

**Why They Don't Fight!  
Experiences and Responses of the Youth in Uganda to discrimination, injustice and  
exclusion**

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**Abstract**

*This paper explores mechanisms that the youth utilize to respond to exclusion, discrimination and injustice without violence. Through a comparative study of Kampala and Jinja districts, the findings reveal resilience, adaptation and social bonding as some of the agency-based mechanisms that influence non-participation in violence. Resilience as a response to exclusion, discrimination and injustice is both a process and an outcome, during which internal and external factors influence victims to adapt and build social bonds that increase the preference for non-violence towards self-advancement. Proactive action and setting clear expectations are internal factors that drive self-regulation and problem-solving by individuals and groups who choose not to fight. Religion, culture and gender are some of the external factors that facilitate adaptation through safety and restoration of a sense of belonging, self-esteem and security in the place of exclusion and discrimination. These factors can be integrated in state policies, community programs and family practices to support reduction in youth vulnerability and violent responses to exclusion, discrimination and injustice.*

**Keywords:** Uganda, Youth, Non-Violence, Resilience, Social Bonding

**Introduction**

As communities continue to struggle to respond and redress manifestations and consequences of exclusion, discrimination and injustice (EDI), states have embarked to reactive approaches that focus on law-enforcement or strengthening the security sector to counter insurgencies, rebellions and violent riots. A few proactive initiatives have also been undertaken especially at political and civil society levels, albeit insufficiently to address these conditions and associated hostilities and violence at least in the short term. The youth constitute the largest percentage among those who are affected by EDI and some have opted to respond through criminality and violence to seek redress. Increasingly, however, efforts to prevention and mitigation are largely a reaction based on the types and levels of violence perpetrated in the process.

The youth are a complex category that most commonly include males and females

between the age of 12 to 35 years. They are perceived to share common characteristics that include lacking in experience but ambitious and energetic, lacking or still pursuing education, at the beginning of their professional and businesses careers or family as part of transiting to adulthood. While these characteristics indicate biological, social and professional progress, EDI are some of the conditions or factors that dramatically impact the lives of individuals and groups to cause a delay in realizing this advancement. The conditions predispose the youth to perceive themselves as marginalized, disadvantaged, and often render them vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by elites competing for power and resources. Under such circumstances, some of the youth opt for varied outward expressions of violence, including interpersonal, criminal, or mass-mobilized economic and political violence (Dowd 2017) to respond to perceived EDI.

Despite such characterization, Wilson and Ebata (2005) have argued that in the context of violence, there is a securitization of the issue of youth; in which analyses of their participation in fighting is generalized as if it is applicable to all youth. Elliott (1994), concludes that today's youth are more frequently the victims of violence than perpetrators, although today's violent acts are more lethal due to access to lethal means of committing violence by a few than being the practice of majority of them. There are a variety of ways that youth choose to interact and respond to EDI in spite of the effect on their lives as individuals, families or communities. Abbink (2005:6) argues that the perception that all youth engage in undesirable or criminal activities is erroneous. In the same way, despite experiences and suffering the effects of EDI, some of the youth tap into their personal abilities, culture, religion, family and social connections to adopt and cope in ways that still produce positive outcomes, including self-advancement. Others estimate the high costs and consequences of aggression and chose non-violent responses so as to remain within means for continuing to survive.

From a human agency perspective, many youths are not inclined to violent responses to EDI, and instead utilize and grow their capacities to survive and remain positive as a means to avoid involvement in crime, insurgency or violent mass protests. The strength of agency among those who do not fight cannot be denied in terms of their interactions with structures that condition them to EDI and their ability to transform them. Therefore, the youth are neither objects of manipulation collectively, nor compliant and passive actors who lack abilities of their own to resist incitement or fighting back. From a resilience point of view, their agency remains eminent in exploring agency-based options to remain positive and overcome stressful events, and to engage in transformation and reform of exclusionary, discriminative and unjust systems and structures (Giddens, 1984). On the other hand, and from an interventionist standpoint, integrative approaches to develop and implement inclusive policies to redress social, political and economic disparities and grievances over

deprivation can also safeguard against participation in violence. This article presents findings from a comparison of the youth in Kampala and Jinja districts, and argues that agency and interventionist factors combine to explain why under conditions of EDI, majority of the youth do not fight even when faced with the same conditions as those who respond with violence.

### **Context**

According to the United Nations World Population Prospects report (2015), Uganda is among nine countries expected to contribute most to the world's total population growth by 2050. As the country's population exponentially increases, so does the percentage of young people. Uganda held first and second place in the world, in 2010 and 2012 respectively, for having the youngest population and maintains second position today. By 2050, Uganda is expected to be among the top ten youngest countries in the world holding 8<sup>th</sup> place. Given that the country has a long history distinctly marked by a variety of societal pressures and violent conflicts over EDI, addressing these conditions peacefully is becoming increasingly difficult, especially as the population continues to grow.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015) lists Uganda as one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The country faces serious challenges of unemployment, HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, and poor access to adequate services, among others (Banks 2014). The country has a complex and diverse social climate characterized by inter-group tensions over marginalization among the 54 tribes. Pre and post-independence Uganda has experienced civil wars, insurgencies, military coup d'états, and other forms of inter-communal violent conflicts in which the majority of participants are the youth, sometimes operating as child soldiers, insurgents, paramilitaries, criminal gangs, violent demonstrators, among others. This scope broadens further when violence is committed for and on behalf of the state, perpetrated by the youth who serve as military and police officers, or other agencies charged with enforcing law and order.

Chomsky (1967) has argued that there is a better way than resorting to violence because under such conditions, a new society rises out of the actions that are taken from it, and the institutions and ideology it develops are not independent of those actions but are shaped by them in many ways. Thus one can expect actions that are cynical and vicious, and whatever their intent, will inevitably condition and deface the quality of the ends that are achieved. Likewise, Uganda has experienced violence for the last 45 years, marked by coup d'état, civil wars, violent demonstrations and riots in public markets and academic institutions. Majority of perpetrators and participants have been the youth below the ages of 35. The cycle promises to continue; yet the actual actors are a small section of the total youth population at 75% of 35 million

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people in the country. As a result of this history, while commenting on escalating levels of violence in the country, Tanbull (2016) reported that violence is taking place from Ntungamo, Mbarara, Fort Portal, Kampala, Mbale and now to Bukwo and Kotido districts, with some youth being reported missing, and it is perpetrated by iron bar hit men as crime rates are increasing and some youth are forming gangs and dangerous cliques that are making some areas no go zone areas.

Uganda's youth have and continue to be victimized, but also play a central role in various manifestations of mass violence.<sup>1</sup> For example, over 30,000 children were abducted to serve as soldiers or sex slaves in Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army. Also, during the 23 years since the NRM government captured power in 1986, more than 20 other militant groups have attempted to overthrow the government using bases within and outside the country. Some of the existing youth groups known to hold grievances over EDI and involve in violence, criminality and violent demonstrations include Kifeesi,<sup>2</sup> Crime Preventers,<sup>3</sup> Nkobazambogo,<sup>4</sup> Rwenzori Region Youth Groups,<sup>5</sup> and child soldiers.<sup>6</sup> Although Uganda has vast experience with youth participation in mass violence, the country has been left out of crucial country level and regional studies. For example, the study produced by Korongo (2012) on Youth Policies and Violence Prevention in the Great Lakes Region focused on Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tanzania, but did not include Uganda. On the other hand, studies that do focus on youth activity in Uganda have yet to isolate factors and mechanisms that help explain why some youth are, and why others *are not*, participating in violent conflict.

Enduring conditions of EDI in Uganda also account for stigmatization among the youth which characterizes the identity and status of the victims as devalued (Major et. al 2002). This is especially when such stigmatization manifests along ethnic or religious lines and reinforced by experiences of discrimination. This occurs, for example, in form of rejection and obvious hostility from government agents towards grieving youth or through policies and programs perceived to disenfranchise them. In this case discrepancies that emerge between preferred and actual state of affairs represent a violation of valued needs and interests among victims of EDI (Festinger 1957). Unfortunately, and as (Major et. al 2002) have further stated, such experiences create a mark of oppression to personalities and group worth, are harmful to their targets at multiple levels, and create structural barriers to access and enjoyment of opportunities for advancement e.g. employment, occupational progress, or education.

The National Youth Policy (2001) recognizes that poverty; inadequate education and skills, inadequate work and employment opportunities, exploitation, diseases, civil unrest and gender discrimination mar lives of millions of Ugandan Youth. Further, the policy recognizes that the environment in which the youth live brings new possibilities,

but also risks that undermine effectiveness of government support to help the youth to prepare, negotiate and explore opportunities during their passage to adulthood. However, with respect to their involvement in violence the policy only focuses on protecting the youth from domestic and gender-based violence. It is silent on the need to build youth resilience, prevention and non-violence capacities considering the violent history of the country the majority of them have been exposed to from childhood. Likewise, the policy does not mention how and why the youth increasingly prefer to participate in violence to respond to unfavourable conditions that affect their lives, and what policy options, tools and mechanisms could be implemented to promote non-violence and prevention.

At the national level, the country's socio-political and economic conditions that largely explain the devastation from violent conflicts experienced by all Ugandans since independence also affect the youth. However, while these conditions continue to influence and also help to mobilize some youth to respond by perpetuating violence, majority of youth choose not to participate. This study examines why some youth choose not to participate or perpetuate various forms of political violence and resist recruitment into militias or insurgencies, despite being affected by almost the same conditions like those who choose to join and fight.

### **Methodology**

From a social constructivist tradition, the study employed Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000) to conduct a comparative case study of youth experiences and responses to EDI in Kampala and Jinja districts in Uganda. Using the method-of-difference (Odell 2001, Bennett 2004) Kampala District and Jinja District were selected because both cases match in many important respects but are different on the levels of youth participation in violence in response to grievances over EDI. There is a long history of youth-based violence in Kampala district regarding grievances and claims of EDI, while fewer or no similar incidents are often reported in Jinja district over the same issues. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2002), the two districts are highly urbanized and dominated by the indigenous Baganda in the central region and neighbouring Basoga ethnic groups respectively. Also, the districts have similar structures and systems of local government, traditional leadership, social organization of communities and the cultures of the people.

Despite such opportunities and a range of policies to improve service delivery, claims of discrimination, injustice and deprivation persist in these districts, to which the youth have responded differently to achieve redress. The unique difference between youth responses in Kampala and Jinja, notwithstanding proximal characteristics between both cases, made the districts most ideal for this study. The research was thus based on the view that very little is known about factors, coping mechanisms and meanings

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that influence non-violent responses to EDI among youth.

A total of 286 respondents participated in the study. Some common data collection techniques included interviews-from key informants and experts and focus group discussion (FGD)-with self-identified participants, self-identified non-participants and self-identified resisters to violent conflict from formal and informal communities. Consistent with grounded theory, open coding was conducted from the initial data collected and was categorized according to sources and their responses to particulate questions. This was achieved through comparison of responses and reported incidents to form broader themes representing emerging explanations of the research problem.

This process also helped to delineate explanations from research participants for why fellow youth respond to EDI with violence, and helped the researcher to able to identify themes representing why others do not fight and what makes this possible from the perspective of respondents. Key concepts were identified with explanations elaborating conditions of interaction, context of actions, strategies employed and their consequences towards non-participation in violence (Willig, 2008, Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Preliminary findings indicate that resilience, social bonding and positive adaptation as some of the explanatory factors, each with associated mechanisms that help to shape nonviolent responses to EDI among majority of youth unlike those who chose to fight under the same conditions.

### **Theoretical Review**

Conflict analysis theories are useful under these conditions to help isolate issues and processes that explain what may lead to youth participation in violence during exclusion and discrimination. The Structural Violence theory by Johan Galtung (1969) can help to describe structural conditions that account for unequal chances and opportunities among the youth in Uganda. For example, the theory asserts that through rank disequilibrium structures can produce disparities where actors who are high on some indicator in the system could be low on another to deny them opportunities to meet their needs. Likewise, Ugandas' public service structure is such that a number of well-qualified university graduates work under less qualified seniors and don't get promoted, others fail to get jobs that they qualify and apply for, while many qualified employees are underpaid. According to Galtung (1969), violence in this case is the difference between what such actors are and what should actually be under the prevailing system and structural conditions. On the other hand, social identity theory explains how the youth define and perceive themselves as part of an identity group, which considers itself excluded, discriminated against or experiencing injustice, and how this manifests across members of the group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1981, 1986). While the theories explain structural and identity dimensions of why some youth

respond to EDI with violence, including the values, interests and needs threatened under these conditions, they do not explain why others in the same conditions do not.

Research on resilience helps to reveal conditions, protective factors and coping mechanisms that explain why others may not respond or participate in violence but instead adapt to changes and stressful conditions caused by EDI to achieve positive outcomes. Explaining the relationship between resilience and positive youth development, Lee et. al (2011) concludes that resilience is an asset that combines with controllability, optimism, conflict resolution and problem solving to spur positive development. While this relationship varies between sufficient, necessary, probabilistic, and spurious conditions, their effects on individual or groups reveal factors and mechanisms that underlay nonviolent responses to EDI. Discrimination, for example, generates difficulties that limit adoption and response options to its negative outcomes, thus creating the need for self-regulation as a coping mechanism. Explaining self-regulation as in the case of EDI, Balsano et.al (2009) state that such frustrating and stressful conditions require proactive action and setting clear expectations to be able to tackle associated contextual problems. From this perspective, self-regulation as well as other factors like optimism, self-control and problem-solving, help to build resilience and serve to maintain relationships that would otherwise not hold through personal and social responsibility. In this way, self-regulation as a factor of resilience supports self-advancement, peace and development. Hence the factors can lead to effective coping as a non-violent response to EDI by individuals or groups.

### **Perspectives on Exclusion, Discrimination and Injustice**

Perceptions and conditions of relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970)<sup>7</sup> often emerge when people experience EDI. Associated frustration further influences the youth to shape their responses ranging from simple disengagement to manifest aggression<sup>8</sup> in order to achieve unmet needs, interest or grievances over entitlements (Elliott, 1994, Deutsch 2000, Sandole 1999, Fisher 2009). Participants of the focus group discussions and interviews expressed fairly distinct, yet overlapping views and opinions over EDI. Exclusion is commonly viewed as denial, unwarranted restriction and imposition of unfair limitation to access opportunities through legislation. It is also perceived to be politically influenced implementation of policies or influences by the politicians that limit opportunities for target groups in favour of political allies, co-ethnics, or spiritual affiliates. A respondent stated<sup>9</sup> that *"it is everything that relates to ensuring that some of us do not benefit from policies of government and do not develop like them."* Thus target groups are denied or treated as outside the boundaries in which certain opportunities and benefits are fairly accessed or enjoyed, exposing the excluded to manipulation and exploitation by those within the boundaries. Experiences and symptoms of such exclusion occur in the process of interaction between insiders and

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outsiders, where victims also form responses that may range from disengagement to manifest violence.

Discrimination is perceived as preferential or selective treatment or allocation and access to opportunities and resources in favor of particular groups at the expense of other categories of people, especially on grounds of ethnicity, sex, or age. A respondent<sup>10</sup> explained discrimination is *“treating a group of people better than others”*, while a female respondent<sup>11</sup> stated that *“things cannot change for me because wherever I go I am a woman.”* Such negative comparisons arise from enduring experiences of discrimination that predispose victims to competition, confrontation and counteractions (Korostelina 2007). In Sri Lanka, the hostilities encountered between Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic groups bred the Tamil Youth Movement in the 1970s, partly driven by education policies seen to discriminate against the Tamils. On the other hand, perspectives of discrimination were expressed in structural terms, marked by systems and institutions that function to instil exclusion and unfairly reward others. A respondent<sup>12</sup> referred to discrimination as *“oppressing some people through tax, and especially land policies aiming to take our land by government, and that is not being fair.”* This has occurred when elements or functions of state systems and structures or institutions appear to be manipulated and influenced to prevent others from or to ring off certain opportunities to be enjoyed by a particular ethnic or political group.

Ho-Won (2000) states that much of human behaviour has profound social roots. Similarly, perspectives of the youth in Kampala and Jinja districts on EDI contain strong orientations drawn from both historical processes and contemporary conditions of managing the state explained through the ethnic lens of the Baganda and Basoga respectively. Inter-ethnic prejudice shares the biggest influences on Uganda’s political struggles and due to persistent conditions of EDI, ethnic groups compare and compete to remain politically, economically and socially prestigious with a positive identity (Tajfel, 1981) albeit at the expense of others.

The Baganda, for example, enjoyed a privileged history under colonialism where they controlled the state on behalf of the British, who actually named Uganda after the Baganda tribe. This was in addition to being the largest of 52 ethnic groups currently at 20% of the total population, with a 400 years old Kingdom in the central region where the capital city is located and their language being the most widely spoken in the country. Such historical conditions were constantly referenced during interviews and focus group discussions in Kampala, to explain grievances over injustice and discrimination by successive governments from their entitlement to control of resources and state power. The claims underlay perceptions of EDI often invoked to mobilize support of the youth for elites to win elections, political appointments or protest against government. Nevertheless, as Mugaju (2000) explains, this does not



suggest that the Baganda act as a uniform undifferentiated mass, instead there are many who disengage of such violence influencing conditions and develop constructive pathways to develop themselves and access political power.

On the other hand, the Basoga ethnic group and their Kingdom were a creation of the colonial administration and not in any sense the consequence of pre-colonial trends (Nabwiso, 1990). Founding chiefdoms of what came to be called the Busoga evolved through breakaway groups from Bunyoro Kingdom in the East, and subsequently the kingdom was established as a political arrangement of the British to extend their rule in the region. Consequently, claims of discrimination and injustice over access to power were not targeted at the state level, but mostly around kingship between the five chiefdoms the colonial government combined to form Busoga and manifest in form of inter-communal conflicts.

During the research, it was observed that Uganda's violent history marked by 3 civil wars and 4 military coup d'états, each mobilized by a different ethnic group, has produced ethnic-based descriptions of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' under each political regime, as a way to define the excluded groups experiencing injustice and discrimination. However, while in Kampala the Baganda explain much of the exclusion and injustice in relation to access to state power and control of local resources, the Basoga in Jinja largely explain these in form of poor access to social services compared with other regions in the country. The apparent difference in estimation and expectations of power and control of resources hinges largely on the allegiance the Basoga identity and cultural institutions owe to the state in return for their creation and existence. This is unlike the Baganda who claim 400 years of existence as a "total group" that enjoys status, a positive identity, power and control of its resources (Tajfel, 1981). Conflicting claims to a common ancestry among the Basoga compromise unity among members, including the youth, to be able to mount common claims against the state as is the case in Buganda. Such historical and political experiences between the Baganda and Basoga influence how EDI are understood and experienced, but also impact on the production of violent and nonviolent responses to redress related conditions.

Abbink (2005) recognizes that the youth do not shun aggression against rivals or those above them, but young people and rebellious groups in Africa consistently phrase many of their problems collectively and in terms of generational opposition to EDI. Likewise, some of the respondents in Buganda and Busoga indicated that they receive too little attention from their leaders to respond to their needs e.g. local chiefs, local government leaders or national level state and political leaders, thus finding themselves unable to progress in their aspirations. Similarly, Jua (2003) also reports

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that among the youth in Cameroon, failure to provide employment by the leaders signals a confirmation of their status as the lost generation without any alternatives in the present. In the process, and as is the case in Uganda, some of the youth have opted to fight their way into the present, while others explore alternative ways to adapt and remain positive or accept to postpone their aspirations or achieve them through non-fighting ways.

### **Why They Don't Fight**

The research indicated a range of factors that combine to influence the youth from participating in violence, and instead prefer to remain resilient through adaptation and social bonds that motivate them to construct non-violent pathways in response to EDI. Foremost, it was observed that the youth understand violence as externally influenced by conditions beyond their control. A respondent<sup>13</sup> indicated that *"we are too weak to fight government or our leaders, we don't have the means, but we are always pressured to a point and we have to find ways to get their attention."* Likewise, violent demonstration and other forms of violence are considered forms of expressing grievances, demand for recognition, and attracting greater attention to their needs. Against such varying opinions, a range of factors and mechanism are employed by youth who do not fight to resist incitement and offset the effects and risks associated with violent responses to EDI. This perspective is explained through resilience; first as a contributor and necessary condition for non-participation in violence, and secondly as an outcome from social bonding and positive adaptation, and these provide opportunities that policymakers and implementers can use to reduce violent responses to EDI.

### **Resilience as a Contributor and Necessary Condition**

Despite reported structural violence, majority of youth are resilient actors who realistically develop and act on their plans to remain positive and peaceful even in the face of compelling conditions for violence. Lee (2011) explains that resilience can be defined in terms of capacity, process, and result. Under conditions of EDI, capacity for resilience involves abilities to engage with stressful conditions associated with conditions of EDI non-violently and positively. A respondent<sup>14</sup> stated that *"we have gone through 3 elections of our market leaders, all of them being rejected by the city leadership, but we will continue working with them because we need to work and feed our families"*. Such ability to continue with this type of engagement can strengthen social bonds and improve communication as critical aspects of resilience that are necessary to find a non-violent solution to the leadership problem in the market.

Demonstrating resilience as a processes, despite the challenge of functioning normally faced by individuals or group encountering EDI, a respondent<sup>15</sup> referred to ongoing hostilities involving taxi drivers and stated that *"there is no way we can avoid talking to*

*the local council about our issues and concerns. Previous meetings have not ended well due to power struggles, but we remained and made some progress that we can build on as we continue to meet because this is our job and we have to agree on how to work with them.*" The persistence and progress made towards finding a solution indicates a preference to continue with meetings, while in the process participants are positively adopting to changes but also learning to cope with unfavourable conditions. On the other hand, resilience as a result focuses on achieving more positive and beneficial outcomes from such stressful conditions. During this time, internal and external factors help to support adaptation, engagement and management of processes that transform negative influences linked to EDI for victims to be able to bounce back and achieve positive outcomes (ibid). In this way resilience becomes a contributor to nonviolent and transformative responses to EDI, and during which the youth are able to adapt and bond at personal, family, community and institutional levels to achieve their aspirations.

There was a general observation among self-identified resisters to violence in Jinja that when it comes to responding to EDI, some of them just do not care, others felt satisfied with what they already have and the issues raised do not really concern them e.g. demanding employment, yet others just do not seem to know their rights. However, none of the respondents mentioned that conditions of EDI do not exist or attract violent responses from other members of their communities. The responses also indicate process and outcome as aspects of resilience. At the process level, those who do not care or are not concerned utilize forms of resilience assets and strengths e.g. self-control, that help them to recognize these conditions but manage to disengage (Heise, 1972). On the other hand, those who feel satisfied demonstrate resilience as a result and an outcome, after successfully encountering tasks and problems on the path to success. In both cases, the actors develop competencies of adaptation that help to meaningfully sustain disengagement or satisfaction as responses to perceived EDI. Loss of hope was also expressed, and in ways that seem to compromise courage as an asset and necessary condition for resilience while responding to EDI. A respondent<sup>16</sup> stated that *"I cannot participate or join any riot now because nothing has been done since the previous strikes and riots."* The total loss of attachment or lack of hope for achievement indicated in this case suggests that resilience requires favourable conditions to thrive and contribute to non-violent responses to EDI, including social bonding and adaptation.

### **Social Bonding**

Majority of youth in Uganda grow up in stressful conditions and challenging social conditions that constantly threaten their lives and predispose them to violent ways to achieve redress. Chriss (2007) explains that under such conditions, social bonding functions to build strong and abiding attachment, involvement, investment and belief

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in social connections that enhance self-control under stressful conditions. Under conditions of EDI, these function to reduce the preference for violence in favour of maintaining the bond. During Focus Group Discussion with self-identified resisters to participation in violence, attachment to family and sports activities were reported to have a strong influence on building effective social bonding and self-control. During this time, members learn about and practice values and norms that counter negative experiences from discrimination and exclusion, and also help to “overcome the influence of discourses of violence experienced outside the home” (Bhulai et.al 2014:5).

Family provides uncontested space to promote values, develop resilient personality traits, and to deconstruct narratives of violence and reconstruct new discourses that are empowered to constructively engage exclusion, discrimination and injustice. In Kampala, some of the respondents from a focus group discussion in Makindye Division attributed the escalating levels of violence among the youth in Buganda to diminishing emphasis on *Obuntu Bulamu* (humble personality) across families towards their children and adolescents. *Obuntu Bulamu* is a cultural value and a societal ethic for maintaining goodness and being humble in the face of difficulty and stressful events. It is a form of declaration that through a good personality, humanity can live beyond its difficult moments. During this process, pro-social values that advance and strengthen bonding are transmitted at family and community levels, while hedonism values that produce selfish interests are discouraged (Schwartz and Anat 2001). Commenting about his family background, a respondent<sup>17</sup> recalled that “*we grew up not knowing that we were not Baganda because our parents and neighbours lived and worked together, and shared food on public holidays and weekends, until I reached university when I investigated our family roots and later joined the association for students from Mbarara.*” In this case, social bonding was emphasized above ethnic barriers at a family level during childhood, through caring and sharing, which left no room of aggression and hostile conduct between the indigenous and local immigrants. However, subsequent interactions during adolescence are increasingly undoing this bonding and instead open the individual to exclusionary forms of identification, belonging and association. Therefore, during parenting, families can develop skills and share guidance for the youth to connect more strongly with the boarder society to boost their resilience capacities and strengthen relationships to withstand the stressful consequences of EDI.

Some of the respondents, especially from among youth cultural leaders, also mentioned various cultural traditions related to dispute resolution, discipline and grooming among the Baganda and Basoga, which they utilize to engage constructively with EDI. In Kampala some of the views made reference two Baganda cultural traditions of “*Kutawulula*” (disentangle) and *Kisaakaate* (enclosure) as grooming and

disciplining traditional practices that throughout Buganda's history helped to enhance bonding between communities and families even during hard times. *Kitawuluzi* (traditional court house) refers to a physical or symbolic place or any practice of promoting nonviolent dispute resolution, but under clear cultural norms that emphasized values and practices for nonviolence and maintaining of unity among the Baganda (Sentongo and Bartoli, 2012). *Kisaakaate* (an enclosure) refers to a physical or symbolic place for training and promoting peaceful coexistence, and is traditionally managed by *Omutongole* (village chief appointed by the King). A key informant<sup>18</sup> stated that *"we used to be taught to care for the community as a whole and there was no room for us to look at participants during training as rich or poor, royals or commoners but just another Baganda family member."* The practice used to be mandatory where every family in Buganda would send their children at least once during their adolescence to learn about kinship, culture, history, receive training in leadership and acquire the skills necessary to serve and protect their families, communities and the Kingdom.

Drama, sports activities and cultural programs increase social bonding at a community level among youth, strengthen attachments to the collective through mutual happiness and care, and provide outlets for frustrations and grievances by offering interactive ways to address difficult topics (Bhulai et.al 2014:10). Commenting about EDI, a respondent<sup>19</sup> mentioned that *"we experience these all the time and that is the nature of our country, but for us sport lovers we shade off our frustration on the pitch and it is off."* Similarly, various experts and practitioners agree that sports, drama, culture and music are useful tools for developing critical thinking and problem solving skills that the youth utilize to build and maintain their resilience and avoid violence (Calfas and Taylor, 1994; Hardman and Jones, 2010). Therefore, in times of incitement and mobilization of the youth to respond to EDI, sports and culture provide alternative forms of engagement that help to craft non-violent responses to these conditions.

### **Positive Adaptation**

Adaptation was indicated as a common pathway to finding more positive responses to EDI. Despite significant difficulties that deny the youth self-advancement opportunities, positive adaptation underlay the bulk of nonviolent responses to EDI among the youth. Positive adaptation in this case hinges on internal factors like optimism and positive adjustments to be able to, among others, manage peer and elite influences constructively and to engage conditions of EDI towards more positive outcomes. Social obligations, including focusing on self-advancement, family responsibilities and community service were considered to influence positive adaptation, thus strong motivates for non-violent responses to EDI.

Economic and political interests and gains mobilized along ethnic lines undermine the

potential to adapt to EDI among the youth and present strong influences towards youth participation in violence. A female respondent<sup>20</sup> confessed that during the previous parliamentary elections *“I was contacted and agreed to join a group in Katwe Division and we demonstrated against bad roads in the area to influence votes for our candidate, and I was given 20,000/= that day.”* However, fear of the consequences from violence influenced the preference for adaptation under such compromising conditions. The feared consequences include loss of lives, property, and known past experiences that discouraged some youth from participating in violent protests. A respondent<sup>21</sup> testified that *“on one occasion when we were driving from Kampala to a riot in Kayunga, all of us armed with clubs and knives, our vehicle stopped at a gas station to refill, I pretended to be going to the toilet and I escaped from the group back to Kampala.”* When probed to explain why he opted out of the plan, he mentioned fear for his life because previously some of his friends were killed during riots.

Religion and gender were reported as external factors that contribute strongly to building adaptation capacities among the youth to constructively engage with the experiences, effects and challenges of EDI. Religion is known to provide strong spiritual influences for non-violence, while culture and gender provide safety valves in form of norms and practices that contain restorative ways in responding to EDI. Some of the factors that account for safety and restoration during adaptation include a sense of belonging, self-esteem and security, in the place of rejection, exclusion and discrimination. These were reported to effectively counter incitement and manipulation into violence. A respondent<sup>22</sup> stated that *“with prayer and blessings from God, everything is possible and we will live through these conditions knowing better opportunities for success will come.”* In this way, religious beliefs and practices socially function to enable individuals and society to adapt to changes in their environment without losing hope and determination to find redress. Durkheim (1965) also maintains that *“religion is something eminently social and religious representations are collective representations expressing collective realities rising in the midst of the assembled groups destined to excite, maintain or recreate certain mental states in these groups.”* Adaption therefore, as a response to EDI, also involves developing and maintaining mental readiness to engagement with the reality being experienced.

Smith (2002) explains a range of other internal and external factors that facilitate positive adaptation to enhance self-advancement and reduce the frustration from EDI by the individual or the group. These internal factors include optimism, perceptions of control, self-efficacy, and active coping. These positive characteristics can also be aspirations of state policies, community programs and family practices aiming to support reduction in youth vulnerability to manipulation and incitement to participate in violence. It was observed among self-identified resisters to violence that even in the face of stressful conditions; they remained optimistic, vigilant to cope and exercised

great self-control in pursuit of self-advancement. Commenting on a violent strike that students organized against increase in tuition fees, a respondent<sup>23</sup> stated that *"unfortunately, many of them approached me and asked if we can arrange for them to continue with their studies since it was nearing exam time."* This and other reported experiences provide useful references to help understand how these youths managed to remain optimistic and focused, and why in this case they did not fight.

External factors include bonding, competence, optimism and environment. According to Lee et.al (2011), bonding in this case draws from internal factors e.g. a positive family climate, to produce strong emotional attachment and commitment to community, build close relationships, and social connections with mature, pro-social and rule-abiding friends and adults. Competence concerns with having good cognitive abilities for self-regulation, positive self-esteem and perceptions, and good social values. Optimism involves maintaining a clear self-identity and holding a sense of meaning to life that influences understanding and positive interpretation of EDI. A respondent<sup>24</sup> demonstrated optimism and stated that *"even in the face of such difficult conditions, my friends helped me to believe that there is something I can do to help make things better and I will find it soon."* Likewise, among self-identified resisters to violence and rehabilitated former gang members, it was observed that they were commonly being helped to cope, adapt and find meaning in the opportunities before them through bonding with friends and communities. On the other hand, environment concerns the organization of livelihood conditions with clear expectations, structured and monitored to ensure self-advancement. Certainly, positive adaptation under conditions of EDI is a more complex process, and this was observed when some of the views admitted the daunting difficulty in focusing on positive outcomes when everyone is expecting the worst. However, the emphasis here is not refusing to recognize or denying of adverse experiences among the youth, but setting realistic expectations that make positive adaptation possible during response actions to EDI.

During adaptations processes, the youth also build and develop alliances, supportive networks and partnerships to increase capacities and build shared strengths to overcome EDI. A range of youth-based civil society and community-based organizations have been established to support the youth to overcome experiences of EDI in their facilities and communities. They contribute to accessing employment opportunities and basic social services in health, education, guidance and counselling, and countering criminality and abuse. At government level, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2013) is implementing a youth livelihoods program through youth-based Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) to alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities of the youth (Nuwagaba 2012). At a civil society level, The Uganda Youth Network (UYONET) focuses on engagement of the youth in development and governance processes in Uganda, including electoral processes,

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transparency and accountability and human rights. However, as is more often the case in many situations, these organizations lack resources of their own, operate in small and less organized ways, and also lack experience, effective tools and capacity to compete with national level structures and departments. A respondent<sup>25</sup> mentioned that *“SACCOs are organizations of some sort within the NRM political party structures and are protected and supported by government to benefit their members”* Likewise, policies from government developed to support youth-based networks and organizations are weak and instead they were reported to be manipulated to benefit political allies, create winning constituencies during elections, and thus remain unable to help the youth adopt and remain resilience to challenges of EDI.

### **Conclusion**

There are various ways policymakers, civil society and community leaders and other actors can learn from experiences and practices of those who so not fight to strengthen interventions that seek to reduce youth vulnerability and preference for violence while responding to EDI. Experiences between the youth in Baganda and Busoga reveal that historical processes of identity construction, status and the roles played by each group during state formation produced competing claims over power and resources that the youth utilize to understand and formulate responses to perceived EDI. However, resilience theories reveal that underlying these experiences at individual and group levels are mechanisms still influence non-violence responses to EDI and support self-advancement. Policies and programs that contain opportunities to redress conditions of EDI should provide incentives that advance these mechanisms, including collaboration, self-control and confidence, resilience, social bonding and adaptation. Since these occur in the process of interaction between the youth and the state, substitutability is a necessary condition to ensure that the youth prefer to preserve their communities and the state than to be violent. Deutsch (2000) explains substitutability, where a person’s actions can satisfy another person’s intentions, as central to building effective collaborative functioning of communities, organizations and state institutions. In the context of building adoption capacities to expand resilience among the youth against participation in violence, approaches to implementation of state policies and community programs should be hinged on achievement and social development. This includes tailored programming to redress unique historical and identity-based grievances that account for separateness and differentiation within and between the youth and the state.

The youth model their behaviours and responses to EDI within possible means affordable and accessible to them in pursuit of opportunities for self-advancement. Resilience, adaptation and social bonding should be integrated in social, education and community programming and advocacy work by government and the civil society, through easily accessible tools, e.g. social medial, sports, music, art and drama, to



advance pro-social values, optimism, self-regulation, problem-solving and adaptation during EDI. The tools should equally articulate and appropriate clear roles that relevant stakeholders can play to support self-evaluation, promote self-esteem and self-representation of the youth in decision-making and leadership at local and national levels.

Equally, local communities should build their own resource and human capacities stretching from family to district and national levels to respond to perceived EDI in relation to individual, family and community level priorities and interests. Due to political and other factors, the youth in local communities may fail to trust or be honest to the state, which may reduce their participation in finding solutions to EDI. Building local youth-based capacities for leadership, production, education and welfare will generate optimism and can promote self-regulation and self-efficacy in ways that diminish the preference for violence among the youth. In this way, and regardless of conditions, these important values will inform and influence non-violent youth-based responses to EDI.

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### Notes

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