for work, and the 1817 Poor Employment Act in England (Sakketa and von Braun, 2019). The American New Deal remains one of the largest examples of public works, to respond to the needs for relief and recovery from the Great Depression (Scott Smith, 2006). In Nazi Germany, PWPs were used to alleviate unemployment problems and build highways (Sakketa and von Braun, 2019). British colonial administrators introduced PWPs in India to provide famine relief. South Asian countries have a long history and sound experience with PWPs, especially during the slack agricultural season to protect the poor from severe consumption shortfall (Subbarao, 2003). Much of the current momentum for introducing and scaling up public works programmes derives from India's experience in the 1970s, when the state of Maharashtra was hit by a massive drought that forced 70 per cent of its rural population into poverty (Subbarao et al., 2013).

83 The Productive Safety Net Project (PSNP) in Ethiopia is one of the largest in the world. It was launched in 2004 to improve the country's resilience to drought-induced shocks. See Hailu and Ali (2018).

84 In Sierra Leone, the Cash for Work Program was set up in 2008, primarily to cushion the adverse impact of food prices increase; it was scaled up in 2009 and then again in 2010 as a component of the World Bank-supported Youth Employment Support Project (YESP) (Andrews et al., 2012). Liberia launched a Cash for Work Temporary Employment Project in 2009, followed by the Youth Employment Skills Project (YES) (Andrews et al., 2011).

85 For example, in Sierra Leone, the labour content of the works projects needed to be above 60 per cent, so that the projects could enable a high share of temporary jobs creation. Roads rehabilitation projects were often favoured because they had the potential to absorb large numbers of beneficiaries at once, as well as being critical for communities to access markets (Andrews et al., 2012).

The setting of the 'right wage' is another aspect that is likely to raise trade-offs. A widely practised design principle in public works programmes is the application of a below market wage rate to ensure self-selection of the neediest into the programme – the understanding being that individuals with other income alternatives will not be attracted by the unskilled nature of the work and the low wages (Andrews et al., 2012).⁸⁶ Yet where poverty and unemployment are widespread and affect a large part of the youth population, it is very difficult to determine a 'low enough but not too low' wage, which ensure self-selection but at the same time politically (and ethically) acceptable (Andrews, 2012: 17).⁸⁷

Even with a lower-than-market wage, selection of participants can be a challenge. Evaluations of the World Bank-supported PWPs in post-conflict Liberia and Sierra Leone found problematic selection practices (such as 'ghost names' in payrolls, and contractors bringing in their relatives and friends rather than complying with pre-set selection criteria), along with mismanagement, low transparency and lack of redress and grievance management mechanisms. From a social cohesion perspective, the challenge of achieving 'good targeting' should not be underestimated (Andrews et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2012).

PWPs raise important gender issues. Most public works activities involve hard manual labour, and are often considered socially inappropriate for women. Efforts to make public works more gender-sensitive include reserving lighter activities for women, identifying specific tasks for women, providing childcare, and introducing set quotas for women participation (Watson et al., 2016).⁸⁸ There are also health, violence and sexual harassment problems associated with construction activities.

PWPs are costly and demanding from an administrative perspective, and their cost-effectiveness is typically low.⁸⁹ Therefore, such programmes can be "a costly gamble" for post-conflict countries: good functioning requires a high level of oversight, which may overstretch the already weak country institutions; and effective delivery can be hard in contexts of poor governance and continuing political instability (Rosas and Sabarwal, 2016: 3).

While social cohesion does not typically feature as a primary objective of PWPs, it has been argued that PWPs may have an extra value-added vis-à-vis other safety net instruments in this respect, owing to specific design and implementation features such as community participation, and creation of assets that have positive spill-over effects for the community. There are indeed examples of PWPs promoting voice and participation, mostly through the engagement of communities in the choice of activities and the selection of participants. PWPs can therefore become an entry point in interacting with local government officials, thereby bolstering local accountability mechanisms as well. They can also, potentially, promote positive contacts between workers from different groups or background, or between refugees and host communities.

These are, however, specific design elements rather than intrinsic conditions of PWPs. In the design process of programmes, it is important to take into account features that may undermine social cohesion and lead to social exclusion of particularly vulnerable groups.⁹⁰ Public works may enhance social cohesion, but -if poorly designed- they may undermine such objectives, potentially 'doing harm' rather than contributing to peace (Andrews and Kryeziu, 2013).

⁸⁶ The lower-than-market rate also helps to explain why PWPs are more popular in rural rather than in urban areas. In Botswana's Labour-Intensive Rural Public Works Programme, the wage rate was fixed uniformly across the country, at 70 per cent of the lowest minimum statutory wage rate for unskilled formal sector workers. In remote rural villages, this level of payment was higher than local norms and was perceived as relatively generous, and volunteers for work often exceeded the supply of jobs offered. Nearer urban areas, however, this wage was much less attractive, and only the poorest – those who could find no alternative paid work – registered for public works' (Devereux and Solomon, 2006:9).

⁸⁷ Because public works involve heavy manual labour, workers are expending time and energy, which reduces the net value of the payment they receive. According to some estimates, there have been cases when participants have expended more kilocalories by working on the public works project than they received in food rations, leaving them worse off in nutritional terms than before (Watson et al., 2016). The time input requirement, especially in rural areas, may also prevent people from building up their own livelihoods, potentially creating dependency on the system.

⁸⁸ There may be a negative stigma associated with women's participation. This emerges, for example, in the case of the 'N'Djamena Nadif' (Clean N'Djamena) programme in Chad, a cash-for-work programme particularly focused on women, which focused on road cleaning (Watson et al., 2016).

⁸⁹ In terms of cost-effectiveness, an assessment of PWPs needs to understand which benefits and costs these programmes entail relative to other interventions, such as Cash Transfer interventions (Gehrke and Hartwig, 2018). Where skill acquisition happens through on-the-job training, PW programmes could have a clear advantage over Cash Transfer programmes. However, the quality of skills acquisition and the transferability of these skills to the private sector is dubious, given that PWPs activities are typically low-skilled and short-term. Conversely, some PW programmes, such as the Expanded Public Works Program' (EPWP) in South Africa, incorporate more formal, longer-term training components. However, such longer term commitments can clash with the short-term nature of PWPs, and jeopardise the functioning of the self-selection mechanism, by attracting better-off, and more ambitious, participants. (Gehrke and Hartwig, 2018).

⁹⁰ Ivaschenko et al. (2017), using a Randomised Control Trial with urban youth in Papua New Guinea, demonstrates that the programme had strong and healthy effects on participants' peer group and behaviour, but more limited effects on the socio-economic causes of crime.

Programme example: ILO Employment Intensive Investments Programme (EIIP)

The ILO Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) has evolved over the past 40 years in over 70 countries, going from a series of labour-intensive infrastructure programmes to a comprehensive and integrated package of interventions, contributing to improved infrastructures and decent jobs.

The EIIP promotes employment-intensive infrastructural investments in three main ways:

- at the macro level, by providing advice to governments and supporting the creation of an enabling environment, promoting appropriate policies, legislation, and regulation;
- at the meso level, through institutional development and capacity-building, working with governments, the private sector, and civil society;
- at the micro level, by working with municipalities and local communities through active local-level planning and contacting to create the maximum number of productive jobs with labour-based technologies. The programme also works with communities and local stakeholders to promote Decent Work standards in projects.

In order to promote employment intensity in infrastructure investments, the programme uses a threefold strategy: first, it focuses on activities that are by default labour intensive (such as forestry works, land and environmental improvements, community works and sanitation); second, it adds additional labour-intensive activities to required capital-intensive works (such as slope protection, drainage, construction of sidewalks); third, it modifies technologies and increases labour intensities of selected construction activities (mostly in road rehabilitation and maintenance works).

Programme example: EIIP as a response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan

In July 2016, as part of its response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, the ILO started the implementation of the EIIP in Jordan.⁹¹ The programme aims to improve the living conditions of Syrian refugees and Jordanians through improved rural infrastructure by using employment-intensive approaches and increased employability and access to the labour market. At the time of writing, the programme is in its fourth phase of implementation (2019-2020).

In preparation for starting the EIIP in Jordan, the ILO commissioned a labour supply study to establish some indicators on the extent of labour availability (willingness to work and ability to work). This includes identifying wage rates that were appropriate for the context, taking into account existing work practices and levels of remuneration of unskilled labour employed in Jordan.

Infrastructure projects have included improvement of tertiary roads, agricultural infrastructure (water catchments, terracing and planting), as well as school maintenance and building additional classrooms in high-density schools. Alongside these project activities, the EIIP in Jordan works on the institutional front by improving the regulatory framework for work permits; disseminate clear instructions on work permits to relevant stakeholders; train Government engineers on employment-intensive approaches; develop and build capacity on systems and contract specifications; enhance the capacity of the private sector to implement employment-intensive approaches. Finally, the programme aims at enhancing the skills of both refugees and Jordanians, thus contributing to an easier exit from the programme.

To ensure transparency of the recruitment process, a balloting system has been introduced to the project, to ensure transparency of the recruitment process, to build mutual trust between workers and municipal leaders, and to promote community stability and social cohesion.

⁹¹ The Programme was funded by the German Development Bank (KfW).

3.5 'Do no harm': recognising the risk of programme capture

What derives from the above discussion is that who gets which jobs, and how, is just as important, from a peacebuilding perspective, as the overall quantity of jobs created. Whether programmes are successful or not will depend, to a large extent, on the way in which they interact with the political economy of job access and distribution, discussed in Section 1. As summarised by Marjoke Oosterom:

“Current donor-funded interventions show limited attention to understanding the politics of youth interventions, or to come up with strategies that mitigate the risk that precious funds get channelled the wrong way. Preoccupied with the more economic side of the story, questions like which sector or value chain is likely to promote job creation, which technology can promote youth entrepreneurship etc., the political economy of the youth employment issue gets overlooked. Yet this is ever so important in all fragile settings” (Oosterom, 2019).

Donor-funded interventions can come to be interpreted by young people through the lenses of navigating precarious realities, as possible sources of income but also of connections and social status. Given the role that patrimonialism plays in job allocation, and the fact that donor-funded jobs are such a coveted resource, there is a very real risk that programmes can be ‘captured’ by powerful interests and feed into pre-existing dynamics of favouritism and clientelism. Indeed, there is no logical reason to believe that ‘connectocracy’ will magically disappear just because the jobs are provided through donor-funded programmes.

An evaluation commissioned by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP) – a five-year program (2013-2017) funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) with the goal of reducing violent conflict – found that youth employment programmes were used by local politicians as “a source of funds to mobilize political support” and “as political point-scoring between and within parties over job creation” (NSRP, 2014: 29, 33). Flawed outreach and beneficiary selection processes left ample room for “manipulation by officials according to political, ethnic or religious affiliation” (NSRP, 2014: 9). Many interviewed youth claimed that only those “close to godfathers” could get access to the programme (NSRP, 2014: 28). Ultimately, for many young people, these projects “have served to exacerbate a sense of exclusion and frustration, with opportunities perceived to be unjustly distributed, largely ineffective or otherwise beyond reach. [...] This state of affairs risks exacerbating, rather than reducing, conflict tensions where perceptions of exclusion are a factor” (NSRP, 2014: 8, 29).

In a similar vein, Marc Sommers recalls conversations with members of the poor and marginalized youth in Sierra Leone, who saw participation in donor-funded employment programmes as an unattainable wish, and not just because there were “few slots and high demand for them”, but also because “nepotism drove access to the treasured program”. As local chiefs could not afford to pay supporters, “becoming program participants was a compensation in another form”. In so doing, the programme “ran the risk of negatively affecting large numbers of young people that were not in the programme. In unsteady Sierra Leone, a country with enduring legacies of inequality, corruption, and violent resistance, such a result promises to exacerbate youth anger and fatalism in the face of still more elite favoritism” (Sommers, 2015: 2).

In conclusion, programmes do not happen in sterile lab conditions: we need to gain a much better understanding of the way in which they interact with the environment they are part of, including posing uncomfortable but essential questions about how the discourse on participation and inclusion can be tactically used to promote different local agendas.

3.6 Who gets the good jobs? Dilemmas of targeting

The selection of programme beneficiaries plays a crucial role in relation to the political economy of jobs, as it inevitably generates ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. This leads us to the crucial question of how governments, international agencies, and donors select out of the large population of unemployed youth, the ‘lucky few’ who will participate in employment programmes. The extensive definition of youth at the policy level, particularly in Africa, as discussed above, has immediate and practical implications for youth programmes: as the pool of *potential* participants is expanded, it is even more difficult to identify who should, in practice, be included.

Involvement of community groups in the targeting process is frequently used in donor-funded projects, as part of a broader commitment to participation. A review of youth-focused interventions funded by the UNPBF post-2015 confirms this observation (see Annex 1 for a list of projects reviewed⁹²). Apart from the common practice of establishing a quota for women, selection criteria are generally very loose. It is often stated that selection will be done in a participatory manner, in collaboration with local stakeholders (such as local government authorities, civil society organisations, youth organisations, community-based organisations, traditional authorities). Less well recognised is the risk that community-based selection of participants may be informed by personal and group interests.⁹³

While there is often a reference to 'pre-established criteria', there are no details in programme documents as to what these criteria are. In recognition of the fact that youth is not a homogenous category, there is an emphasis in various programmes to 'profiling' youth, to ensure that the selected group represents a cross-section of different sub-categories (e.g. linguistic, ethnic, religious).

There is a strong focus on being inclusive. For example, the programme document *'Pérenniser la paix en Tunisie par l'inclusion des jeunes au niveau local'* ('Making peace last in Tunisia through the inclusion of youth at the local level' - PBF/IRF-288) states that "exclusion criteria will be avoided". It can be argued, however, that any inclusion criterion is necessarily an exclusion criterion, and the only way to actually completely avoid exclusion criteria would be to open the programme to everyone. Given that the project can only reach a minority of the population, however, this means only postponing selection decisions further down the line (including the inevitable 'exclusion').

When some indication of criteria is given, these normally revert around 'vulnerability' and 'risk'. For example, the programme on Youth Political Empowerment in Somalia (PBF/IRF-205) states that the programme will prioritise "young women and men with high vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups including young women and men from minority clans, returnees and internally displaced persons, youth with disabilities, former combatants as well as unemployed and/or out of school youth in each district [Baidoa, Dollow and Kismayo]." It can be noted, however, that the programme has a target of 3,000 beneficiaries, while probably most young person in the three districts can be seen as falling into at least one of these categories.⁹⁴

There is a recognition that selection processes need to be 'transparent' in order to avoid creating or reinforcing feelings of marginalisation. The project 'Engaging Youth to Build Peaceful Communities in Mali' (PBF/IRF-234) states that "[e]fforts will be made to secure that youth are selected through an inclusive and transparent process, and are representative of the diversity of the targeted community, in order to avoid exacerbating feelings of marginalization". Yet the only project, among those reviewed, which explicitly identifies this as a risk is the "Youth Action for Social Cohesion in Tillabéri" in Niger (PBF/IRF-277) - rating the probability of this risk as 'low' and its impact as 'moderate'.⁹⁵

3.7 Linking selection criteria to Theory of Change: the Public Health model

These findings, combined with our overall analysis, call for the necessity of more explicit targeting criteria. While community participation in the selection process can be a useful and positive element, project documents should avoid simply 'kick the can down the road' by postponing any decision on selection criteria to the implementation stage.

'Who participates' is not simply an operational decision: it goes to the core of the assumptions on changes that a specific intervention has in a given context, and therefore its Theory of Change. A potentially useful model to explain this point is the Public Health model, which distinguishes between 'primary', 'secondary', and 'tertiary' prevention (see Table 3).⁹⁶ The model has been applied to a variety to social programmes,

92 These projects include both employment for peacebuilding programmes and other types of peacebuilding projects.

93 An evaluation of the Youth Economic Empowerment project in Yemen raises concerns about community-based selection of participants, arguing that it could easily lead to "personal interests, tribal or political reasons [...] as community members may have other incentives beside good targeting" (Bahnessi, 2014: 17).

94 It is also unclear why disability is considered a risk factor for radicalisation.

95 Risk mitigation measures include a mechanism where complaints can be registered.

96 The Public Health Model was initially proposed by the US Commission for Chronic Illness in 1957. For a discussion of the applications of the concepts of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' prevention beyond public health (e.g. crime prevention, social work) see Gough (2013).

and has found great popularity for the interventions to prevent and reduce risk behaviours and gang violence in Europe. It relies on a distinction between primary prevention (broad-based activities, aimed at reducing the risk in the population at large), secondary prevention (interventions focusing on people considered 'at risk') and tertiary prevention (interventions aimed at people who have already exhibit a problematic behaviour).

Table 3 - The public health model and its application to Employment for Peacebuilding programmes.

Level of prevention	Application to social programmes	Youth employment example
Primary prevention	Interventions that address the potential for a problematic behaviour in the population in general or a large sub-set such as youth (e.g. awareness campaigns)	Interventions that provide wage subsidies to firms to hire younger workers (without specification of additional criteria).
Secondary prevention	Interventions that target people who are at specific risk of developing a problem or behaviour, or who are exhibiting specific signs or symptoms of a problem.	Interventions (e.g. employability training) for young people considered particularly at risk of violence in a particular context (e.g. urban homeless youth; school drop-outs).
Tertiary prevention	Interventions aimed at individuals that have already exhibited a certain problematic behaviour.	Interventions targeting young people that have already been involved in violence, such as employment interventions as part of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes.

Overall, it appears that most youth employment for peacebuilding projects hover somewhere around the concept of secondary prevention, as they make frequent reference to 'at risk' and 'vulnerable' youth. However, these factors of enhanced risk and vulnerability are generally left unspecified.

It is clear from the table that the level of targeting is directly related to what the intervention is trying to do, and this should be reflected both in the *a priori* formulation of selection criteria, and in the expectations of impact: for example, a tertiary prevention intervention can be logically expected to focus on a more limited number of participants, and therefore to be able to 'show results' on these participants, but less impact on society in general. Conversely, a primary prevention programme would work more in general on 'push factors' that apply to the youth population as a whole, and therefore possibly having less 'hard results' to show.

Using this framework helps to identify risks of 'doing harm'. For example, it is well known that tertiary prevention programmes can often create resentment among the general population, as they are seen as rewarding the troublemakers while ignoring those who conform to the rules. For example, a study by the NGO Search for Common Ground in Niger states:

"It was noted that youth might at some point lose patience and be driven to be at odds with the rest of their community and authorities. This frustration [...] is also fueled by the fact that the government and international community [are] perceived as helping people who had committed crimes, or had joined Boko Haram, more than the youth who had done nothing wrong. [Youth] see this as a serious injustice. A young man from Diffa added [...] that *"we continue to see ex-inmates with job created by the government while we are struggling, there will be some consequence"*. There was a very strong 'us' [those who have done nothing wrong] and 'them' [the government/authorities neglecting us] narrative during the consultations. This is also evidence that current programming and communications around this programming are facing some backlash. The deficit-based approach programs by governments, NGOs, or the international community (working with convicts, former combatants, etc.) is no doubt important but leaving other youth who are in the middle of the spectrum makes them feel left behind. Despite living in very difficult situations, the young people consulted have not turned to violence, even if so many in their community have. This resistance to violence is strength in which to invest." (SFCG, 2017: 33).

Less generally recognised that is that tertiary (and, to a lesser extent, secondary) prevention can be also stigmatizing for participants themselves: in particular, the fact of having been part of a training or work programme as part of a P/CVE programme may identify a certain individual as a 'terrorist' in the community, thus making it more difficult to get a job in the future.

Programme example: Youth employment programmes in Somalia

The National Development Plan of Somalia (2017-2019) includes as one of its ten goals “increased employment opportunities and decent work particularly for the youth” as one way to address a structural driver of youth engagement in conflict. The ILO has undertaken almost 50 projects in Somalia in the last ten years, for a total budget of around \$50 million. These programmes have mostly focused on labour-intensive infrastructure development, enterprise promotion as well as the promotion of employability through vocational training.

A recent ILO study (Florio, 2019) analyses two of these programmes - the Joint Program Youth Employment Somalia (YES) and Youth for Change (Y4C) - in order to investigate whether and how the two ILO employment programmes are affecting the willingness of people to engage and support violence in Somalia.

The YES programme aimed to contribute to sustainable employment creation while also providing immediate livelihood opportunities for the young men and women through the implementation of three interlinked programme components: value chain development, capacity development through vocational and skills training, and developing productive infrastructure through cash for work. The Y4C program engaged youth who were involved or at risk of becoming engaged in violent activities, through training and employment-intensive projects. Both programmes were implemented by the ILO in collaboration with a range of UN agencies.

The study concluded that employment programmes can boost labour market outcomes (‘employment effect’) even in complex, conflict-affected countries: “[t]he skills provided by ILO employment programmes in Somalia had a positive impact on respondents’ labour market outcomes, for both men and women” (Florio, 2019). Furthermore, the study found preliminary evidence that the programmes reduced support for violence among Somali youth beneficiaries. It also confirmed the relevance of the three ‘transfer mechanisms’ identified in the 2016 study - i.e. ‘opportunity’, ‘grievance’ and ‘contact’. With regard to the latter, in particular, it was noted that:

“the trainings from YES and Y4C bringing people together, and strengthening opportunities for dialogue among people from different clans and sub-clans and between men and women broke down stereotypes and increased social cohesion. In particular, the quantity and quality of interaction between sub-clans improved after the participation in the training” (Florio, 2019).

Finally, the study found “suggestive evidence of the positive externalities the employment program had also on non-beneficiaries, in term of reducing their support of violence” (Florio, 2019). The author cautions, however, against drawing overly broad generalisation from these contextual findings.

3.8 Concluding remarks

Employment programs are the international community’s tool of choice to capitalise the development and peacebuilding potential of youth. Yet, after more than a decade of intensive investments in job creation for youth in post-conflict and other fragile settings, evidence of impact is scant. Discouraging programme results are often attributed to implementation challenges, particularly in complex post-conflict and fragile settings. We argue, however, that attention should be given to the assumptions and narratives that inform programme design and implementation (Izzi, forthcoming).

Even the best programme cannot build peace by itself, and even technically sound programmes can fail to have a positive impact, or even do harm, if they do not take into account the broader context where these operate. No good comes from making programme participants ‘more peaceful’ if the programme simultaneously creates resentment or despondency in the wider population. The logical gap between ‘employment for some’ and ‘peace for all’ is probably the greatest conundrum facing Employment for Peacebuilding programmes.

Programming need to be informed by a better understanding of the problem (through research and analysis) and framed within a coherent design of responses that allow a wider and longer-term perspective. The final section of this paper will attempt some reflections on what can be done to organically improve research, policy and programmatic responses.

4. Where do we go from here?

Considerations for research, policy and practice

The idea of using youth employment programmes as a tool to reduce violence and promote peace is coming under increased scrutiny. Ultimately, the answer to the question ‘do jobs create peace?’ is, at best, “it depends”. It depends on the kind of jobs (and how they fare in terms of creating real opportunity, diminishing existing grievances, and furthering positive interpersonal and intergroup contacts). It depends on who gets those jobs, and how the fact of some people ‘getting’ them is perceived by the rest of the population. And it depends on this it all ‘fits’ with the context surrounding those jobs.

The scale of this challenge should not lead us to conclude that nothing can be done to tackle it. The focus on youth employment and decent work in the peace and security agenda is well-placed. Policies and programmes need to engage much more decisively with the complex structural context in which interventions take place, as a basis for an ambitious rethinking of a policy agenda to promote decent work for youth and peace.

We are at a critical juncture: we know a lot about what doesn’t work; we know a fair amount about why it doesn’t work; but we know very little about what works, or may work, under which circumstances. Research, policy and practice need to work together to advance from here. In this concluding section, we offer some considerations on how this synergy could be pursued.

4.1 What do we know?

The relation between employment and violence is complex and context-specific.

Concepts like ‘work’, ‘employment’, ‘jobs’, ‘violence’, ‘peace’ and ‘youth’ are inherently polysemic, and acquire different meanings depending on the specific historical and geopolitical context. This poses an important limit to the transferability of knowledge: for example, lessons gathered in relation to preventing at-risk teenagers from joining gangs in the UK have limited relevance to help shape interventions to dissuade people in their 20s and 30s from joining Boko Haram in Nigeria or al-Shaabab in Kenya. Yet this context specificity is often lost in policy discussions.

Complexity also comes from the fact that both sides of the equation (‘work’ and ‘violence’) are rapidly evolving in Africa. While informality continues to dominate the African labour market, its forms and manifestations are being transformed through its integration in global value chains and vertical networks. The emergence of online platform work offers new opportunities, as of yet untapped, but also opens challenges, and poses new and urgent questions on how to uphold and promote standards of decent work. This context needs to be reckoned with, as this is, ultimately, the environment where ‘graduates’ of donor-funded youth employment programmes will find themselves to operate. While the strong presence of informality in conflict and post-conflict situations is commonly known, the transition to formality and peacebuilding, and their potential reciprocity, are rarely explicitly addressed in research on the subject or during project design. “[T]his is a topic of ‘maximum importance, minimum clarity” (Schoof, 2015: 4).

Forms of violence are also changing. This paper looked in particular at violent extremism of Islamist nature, a growing new manifestation of violence in Africa, but one that overlaps with pre-existing intergroup dynamics, structural conditions, and grievances. For too long, analyses of violent extremism in Africa have been hampered by an overwhelming focus on how those ‘fit’ into global networks of terror. The limits of this approach are now clear: one cannot hope to address the rising threat of extremism in Africa unless the complexity of the global-local connections is properly taken into account.

A focus on employment status alone is reductive – the quality of work counts.

It is now clear that a focus on employment as a dichotomic condition ('having' or 'not having' a job) should give way to a focus on 'work writ large'. The three transfer mechanisms identified in the 2016 report (opportunity; grievance; and contact) are all heavily dependent on the nature and quality of the jobs provided. The evolving nature of the labour market in Africa, including the promises and perils of 'new informality' (e.g. platform work) need to feature more prominently in the academic and policy research on violence.

While government and international agencies recognise in principle the importance of jobs being 'good', this can turn into little more than a self-evident platitude unless it is accompanied by a real understanding of how programmes with a decent work lens would look like. We need to gain a better understanding of how issues related to decent work have emerged in practice in programmes, and which challenges and trade-offs they have raised.

We also need to engage more explicitly with the risk that youth employment programmes can 'do harm': if we accept the argument that bad jobs are potentially conflict-inducing, inadequate attention to the quality of job creation, at the expense of quantity, can be at best ineffective for stabilization and peacebuilding, and at worst backfire. It has been suggested that "not only there is limited evidence that such programmes do much to create sustainable and good quality jobs for young people, it is also possible that they work to entrench social and economic models that undermine peace and security in the first place" (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2017: 861).

Macro-level conditions do not explain individual choices.

Research consistently tells us that areas with high unemployment and bad working conditions are more at risk of violence than areas where access to employment and working conditions are better. However, these macro-level considerations do not explain differences in violence among areas where poverty- and employment-related conditions are very similar. Even more importantly, they do not explain why, faced with the same conditions, some young people get involved with violence and others do not.

In sum, macro-level considerations have limited analytical and predictive power at the individual level. This poses a key challenge for the use of research for programming. As youth employment-for-peacebuilding programmes are essentially based on selecting individual participants, knowing that a country or area is generally more at risk of violence offers little in terms of practical guidance. There is a "(fortunately) growing consensus that the success of youth employment programming depends on a much deeper understanding of the choices young individuals make and the contexts within which they make them" (Irwin et al., 2018: 22).

4.1 Implications for future research

Focus on connecting the dots

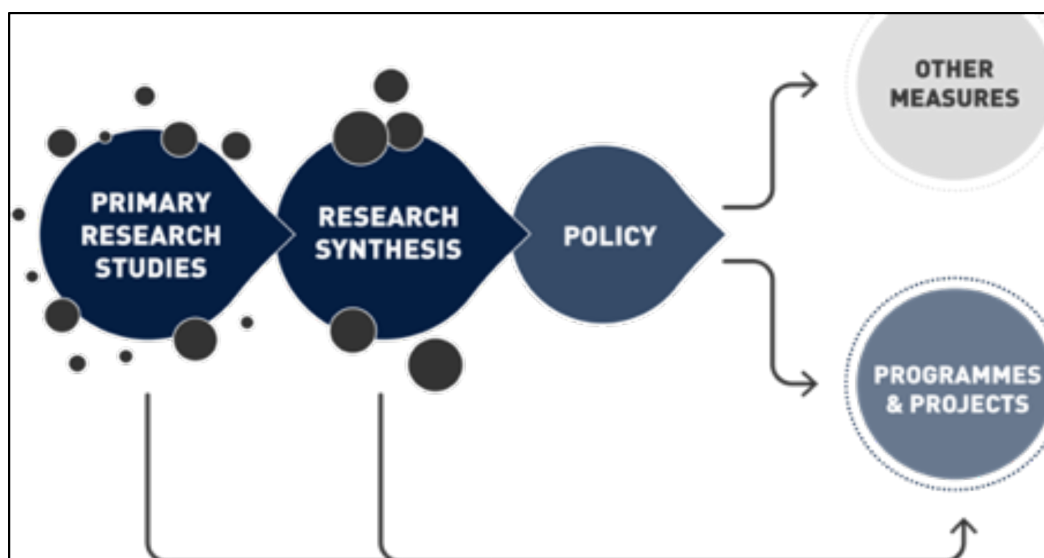
We have seen in Section 1 that there is extensive literature on employment and the world of work in Africa, as well as a growing body of research on new forms of violence in the continent. There is, however, relatively little in terms of connecting the two: the 'employment' literature mentions violence as a risk, but mostly treats it as a black box, and the reverse is also true of the 'violence' literature. There is a need to expand and deepen the overlapping section of this Venn diagram, something that is best done through an interdisciplinary approach.

Invest in research synthesis for policy and programming influence

While individual case-studies and other primary research studies are essential, the field has now reached a maturity that allows (and indeed, calls for) synthesis studies that can provide a sound basis for policy-making and programming, avoiding evidence overload as well as the risk of 'cherry-picking' some findings over others.⁹⁷ Equally, it is important that learning from programming and other types of policy responses is systematically fed back into research. Figure 2 summarises this dynamic interaction.

⁹⁷ On research synthesis and its use for policy-making, see Davies (2006); Wyborn et al. (2018).

Figure 2 - interrelation between research, policy and practice



Engage with the 'programme ecosystem'

A topic that is overdue for research attention is how general policy principles (such as 'leave no one behind'⁹⁸) play out in the context of programmes, once translated into indicators and targets. While no-one would argue that a programme should be 'inclusive', what does this mean in practice for a programme that necessarily has to select a small percentage of the youth population in a given context? Similarly, while it certainly seems a good idea to make practices of beneficiary selection 'participatory', the question of how these interact with local dynamics of power needs much more focused attention.

Take the long (and large) view

While programme evaluations are often limited to immediate results on direct beneficiaries, research can play a complementary role by providing follow-up studies that focus on the broader, longer-term impact on society at large. This will also allow testing the assumption of programmes have positive 'catalytic' effects on society at large, as well as providing more specificity as to what these effects look like, and what are the conditions to enable their emergence. Looking at non-beneficiaries not merely through the lens of a 'control group', but rather as young people in their own right, whose views on the interventions represent an important factor to take into account from a broader societal perspective.

Research priority: how do the three 'transfer mechanism' apply to violent extremism?

As discussed above in Section 1, the 2016 *Jobs Aid Peace* identifies three prototypes of transfer mechanisms that link employment with violence and peace.

1. *Opportunity* - i.e. the idea that employment plays a crucial role in defining opportunity-cost consideration on whether or not to participate in violence;
2. *Grievance* - i.e. the idea that unemployment creates resentment (towards the government and/or other groups in society), which, in turn, can fuel violence;
3. *Contact* - i.e. the idea that the workplace can create a safe space where different groups can learn to communicate and trust each other.

Our discussion of violent extremism in this paper confirms the relevance of the grievance and opportunity transfer mechanisms, which significantly overlap with the commonly-identified 'push' and 'pull' factors. It also casts new light on the relevance of the contact transfer mechanisms, which is comparatively less well understood and would benefit from more in-depth exploration.

The underpinning social contact hypothesis posits that interpersonal contact between individuals from hostile groups, if happening within a cooperative and egalitarian framework, will reduce tensions and prejudice, and improve intergroup relations (Scacco and Warren, 2016). In recent years, there has been a growing popularity of peacebuilding interventions aimed at increasing positive contact among members of different groups in conflicted societies ("mixed Jewish and Arab tango classes in Israel, gardening

⁹⁸For a reflection of the principle of 'leave no one behind' applied to the SDGs, including SDG8 on Decent Work, see Donoghue and Khan (2019).

projects in the Palestinian territories, inter-ethnic soccer groups in the former Yugoslavia, reconciliation committees in Rwanda, or integrated Christian-Muslim basketball leagues in Nigeria"; Scacco and Warren, 2016: 5-6).

Yet despite this proliferation of interventions, many unanswered questions remain about the consequences of intergroup contact in divided societies, and whether such contact can be purposively engineered through external interventions:

"Does cooperative contact between individuals from across a deep social cleavage lead to reductions in prejudice and discrimination? How intensive must social contact be to induce positive effects? Does contact affect all groups involved in social interactions equally?" (Scacco and Warren, 2016: 1).⁹⁹

Application to conflict and post-conflict settings may be particularly problematic: when tensions are high, "increased intergroup interactions can actually *increase* the probability of violence" (Scacco and Warren, 2016: 4, emphasis in text). As prejudices have been developed following many years of conflict, it may be questionable whether they can be changed by short-term interventions.

It is commonly noted that interventions aimed at promoting contact suffer from selection bias: people agreeing to participate tend to be those already relatively open to contacts with the 'other'. In principle, employment programmes can be expected to overcome this bias, as the main reason to join is linked to self-interest (getting a job, or receiving training) rather than an openness to intergroup contact. However, as the example of Palestinian job-seekers in Jordan clearly shows, the quality of work is a fundamental component of employment-based promotion of social contact: work under conditions that are exploitative and unfair can actually reinforce, rather than dilute, prejudices and intergroup tensions.

New forms of work fundamentally change the traditional idea of the workplace as a place of aggregation that can overcome other identity divides. Moreover, the one finding consistently emerging from the (otherwise quite diverse) literature on the causes of violent extremism is the importance of social contacts: it is often argued that the single most important predictor of somebody getting involved in violent extremism is they being in a social circle where other people have. Social contacts can serve as a facilitator or a deterrent for violence. The interplay between these two rapidly changing dimensions (new forms of violence and new forms of work) urgently calls for further research to test the 'social contact transfer mechanism' under these new conditions.

4.3 Implications for policy

Promote greater convergence between the Peace and Security policy agenda and the Decent Work policy agenda

As discussed in Section 2, each of the two policy agendas is giving increasing attention to issues traditionally in the remit of the other. However, more reflection needs to be given on how Decent Work parameters can be achieved in post-conflict and fragile settings, as well as any trade-offs that may emerge between (short-term) stabilisation needs and Decent Work criteria. In particular, the question of informality (and its implications for decent work and peace) should be addressed by policy in order to ensure a coherent programmatic approach. While we may not yet know enough to define what this approach may be, it is important that these questions are posed and discussed across policy areas, to avoid the danger of parallel policy silos.

⁹⁹ The authors conducted an education-based, randomized field experiment—the Urban Youth Vocational Training program (UYVT)—with 849 randomly sampled Christian and Muslim young men in the riot-prone city of Kaduna, Nigeria. Kaduna has been the site of several Boko Haram attacks in recent years, including suicide bombings carried out against churches. These deadly conflicts have resulted in patterns of residential segregation: Kaduna is physically and symbolically divided by a river with Muslims living to its north, Christians to its south. The city therefore offers an ideal research setting to study the effects of purposeful contact activities on intergroup relations. By focusing on practical skill-building instead of overt peace messaging, the intervention aimed at minimising selection and reporting bias. After 16 weeks of social contact, researchers found no changes in prejudice, but they did find significant increases in generosity and decreases in discriminatory behaviour toward members of the religious out-group (Scacco and Warren, 2016).

Distinguish youth-specific issues from broader socio-economic issues that affect youth

'Youth' is not recognised as a policy issue in its own right. Yet many of the problems highlighted in these policies are not youth-specific, and they do not originate with youth.¹⁰⁰ While a policy focus on youth can have the positive effect of creating a privileged observatory to highlight some of these issues, it also runs the risk of obfuscating the more general political and socio-economic nature of these issues.¹⁰¹

Explore learning for policies on youth migration

There are clear parallels between the policy narratives on youth with regard to violence and peace, and those that focus on migration from the Global South to the Global North, and there is therefore a clear potential for policy-oriented research that connects the two topics, as well as shared learning about programming.

Youth unemployment and migration

The interrelationship between youth employment (or lack thereof) and migration has lately attracted increasing attention from governments and the international community. The Youth, Employment and Migration Strategy in West and Central Africa by the International Organisation of Migration draws a clear connection between using employment to control violence and to limit illegal migration:

"The impact of youth unemployment on peace and security in West Africa is two-fold. On one hand unemployment can potentially draw youth into violence and engagement in unlawful activities, including radicalization and violent extremism, thereby contributing to increasing insecurity in both urban and rural areas. On the other hand, youth may decide to migrate irregularly towards countries further afield (including across the Mediterranean) in search of better opportunities, thereby putting their own security at risk. As these decisions are often undertaken without the right information at hand, many such journeys have ended in failure or tragedy" (IOM, 2018: 16).

Just like it happens for youth involvement in violence, discourses on youth undocumented migration from Africa to Europe generally distinguish between 'push' factors (e.g. conflict, poverty) and 'pull' factors (the promise of greater opportunities abroad) - with employment-related issues cutting across 'push' and 'pull' factors. There is also a great risk that policies are informed by a simplified understanding of the problem, according to which unemployment youth would 'take the risk' to undertake perilous journeys to a better future, while employed youth would not. The evidence contradicts this simplistic equation: in fact, it is often the (relatively) wealthier and more educated young people who can afford to seek their fortune abroad.

4.4 Implication for programming

Avoid to 'add peace and stir'

It is now clear that traditionally conceived employment programmes are not effective interventions from a peacebuilding perspective. This does not mean that they are not important - it only means that they cannot be justified from a peacebuilding perspective, nor directly prove a peacebuilding impact.

Employment for Peacebuilding programmes are qualitatively different: they raise trade-offs, and they are not adaptable to all contexts. Designing such a programme is not about adding peacebuilding activities alongside traditional employment promotion activities; it is not (only) about conflict- and fragility-proofing the intervention to ensure that it is suitable for such contexts; and it is not (only) about ensuring that the intervention is sensitive to local dynamics and avoids doing harm. While conflict-sensitivity should be routinely integrated into any intervention, Employment for Peacebuilding is about designing and implementing interventions with the primary aim of contributing to peace. This raises important trade-offs, with regard to the choice of activities as well as the selection of participants. There is a need to consolidate learning about how these trade-offs have emerged, and been navigated, in the context of actual programmes.

¹⁰⁰ Using six years of data (2011-16) drawn from the Global Terrorism Database and from other sources for 127 countries, Cruz et al. (2020) found a strong negative relationship between labour force participation and the frequency of terrorist incidents; however, no correlation was found specifically with youth unemployment.

¹⁰¹ A recent study by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) explicitly addresses the question of how 'youth-specific' the youth employment challenge is in Africa (Irwin et al., 2018). The study points to the risk that, by focusing on young people themselves (typically, by reinforcing their skills), policies are shifting the attention away from barriers to employment and decent work that are exogenous to youth (e.g. over-saturated labour market, exploitative work practices). This has important policy implications, as there is a risk that "policies aimed at business environment reform, labour market deregulation, or infrastructure - if they are justified in terms of youth employment - risk instrumentalising rather than helping young people" (Irwin et al., 2018: 22).

Scoping phase: is a 'youth employment for peacebuilding' programme the way to go?

A key conclusion is that Employment for Peacebuilding Programmes are not necessarily adequate to all circumstances. Even before the design phase, it is therefore necessary to assess whether the conditions for this type of programme are present in a given context. Key questions that can help to guide this assessment are:

- Is there sufficient evidence to confidently claim that work-related issues play a significant role in the dynamics of peace and violence in this particular context?
- Are there specific work-related issues that can be influenced by a programme?
- Is there sufficient good-quality analysis to understand how these dynamics play out, and how a programme could affect them?
- Is there a well-defined target group that the programme would reach? How does this compare to the totality of the affected population?
- How significant is the risk of 'doing harm'? Can appropriate mitigation measures be devised and put in place?

If the conclusion from the scoping phase is that Employment for Peacebuilding is not appropriate for a given context at a given time, the implication may be that more research is needed; or that different types of programmes are needed; that a different scale of programme is needed; or even that the problem cannot be adequately tackled through programmatic interventions, and that it needs other types of measures.

Design phase: how should the programme look like?

If it is decided that an Employment for Peacebuilding programme is the right way to go in that particular context, programme design should include an in-depth context analysis, based on sound evidence, including an analysis of violence dynamics and opportunities for peace; an analysis of the world of work in that context, including any youth-specificity; the weight of work-related factors in the history of violence in that context.

Based on this context analysis, the programme should design a context-specific, evidence-based Theory of Change, elaborating the way in which impact is expected to occur from the activities through a causal chain. The three transfer mechanisms identified in the 2016 report (opportunity; grievances; and contact) can be useful to aid thinking when elaborating the Theory of Change. However, they are not a substitute for a context-specific analysis: most likely, every specific context will see some combination of the three transfer mechanisms, alongside other context-specific factors. It is important that the Theory of Change distinguishes between structural conditions (that are beyond the direct influence of the programme, and should therefore be taken as a given) and specific issues that are expected to be influenced by the programme.

Monitoring and evaluation: how do we know if the programme was successful?

The ILO Handbook *How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes* represents a key resource to help both programme managers and external evaluators (ILO, 2019a).

As discussed at different points in this paper, Employment for Peacebuilding programmes run the concrete risk of 'doing harm' through the way in which participants are selected, which can potentially reinforce inter-group divides and grievances, or potentially feed into existing power dynamics in access to employment. This risk should be considered when setting up a Monitoring and Evaluation system. Methods such as Iterative Beneficiary Monitoring¹⁰² and Learning Loops¹⁰³ can be explored as ways to continuously keep the pulse of the situation and flexibly adapt implementation.

Fragile and conflict-affected contexts pose particular challenges in terms of data collection, and thus Monitoring and Evaluation. Moreover, any analysis of people's involvement in violence (and more broadly, attitudes towards violence) raises important methodological challenges, including reporting and attrition bias (Christmann, 2012).¹⁰⁴ In such settings, it is particularly important that the Monitoring and Evaluation system reflects a mixed methods approach as well as systematic triangulation (Borino, 2019).

¹⁰² Iterative Beneficiary Monitoring (IBM) is based on a light, focused, low-cost beneficiary feedback system, which facilitates timely and on-going analysis. In so doing, the IBM approach reflects differs from more typical monitoring systems that collect the bulk of their information at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the project. The approach is intended to support adaptive project management. See Hoozeveen and Taptué (2020) on the application of this method in a programme in Mali.

¹⁰³ The Learning Loop is a tool that helps practitioners learn from current work to plan for future adaptation and change. A common distinction (derived from Argyris and Schon, 1974) is between single loop learning (fixing problems by following the rules), double loop learning (changing the rules) and triple loop learning (learning about learning).

¹⁰⁴ Attrition bias refers to participants leaving during a study, and here, by implication, to the difficulty of 'following up' with programme participants over a sustained period of time.

At the commissioning stage of an evaluation, it is important to specify in the Terms of Reference whether the evaluation has a specific peacebuilding focus. A key finding of the 2016 report was that, in many cases, evaluations completely avoided the question of peacebuilding impact. In addition to having this spelt out in the Terms of Reference, it should also be reflected in the composition and skillset of the evaluation team, as well as the process, methodology and timeline of the evaluation. The evaluation framework should clearly distinguish between 'employment and peacebuilding' impact' as well as 'impact on participants vs. impact on society at large.

Any evaluation that intends to assess the peacebuilding impact of a programme cannot focus on participants alone. It is important therefore that evaluation methods explicitly include non-beneficiaries, and look at the impact of the programme on society at large. Much still needs to be learned of effective methods of doing this, and this should be a key priority moving ahead.

Evaluations' questions and methods need to be directly derived by the programme's Theory of Change, if one exists. If it does not, a working-level Theory of Change can be devised by the evaluation team, to capture the shared understanding of programme managers of how the programme was expected to lead to its intended impact. Key focus of the evaluation should be how the pathways envisaged in the Theory of Change have been reflected in the programme's design and implementation: for example, have selection criteria for beneficiaries been consistent with the principles of the Theory of Change? Any inconsistency should be pointed out in the evaluation.

Donors should start to systematically commission longitudinal evaluations, which follow through after the end of the programme. For example, in the case of Public Works, are infrastructures still used and in good shape after 5 years? Have the immediate benefits for participants after the end of the interventions continued in the longer term? Have they translated into wider societal benefits?

To RCT or not to RCT - is this the question?

Long regarded as the 'gold standard' of evidence for informing development policy, Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) have gained popularity in research and evaluation on youth employment interventions (e.g. Blattman, 2013, 2018; Kimou et al., 2019).¹⁰⁵

Proponents of RCTs point to their value in addressing the "glaring lack of quantitative evidence" that has characterised aid policies in the past (Bedecarrats et al., 2015: 4). RCTs are praised for their rigorous and systematic approach, and for their ability to overcome selection bias (White, 2013). Critics, on the other hand, note that RCTs have a limited scope: they are best suited for small-scale projects covering a limited geographical area, so as to keep parameters under control. They pose issues of scalability of findings, once their "ideal laboratory conditions" are removed and the complexity of the real world is taken into account: (Bedecarrats et al., 2015: 9-10). Others have noted that the problem may not rest in the RCT as a method for understanding causal relations, but rather in the automatic "jump from positive analysis to normative policy" that is often associated with RCTs use, but not a necessary consequence of it (Hammer, 2017).

With regard to Employment for Peace programmes, RCTs are regarded by some as a much-needed antidote to the lack of sound evidence of 'what works'. Yet, RCTs may be better suited to address some evaluation questions rather than others: for example, while under certain conditions a RCT may tell us that the youth in the treatment group gained better employment prospects than youth in the control group, it is much more difficult to compare attitudes towards violence, as comparability of groups is much more difficult to achieve.

Perhaps more importantly, the process itself can influence the outcome. While a programme can have positive effects on the treatment group, young people belonging to the control group might increase their grievance exactly as a result of being a control group (i.e. being 'observed' but not benefitting from the interventions). Ultimately, it is important to remember that RCTs are only one possible method to embed counterfactual thinking in evaluation, and that their suitability needs to be considered in the context of what the evaluation is seeking to achieve.

¹⁰⁵ RCTs originate in medical science and are already widely used for public policy evaluation in many Western countries. By comparing randomly-assigned 'treatment' and 'control' groups, they seek to formally establish a causal link between an intervention and a certain number of outcome variables (Bedecarrats et al., 2015).

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Annex 1. Reviewed UNPBF projects

Project title	Project code	Country	Employment focus	Start date	End date	Total amount
Jeunes et Paix	PBF/IRF-292	Burkina Faso		Jan-19	Jun-20	1,350,000
Youth LAB	PBF/IRF-241	Burundi	No	Mar-18	Mar-20	2,899,892
Youth leading the way for an engendered inclusive society in Burundi	PBF/IRF-279	Burundi	No	Dec-18	Jun-20	600,000
Appui à la participation citoyenne des jeunes et des femmes à la gouvernance locale et à la consolidation de la paix au Tchad	PBF/IRF-284	Chad	No	Dec-18	Dec-21	3,491,000
Supporting youth	PBF/IRF-283	Cote D'Ivoire	No	Dec-18	Jun-20	385,842
Women and Youth participation in decision-making processes and as agents of community conflict prevention	PBF/GMB/D-1	The Gambia	No	Dec-18	Dec-20	1,300,000
Supporting Women's and Youth Political Participation for Peace and Development in Guinea-Bissau	PBF/IRF-211	Guinea-Bissau	No	Dec-17	Mar-20	1,775,482
Mobilizing rural Youth and adolescents to serve as peacebuilding leaders	PBF/IRF-210	Guinea-Bissau	No	Dec-17	Jan-20	1,564,821
Sustaining Peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict-prone areas	PBF/LBR/D-14	Liberia	Yes	Feb-19	Feb-21	1,500,000
Enhancing Youth Participation in the 2017 Legislative and Presidential Electoral Process in Liberia	PBF/IRF-170	Liberia	No	May-17	Jun-19	2,477,891
Engaging Youth to Build Peaceful Communities in Mali	PBF/IRF-234	Mali	Yes	Feb-18	Feb-20	1,700,000
Emplois et jeunes pour la paix- Approche pilote intégrée de stabilisation et de consolidation de la paix par la promotion de l'emploi et de la participation des jeunes dans la région de Mopti	PBF/MAL/D-1	Mali	Yes	Sep-18	Mar-20	2,933,387
Les jeunes acteurs pour la Paix et la Reconciliation Nationale	PBF/IRF-219	Mali	Yes	Jan-18	Dec-19	2,626,790
Jeunes et paix: "Une approche transfrontalière entre le Mali et le Burkina Faso"	PBF/IRF-291	Mali	No	Jan-19	Jun-20	1,650,000
L'implication des jeunes et des femmes dans la résolution pacifique des conflits communautaires dans la zone nord Tillabery	PBF/NER/B-3	Niger	Yes	Dec-18	Jun-20	2,500,000
Youth Action for Social Cohesion in Tillabéri (Youth ACT)	PBF/IRF-277	Niger	No	Dec-18	Jun-20	1,500,000
Youth Political Empowerment: enabling Somali young women and men to meaningfully engage in governance, peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts	PBF/IRF-205	Somalia	No	Dec-17	Dec-19	1,999,899
Pérenniser la paix en Tunisie par l'inclusion des jeunes au niveau local	PBF/IRF-288	Tunisia	No	Dec-18	Jun-20	2,998,889
Harnessing the youth's potential	PBF/IRF-303	Uganda	No	Oct-19	Apr-21	2,487,750

This paper is based on a desk review. Section 1 conducts a review of academic and grey literature. It soon became clear during the initial scoping phase for this paper that the topic did not lend itself to a systematic review,¹⁰⁶ as there is very little overlapping between the various strands of literature examined in this paper. The extensive literature on labour markets in Africa makes, at most, only passing reference to issues related to peace, social stability, or violence. Conversely, while the literature on youth violence in Africa mentions (un)employment often, it rarely goes into detail into broader issues of labour market configuration and quality of work. Therefore, a more traditional literature review was conducted.¹⁰⁷ The need for more primary research connecting these areas of study (in turn opening the way to systematic reviews and research synthesis) is highlighted as one of the recommendations of this paper.

A literature search was conducted for papers published after 2015, i.e. not included in the extensive literature review conducted for the *Jobs Aid Peace* report. This was done through Google Scholar keyword time-limited searches, for various combinations of the words 'jobs', 'violence', 'peace', 'youth', 'Africa'. Results were screened manually for relevance (e.g. searches for 'employment' and 'violence' tend to return entries on domestic violence; searches for 'employment' and 'peace' return entries on the employment of force in peace operations, etc.).

The rest of the literature review focused on more specific keyword searches on the topics of this paper ('violent extremism'; 'decent work' in combination with 'youth' and/or Africa'). Google Scholar was the main engine used for the search, alongside targeted searches in Africa-focused journals such as *The Journal of Modern African Studies*; *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*; *African Affairs*; *Review of African Political Economy*; *Third World Quarterly*. In several cases, I followed clues in the reviewed literature and conducted exploratory searches for particular topics as well as authors. Given the focus of the paper, the comprehensiveness of the results was considered more important than the replicability and reproducibility of the search.¹⁰⁸

For its programme review, the paper analyses interventions funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF). To identify relevant interventions, I used the Multi-partner Trust Fund Gateway database.¹⁰⁹ I filtered my search by Fund ('Peacebuilding Fund'), and then searching by keyword ('youth'). Only projects with a post-2015 start date were considered (as the others had already been analysed in the *Jobs Aid Peace* report). A list of the reviewed projects is presented in Annex 1. Additional project examples were suggested by the ILO and the INCLUDE Knowledge Platform in the Netherlands. This approach was justified by the learning focus of the paper, which did not require a randomised sample of interventions.

¹⁰⁶ The Campbell Collaboration defines a 'systematic review' as a "an academic research paper that uses a method called 'evidence synthesis', which can include meta-analysis, to look for answers to a pre-defined question. The purpose of a systematic review is to sum up the best available research on that specific question. Reviews can also show when there has not been enough research carried out, and where more research is needed." (see Campbell Collaboration, <https://campbellcollaboration.org/> - accessed March 3rd, 2020).

¹⁰⁷ For a distinction between literature review and systematic review, see Robinson and Lowe (2015).

¹⁰⁸ In the language of systematic reviews, 'replicability' refers to re-doing a study to gather new data or recollect the same data; while 'reproducibility' is re-conducting the same study by a different researcher, using the same methods and data. See Shokraneh (2019).

¹⁰⁹ See <http://mptf.undp.org/document/search> (last accessed March 13th, 2020).

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About INCLUDE

INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa through research, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue. INCLUDE brings together researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages for inclusive development in Africa. Since its establishment, INCLUDE has supported more than 20 international research groups to conduct research on inclusive development and facilitated policy dialogues in Africa and the Netherlands.